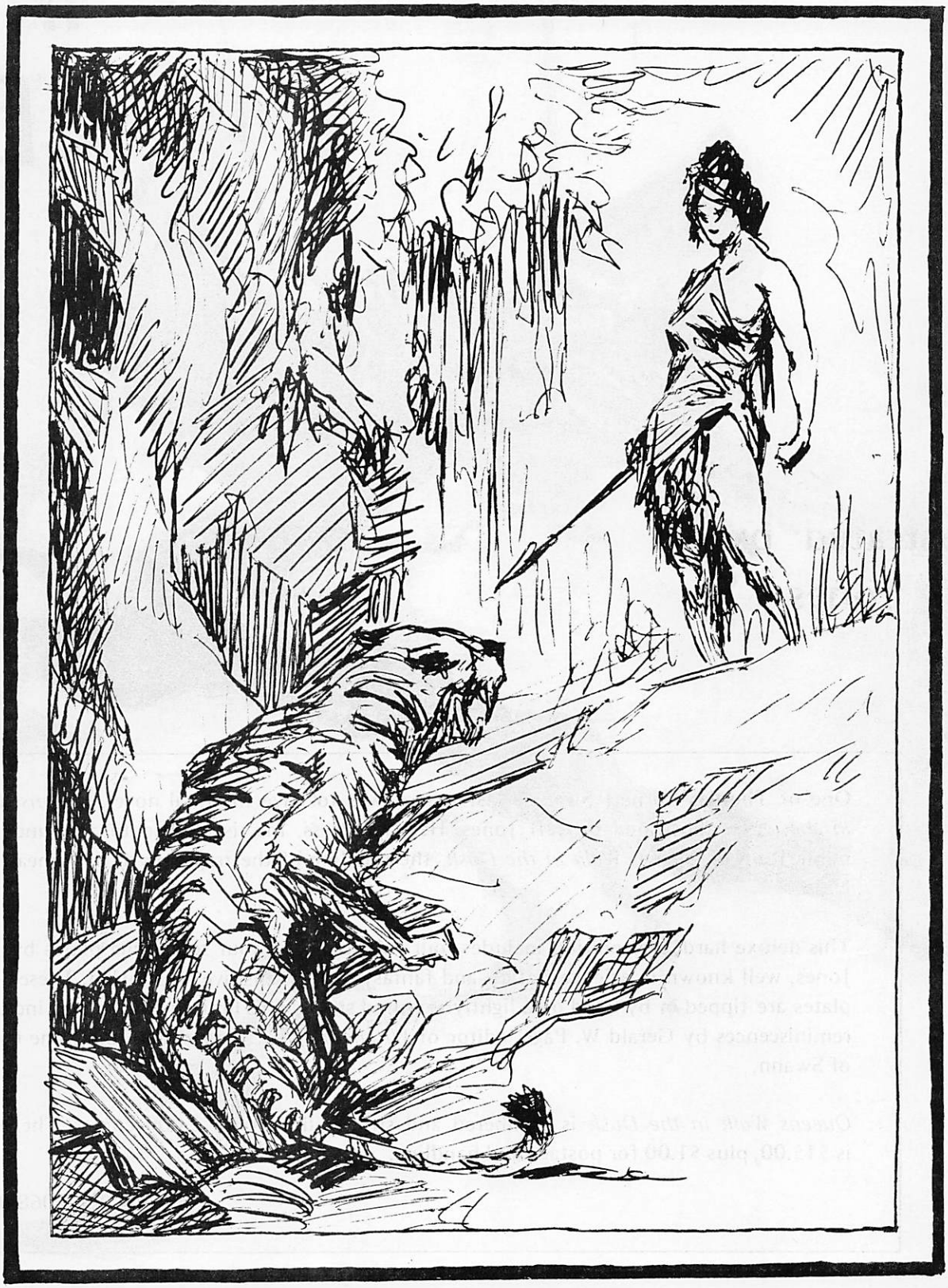

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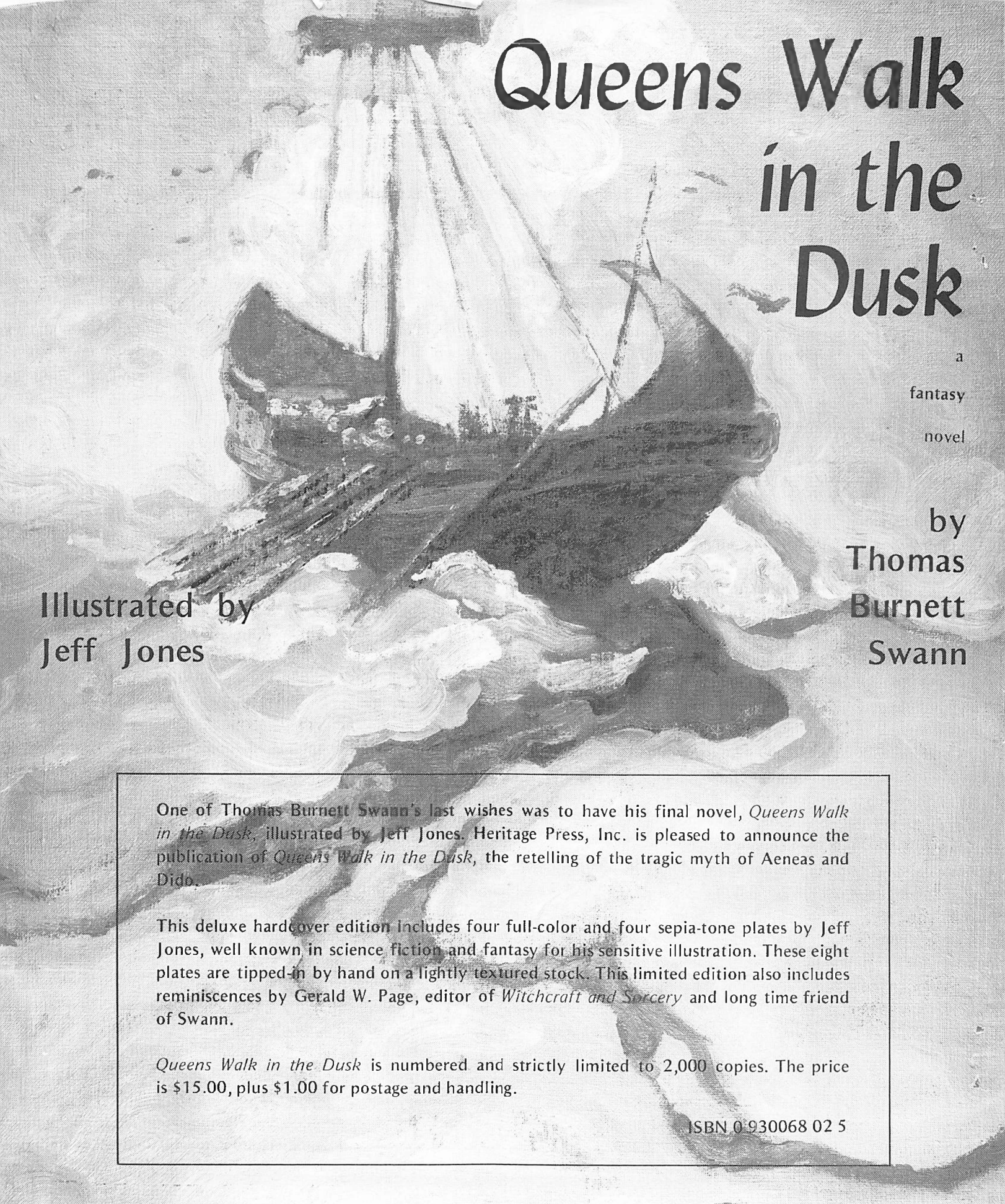

Queens Walk in the Dusk

a fantasy novel

by Thomas Burnett Swann

Illustrated by Jeff Jones

One of Thomas Burnett Swann's last wishes was to have his final novel, *Queens Walk in the Dusk*, illustrated by Jeff Jones. Heritage Press, Inc. is pleased to announce the publication of *Queens Walk in the Dusk*, the retelling of the tragic myth of Aeneas and Dido.

This deluxe hardcover edition includes four full-color and four sepia-tone plates by Jeff Jones, well known in science fiction and fantasy for his sensitive illustration. These eight plates are tipped-in by hand on a lightly textured stock. This limited edition also includes reminiscences by Gerald W. Page, editor of *Witchcraft and Sorcery* and long time friend of Swann.

Queens Walk in the Dusk is numbered and strictly limited to 2,000 copies. The price is $15.00, plus $1.00 for postage and handling.

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o0o o0o

We've managed to add four new fan artists and a lovely Krenkel cover to our art credits this time, but we still need fan art desperately! You'll continue to receive FR so long as we have any unused art by you in our files, you will receive your originals back, and all art will be electrostencilled, if you'll just send us some! If you wish, we may electrostencil the art upon receipt and return it to you within a week.

Another thing we still need is a regular commentator on the SF magazine field; with ISAAC ASIMOV'S SF ADVENTURE MAGAZINE coming in the 8.5 x 11 format this summer, the pro magazine field is growing again, and we'd like someone who thinks they can regularly tackle the job of commenting on the magazine field to do so. What we don't want is issue-by-issue listings and reviews, though, so bear that in mind.

Lots of reviews in this issue; so many, in fact, that we almost made it a double issue instead. We urgently need good, usable locs to balance out the issue--our loc files were misplaced when we moved to this new apartment, and that's a major reason for the scarceness of locs this time. Please, please take the time to write your outrageous comments on this issue of FR! A loc, published or not, will get you a free issue of FR. Oh, you might try commenting on our 3-column format this time--how does it look? Is 2-column better? Tell us these things!

Perspectives

an editorial of sorts

by Cliff & Susan Biggers

For there to have been no FR in so long a time, this has been one of the busiest seasons I can remember since Susan and I were married; it seems like my time has constantly been taken up with one project or another, and yet I can't think of any thing that really should have been that time consuming.

Oh, lyes I can: we moved in October, and we're still recovering from that. Yes, I know that we had just moved six months before that, but the noise problems I've been mentioning in passing became a full-scale sonic war with our upstairs neighbors in the late summer and early fall, and the problem of noisy neighbors was one that was affecting both of us very seriously. Susan, particularly, found it difficult to live in the apt. at all, and the management of the Savannah Oaks complex, headed by George H. Lane and Associates, was determined to do nothing to help us with our problem. We'd extract one promise after another from them, only to have it broken or denied by the next resident manager that came along.

So, we moved--to another apartment in Savannah Oaks. Yes, I realize that we still have George H. Lane and Associates to contend with, along with their misleading and fraudulent ways, but we happen to like the apartment--it"s a townhouse, and so we have no upstairs neighbors but ourselves, and the walls are sufficiently thick to block out any noise coming from that way--and, even though the resident manager has already mentally blacklisted us, we like the complex. We both get along with one of the leasing agents, Margaret, very well, and the other leasing agents at least avoid showing open hostility toward me whenever I have business with them...

At any rate, the new address is given on the contents page, but I'd like to list it again, right here; the only change is in the apartment number, so be sure you compare it carefully to the address you're using for us right now. Here it is:

CLIFF & SUSAN BIGGERS, 1029 FRANKLIN ROAD APT. 3-A, MARIETTA, GA 30067.

The mail does get forwarded, but it sometimes takes a week or so extra for forwarding to be done. I've yet to figure out why a shift in apts. should cause a seven day postal delay, but it does--they can't even explain it at the post office, but they really don't seem to understand why I write so many letters, mail out packages so frequently, and receive books constantly. I never try to explain any longer, recognizing futility when I'm confronted with it. In fact, if you'd like to help save a little futility, run that CoA in your fanzine as well, alright?

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This year's DSC was a phenomenal one for us; we knew it would be a good convention, with Michael Bishop as GoH and Charlie and Dena Brown as fan GoH, but we scarcely expected to bring a Rebel Award home with us as we departed from Birmingham. I can't remember all the thoughts that went through my head after the Rebel Winners were announced, but I can admit, even now, that it was an egoboosting thing to be recognized for "Outstanding Achievement in Southern Fandom". The fact that Michael Bishop won the Phoenix for outstanding professional work was also a bit of very good news--winning an award is nice, winning one the same year Mike won his is even nicer.

As Susan said the day afterwards, though, "Now we have to keep doing big FRs and all that, just to stop people who didn't know us from saying 'why'd they win an award?'"

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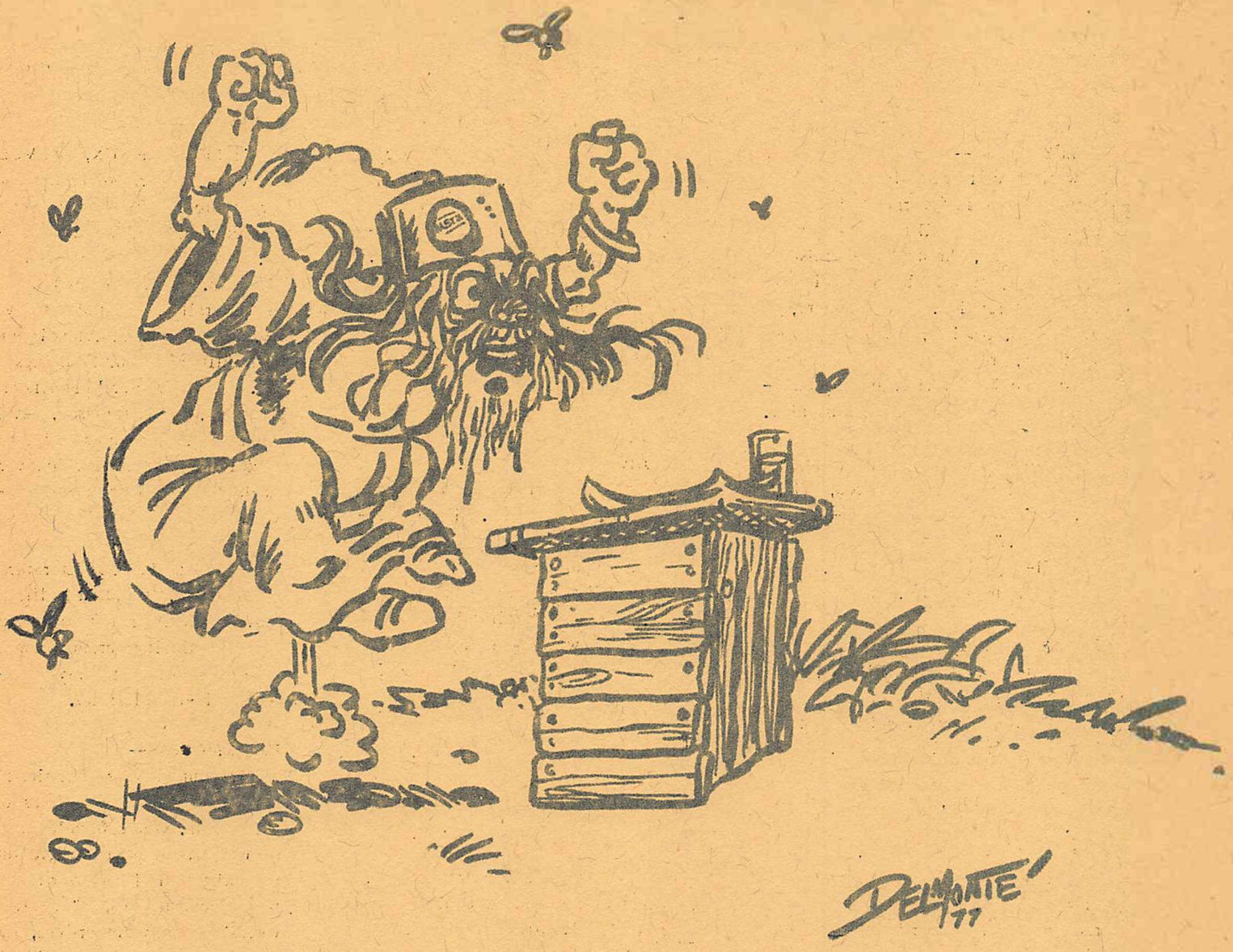
As you've no doubt become aware, it's taking more and more time to produce these larger issues of FR; in fact, this issue is almost a full issue behind the schedule I had set for myself a year ago, and two full issues behind the schedule I had set for FR with the first or second issue.

I wish I could guarantee that it won't happen in the future, but so long as the big issues are done, it most probably will; I can get the reviews on time, to be sure, but the other material is much slower in coming. So, as a result, you might expect a sort of alternating schedule, with some smaller, almost



entirely [illegible] coming out in between these larger issues; it's one way to keep up with the review coverage.

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One of the more clichéd phrases of recent vintage is "there's a publishing boom going on out there." And, it seems, it's one of the more appropriate ones; just last week, when I went to the store, I found a copy of the new Dale Books release, THE QUEEN OF ZAMBA. I hear that the first in the new series of books edited by Kelly & Polly Freas is due out soon. A lot of limited edition publishers are increasing their volume. And, as Joe Green points out in a letter in this issue, the result is a wide selection of reading material for the sf fan, but a market so filled with constant releases that the shelf-life of a book will probably end up (at least in the newsstand market) being a week, which is the average interval between distributor deliveries in the local marketplace. With bookstores, the demand will probably result in a higher on-shelf life, perhaps a month. But even now, I can see the shift; and it seems to be a good time for an example.

As a DAW collector, I'm aware of the shelf life of DAW Books; at one time, a DAW release could be found in bookstores five or six months after release; I know, having started buying the books new with #32 in the series and managing to buy all the older releases in just a few new bookstores. Nowadays, the December releases go to make room for the January--there are no DAW Books at our local bookstore that are more than six months old, and only a handfull that pass the three-month mark. And this will mean that, for the average writer, an advance will be simply a selling price; the average author will have no hope of earning out his advance. And I'm awfully curious as to what that will do to the market; will it mean (contd. p. 9)

WOMEN IN SCIENCE FICTION

SALLY COOK
SUSAN BIGGERS
SUE PHILLIPS

SALLY COOK --

A while back I had a flu virus take residence and in feverish delirium I hallucinated that all the women in the world had, through some sinister conspiracy, been replaced by clones of Rissa Kerguelen. Power hungry, ambitious, ruthless, loving for convenience, freezing fetuses for future mechanical deliveries, these pseudo-women ran about in assorted disguises.

My husband told me later that at the height of fever I had gibbered, "No, no, don't wanna be a woman-man, donwanna." Since he knew me to be well-adjusted to my gender, this outburst intrigued him.

I have been fully recovered for some time but the images still linger, haunting. In the midst of a mini-wave of female protagonists in sf, I find myself deeply disturbed.

There was a time, and not so long ago, when women were depicted as mere extras and bit players. (For notable exceptions see Heinlein and Piers Anthony.) Recent efforts to rectify this gross oversight have replaced the old stereotypes of dumb sex object and unattainable goddess with a brand new stereotype.

In RISSA KERGUELEN by F.M. Busby, FLOATING WORLDS by Cecilia Holland and EARTHCHILD by Doris Piserchia this new persona is demonstrated forcing women into the narrow confines of an extended women's lib fantasy.

Independent isn't the word for these gals; they don't need nobody, no way. They can kung fu with the best, navigate the stars single-handed, battle world-sized monsters and turn men into lusting pretzels. I'll buy that. Time and again research has shown women to be every bit as capable as men. But--it's the lack of woman-ness that frightens me. Menstrual cycles and the occasional orgasm do not a woman make.

What really bothers me is that they are, in general, masculine characterizations in female bodies. Notice how effortlessly they negate their biological imperative. Not one of them ever expresses the maternal necessity or a nesting urge. Not one of them reveals the subtle differences in their gender. These heroines lack sensitivity, intuition, compassion, empathy--in short, the whole bag of goodies to which women are prone. They don't fall vulnerable to love. Show me a human being, man or woman, who doesn't need to give love and I'll show you a neurotic.

The problem here seems to be a misunderstanding of what was previously lacking in the genre. It is not merely that women were not allowed the same adventures as men. It is that women were not allowed to share these adventures on an equal basis. Inverting the equation does not resolve the inherent absurdity. Women alone against the cosmos areeevery bit as peculiar as men alone. Ah, there's the rub.

We're supposed to be a matched set, aren't we? Too often SF views the sexes as independent species, opposing and conflicting. This may be reflective of reality to some extent, but SF has traditionally been a literature of alternatives, of ideals and hopes.

A remarkable exception to this general trend is the work of Tanith Lee. In DRINKING SAPPHIRE WINE, THE BIRTHGRAVE, THE STORM LORD, DON'T BITE THE SUN, and VOLKHAAVAR, Lee breaks through the stereotypical barriers to present characters of depth and rich feeling; aggressive men/women who can weep. Passive women/men who can rally in the face of adversity. Lee creates individuals who are multifaceted human beings first. Her characters' genders are secondary, easily reversed, inversed or neutered, but each showing the special inclinations of whichever sex they happen to be at the moment.

And this is the ideal in literature beyond genre, the ideal in life as well. For it is far more complicated and difficult to create/become human beings than to play archetypal male-female roles.

SUSAN BIGGERS--

The first author whose females made a strong impression on me was Robert Heinlein, whose females were undoubtedly the poorest caricatures of a real female I had ever read of. Just the opposite of the "men-with-ovaries" so many authors use, Heinlein turned women into the ideal, what a man thought a woman should be. Of course, one can't accuse Heinlein of sexism--he did much the same with men in his works--but I find it appropriate the the one Heinlein book I have an aversion to after reading is PODKAYNE OF MARS; these women are adventurous (no objections), but they worry about the things that a man would think a woman would worry about. and in the end she suffers great physical injury, and it's all blamed on people who are so insane as to allow a girl to do male things and not stay in a woman's place. That bothered me--bothers me--because it subtly tells us that even Podkayne,

who is undoubtedly the most prominent of Heinlein's females and the most vigorously successful, can't complete a job without massive injury (for the most part, Heinlein's males always come out with a few bruises, bumps and scratches in comparison).

Heinlein, however, remains an antique in his view of the female, unwilling to adapt, as Joan in I WILL FEAR NO EVIL. She reads like a Helen Gurley Brown editorial, all cute and fluffy and worried about make-up, clothes, and going to bed with a man. The antiquarian male image of a female--or a fantasy. Unfortunately, not true. And while I found both books enjoyable, they give me cause to lament Heinlein's view of the female.

But I just as vigorously reject the Joanna Russ female of THE FEMALE MAN, linked in its common denominator of a rejection of men. Russ is no more accurate than Heinlein, for she shows only a half-person, and then pits this half-person against stereotyped men ina predictable psychological battle.

Women aren't all softness and compassion; there can be bitterness and hatred and desire and sexless friendship and frustration and delight as well, and that's a side too many authors would just as soon leave out, simply because they can't write of it well, or because it might throw a few complexities into their plots otherwise. John Norman far outsells Tanith Lee...

But the other half of the problem is that every trait I've listed for females may also exist for males, and it, too, is overlooked by so many authors; and a well-characterized female looks very awkward against a backdrop of stereotyped men.

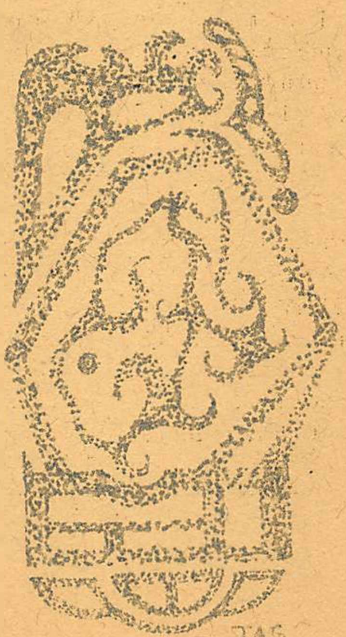
Ursula LeGuin's LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS sent out a great many ripples, and it's easy to see why. Winter, with its hermaphroditic society, is unconcerned with male-vs.-female, and LeGuin was able to present a portrait that is poignant in its idealism. The masculine and feminine traits exist side by side, and when one of the aliens is in a masculine or a feminine phase, he/she does not deny the emotions we associate with just one sex, nor is he ashamed or envious of the biological differences. It's a stunning work.

David Gerrold's MOONSTAR ODYSSEY is also a powerful portrayal of a world in which sex is a matter of choice, not necessity; the protagonist, Jobe, becomes unique in that she is one of the few people of her planet whose sex was determined without her making a choice. It offers a strong female character, a character who loves and suffers because of her love.

Laurence Yep's SEADEMONS offers an equally satisfying protagonist in Ciarin, a female settler on an alien planet. Ciarin is a full character, showing full femaleness and not lacking in the softer emotions, in compassion and love and concern for others. And even more satisfying is that Yep, like Gerrold, doesn't identify these emotions as female-sorts, but gives these same traits to the male figure Anglic. And when the time comes, Ciarin joins the males and females in fighting for her people--a bloody, vicious fight, and one in which females take part without being considered unusual. Yep presents it almost matter-of-factly, and doesn't try to impress the reader by drawing attention to the fact that he has women acting out "male roles" alongside the men without reproof; he makes it perfectly natural, a minor aspect of the story as a whole. Ciarin is a leader, a woman, a mother, and an intelligent, rational person who dearly loves her home and is willing to make sacrifices to save it.

There's an awful lot of optimism concerning the role of the female in the future via SF; even in superficially hostile stories like "Houston, Houston, Do You Read?" by James Tiptree, Jr., there is a positive statement about the male-female relationship; for while the clinical analysis and eventual elimination of the male astronauts by the females is a horrible thing, Tiptree presents it so as to be recognizably horrible. Unlike Russ, Tiptree doesn't glorify this separation of the sexes, this competition that seems almost a hatred; no, Tiptree reveals it for the ugly thing it is, and that's why "Houston, Houston, Do You Read?" is one of 1976's more impressive stories.

And then there are the authors like Bradley, McCaffrey and Swann, who have written almost throughout their careers about real men and real women, about full people who acknowledge all aspects of their emotional and sexual make-up. The difficulty, it seems, doesn't come in creating these real male/female characters, imbuing each with the traits of his/her sex--all the traits--but it comes in putting these characters in a satisfying story without succumbing to the temptation to say "look at my characters, aren't they nice?" The soapbox writers and moralizers will be glad to tell you what they did for the female character; I'll put my trust in the writers who are satisfied to show you in their fiction, and let you draw your own conclusions.



SUE PHILLIPS--
There have always been women of sf. Mary Shelley, C.L. Moore, Judith Merrill, Kate Wilhelm, Andre Norton: women who create, who edit, who--like Polly Freas--do none of these things but still are forces in the field.

But real women in sf have always been rare. For a long time, the male writers seemed to have no conception of women who were more than mothers, who wanted more than the domestic life. That, though, was dictated somewhat by the fact that society thought this way. However, in a field that professed to be speculative, this was inexcusable.

Asimov's work contains few females, and the ones he writes of lack reality; Van Vogt's women are better but function in minor roles; Ellison writes of women as if they were the cause of the world's misery; Howard's fantasy women are independent females, but are still not whole women, being simplistic extensions of barbaric heroes, living in a simplistic world.

One of my favorites, Tolkein, has only three major women's roles in LoTR, and these were touched on only briefly. At least, though, he was realistic; women had no place in the story he told, in the world he made.

When it comes to it, it takes a woman to create a woman. Moore's Jirel of Joiry was one of the first female characters to be more than a cardboard figure. She was a swordwoman but also a queen, a friend and a lover. Jirel was a pioneering effort in a field whose subject is pioneering efforts.

Among the newer writers, Patricia McKillip stands out for her FORGOTTEN BEASTS OF ELD. Her heroine/protagonist, Sybel, is a definite person yet still a woman. She loses none of her feminine characteristics while performing a job usual for a man.

Tanith Lee, who seemed to spring fullborn from the brow of Don Wollheim, is a full-blown writer. Her female characters are among the most complex in the field. She has a weakness only in the portrayal of secondary male characters. In all other respects she keeps alive the positive image of woman.

I think lone of the best writers is Marion Zimmer Bradley; her Darkover series is one of the best known series in sf and one of the most rounded.

Women play an integral part of Darkovan society in all strata. Though Bradley tends toward an embarrassing maternalness in her women, her females are not "women-men" but true women.

This is hard to explain; in my view, there are two kinds of women. The female, a sex object who has no cares above herself; and the woman, who integrates this with the fuller view of the world. (I assign the terms arbitrarily.)

Clarissa, one of the Terrans who k crashlands on Darkover, is a willful woman. She is a member of the crew of a colony ship and, as such, is unprepared for the demands made on a colony woman. Having children is outside her experience; indeed, she's never even thought seriously about the idea.

When the Ghost Wind comes, throwing the camp into turmoil, she must come to grips with herself and with necessity. This is a lesson everyone must learn, one I'm still learning.

The women of the New Hebrides commune, part of the original colony, are different. They are oriented to the earth and to their part in nature. They are very much child and family oriented, being prepared to be the first women in the world, ready to "be fruitful and multiply."

From these two types, Bradley builds each woman on her world. Those of the Comyn, telepathic nobility, are indoctrinated to marry and give their houses heirs. This is true also of the lower classes but these are freer to choose the life of the Free Amazon. A member of the Amazons takes the garb and work of a man, flaunting the laws of a very definite male society. And Bradley makes it work.

Anne McCaffrey is another of the growing number of women of sf. In her books, she puts women on the same level as men; she puts little emphasis on sex roles and concentrates on character and capability. Helva, the Ship Who Sings, and Lessa of Pern are both excellent examples of this. Both are strong-willed people capable of doing far more than the world gives them credit for.

These are positive images of women; there are those female writers, though, who seem to dislike their sex and show it in the way they portray women. Joanna Russ is one who comes first to mind. She is a proponent of the "woman-man" syndrome. Though I haven't read all her works (notably THE FEMALE MAN), her earlier novels indicate that her ideas tend towards women who are equally as capable as men, who take men's jobs but have no female characteristics.

For me, Ursula LeGuin seems to be this way, too. I confess I'm not familiar enough with her work to profess expertise, but she seems to get around the matter by using women in her stories as little as possible. Perhaps I've missed something, but this is the impression I've received.

So far, men have been mentioned only in the context of bad women characters. Heaven knows there are enough of them. Even today, it's difficult to find a male writer who treats women in a competent manner. There are some good examples, though: Heinlein, for instance, has shown women to be people and not just adjuncts of men. Star of GLORY ROAD is such a woman. She is competent in many areas, yet knows her weaknesses. She is capable of facing reality yet yearns for some fantasy.

Piers Anthony, too, is a creator of believable women. Most recently, he presented Chameleon in A SPELL FOR CHAMELEON. Here we have what is probably the most together woman in the world. She can be genius, ingeniously dumb, beautiful and horrifyingly ugly. And she can be what most of us are, incredibly average.

Women in science fiction are proliferating at an alarming rate. As in life, there are good ones and bad ones and simply medium ones. Whether you consider a given character as a good example of her sex is up to you, for we all have our own standards.

Women of science fiction are also proliferating; whether they are competent or incompetent, spin a good tale or a bad one, it's nonetheless good that they're free to work within the field. Though I consider many aspects of the women's movement bad, the fact that more of them are coming out of the closet in my favorite brand of reading excites me. And gives me hope.

EDITORIAL, CONTD. -

a shorter-run, less-open-return-policy on paperbacks (as I've heard that Dale Books is offering) with a massive discount to make it worth the dealer's risk in taking books on a no-return basis? That seems very likely, if store owners are willing to sacrifice return privilege for the higher per-item profit.

But as much as I can sympathize with Joe and others who make a living out of the field, I'll still have to profess that eagerness that I experience as a reader when I hear of the growth in the sf publishing field...

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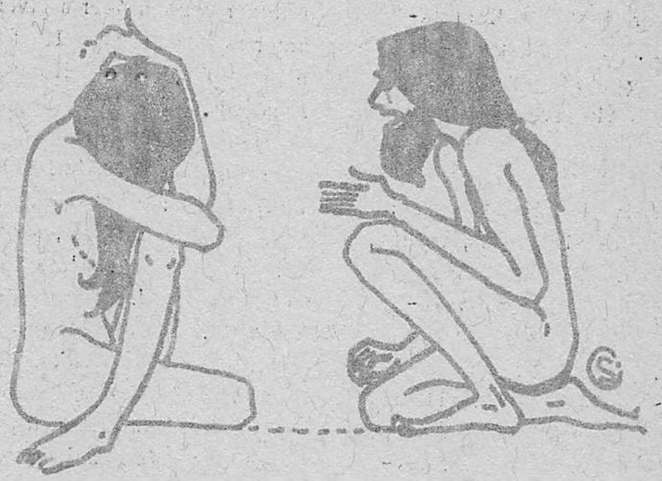
THE SILMARILLION is managing to sell incredibly well for a book that no one seems overly impressed with; as a teacher, I'm acutely aware of the success of the book, as many of my students who haven't bought a single pb book in a year or more shelled out their $10.95 for the new Tolkein hardcover. LOCUS reports it as the #1 selling hardcover (next to the Bible, of course). I wonder how much heavier the glut of pseudo-Tolkein fantasies will become?...

SUSAN'S COLUMN

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND is undoubtedly old news as you read this, and I'm not going to attempt a review of it since Ceese does it so much better (or will do it so much better for the next FR); I will say that I was favorably impressed by the film, much more so than I was with STAR WARS, and I recommend it to anyone who enjoys more individual-oriented fiction and cinema. In STAR WARS, the effects were the real star; in CLOSE ENCOUNTERS, Richard Dreyfuss does an impressive job of portraying a man whose life is radically altered by extraterrestrial influence. I was almost fearful of a flop; after the heavy promotion of the film, I feared it would sell poorly and the market would again be in a slump. It didn't, obviously; but when will we get a major box-office flop, the sf film equivalent of THE GREAT GATSBY of a few years back? DAMNATION ALLEY wasn't it; it flopped, but it was scarcely "major box office," price notwithstanding.

As you read this, I'm either eagerly awaiting, or in the middle of, a pair of Tanith Lee novels from DAW books; next issue will bring a review of the two books, but the anticipation is oddly satisfying; it's so nice to have an author whose work is still able to produce this kind of eagerness in this jaded reviewer. That's one of the biggest "occupational hazards" of reviewing on a regular schedule; you often read in terms of a review, instead of reading for sheer enjoyment, and it's so easy to become unenthused. Charlie Brown said much the same thing in conversation with me in Birmingham; like myself, he turns more and more often to mysteries as a light-weight source of entertainment between bouts of sf. And now Wade Gilbreath tells me to start a mystery reviewzine--*sigh* then what do I read for simple entertainment? Not...choke...gothics?...

Books



ALL MY SINS REMEMBERED. Joe Haldeman (St. Martins' Press, $7.95). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

I have not, as yet, been impressed with Joe Haldeman's works; I've found him to be a talented storyteller and wordsmith, but I haven't found the vibrant life I look for as an indication of quality. Perhpas it's Haldeman, perhaps it's me; at any rate, I've yet to feel Haldeman deserves (or deserved) a Hugo.

And with that behind me, I should say that ALL MY SINS REMEMBERED, episodic narrative notwithstanding, is Haldeman's best work to date.

SINS is a novel thrown together from novelettes (three, to be exact) and there's no attempt to hide the individual climaxes. There is a relatively simple frame to link the entire seriestogether, but the frame interferes with the flow of the book more than it helps it.

What does help the novel, though, is the character of Otto McGavin, Prime Operative; McGavin's job is taking on roles of others and imitating them. He is a government agent, trained and programmed to be efficient and precise in his job, and he travels from planet to planet in different appearances and guises, solving cases and preventing planetary takeovers.

It's a good, solid adventure premise, one that's proven successful for espionage thrillers for years. For Haldeman, though, the plot seems to sparkle with new-found inventiveness.

The three novelettes in SINS differ in approach somewhat, with the first being a standard sf/mystery (albeit a well thought-out mystery) the second being a more typical adventure story, and the third being a suspense-thriller. The difference in approaches to each segment of the novel adds some variety to the stories, making SINS much more entertaining than, say, a Retief book, where the characters go through the same motions story after story, losing reader interest along the way.

Haldeman has left himself ample opportunity to continue the Otto McGavin series--there are numerous adventures hinted at throughout the course of the "novel," and some of them sound as if they could be done justice in a novel-length work.

It almost seems odd that an author whose work has been praised for its strong philosophical/moral statements could do his best work on a book where the statement is tertiary to plot and characterization. Nonetheless, Haldeman has finally convinced me that he can tell a strong story when he sets his mind to it, and I hope that, in the future, he can carry the strength of his short stories into his novels.

THE DEVIL IN A FOREST. Gene Wolfe (Ace 14288-5 - $1.50 - 1977). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

The packaging of Gene Wolfe's latest novel seems to indicate that Ace was unsure how to promote the book; to be certain, if it's fantasy, it's not the typical fantasy novel; and if it's mainstream, then why is the entire novel set in some remote past and why do the characters have fantasy-character names? As a result, the cover is misleading, hinting at fantasy and at sf.

In reality, THE DEVIL IN A FOREST fits very well in the same subgenre of fantasy that Mervyn Peake's TITUS GROAN occupies; it's very somber and moody, very much steeped in medieval life and traditions, and its characters are all too human. There's no magic, none of the heroic swordplay of a Conan story, no superhuman figures or unearthly beauties.

There is Mark, a young man who faces the evils of the novel in such a way as to lead the reader to question his own concepts of evil; and there is Wat, half-evil, half-mischief, against whom no one seems to have the courage to stand.

And DEVIL IN A FOREST is a story of death, both physical and spiritual, and of the coming of age of a young man.

It probably is mismarketed as a fantasy, but I'd be hardpressed to find a neat little niche for this one, too. It's very well-written and very contemplative, though, and I recommend it highly.

ALDAIR, MASTER OF SHIPS. Neal [illegible] Barrett, Jr. (DAW UW1326 - $1.50, 1977). Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

There are a great many underrated authors working in the field, turning out enjoyable novels on a regular basis but getting little recognition. Neal Barrett seems to be one of those authors, and this second ALDAIR book emphasizes just how talented Barrett is.

The Aldair series is set in a future earth-civilization where animals have risen to positions of intelligence and dominance; Aldair, the protagonist, is an evolved pig, for instance. Using this future world as a setting for the series, Barrett manages to combine superior swashbuckling adventure with a genuine quest theme--Aldair's desire to learn of the prior earth, and of men, and of the origin of his own world--and produce a ver solid bit of reading.

ALDAIR, MASTER OF SHIPS details the adventures of Aldair once he accidentally kidnaps Corysia, a noblewoman; her countrymen vow to recapture her at all costs, and Aldair finds himself pursued from one adventure to another.

ALDAIR, MASTER OF SHIPS is one of the most satisfying new series to come into print recently, and I find myself looking forward to the next book that continues Aldair's adventures. Barrett's neat, efficient prose makes the pages flow by both quickly and enjoyably, and I recommend the series to all who enjoy modest sf/fantasy.

A SPELL FOR CHAMELEON. Piers Anthony (Ballantine #25855, $1.95, 1977). Reviewed by Sue Phillips.

I understand there's a sequel forthcoming to this book. This is enough to warm the cockles of my heart for two reasons; one, it means another Piers Anthony fantasy; and two, there are many things here just crying for elaboration.

It's difficult to review a book like this; there are a great many good things herein and very few bad. How do you describe the fun and the pure joy the book is to read? How do you tell people about puns, with which A SPELL FOR CHAMELEON abounds?

Anthony has a fertile imagination for fantasy, one that he uses far too little. Xanth is a magic land, full of wonder and replete with Good and Evil magicians. Our hero is Bink, a lad with no magic in a land where everyone has magic on some level. Our heroines are Fanchon, Dee and Wynne, three girls with a remarkable variety of beauty and intelligence. There are villians both human and animal. There are spells and geases, castles and monsters.

But most of all, CHAMELEON is a fun book to read. It is very easy to get involved with its twists and turns, to like the good guys and hate the baddies. Anthony leaves some strings, though. Where and when are Xanth's beginnings. Why is Xanth magic when all around it lies Mundane?

There are very few things wrong with this book. The biggest is a purely personal reaction and therefore trivial: I could have wished for more characterization in those creatures other than humans. In particular, this would hold for the more hostile but intelligenct magic beasts: manticora, dragons, giants, gryphons.

I would hope that all these questions and loose ends would be covered in a sequel. Sequels have a habit of being less than the originals--and the twists and turns of this novel will be hard to top. Nevertheless, I believe Anthony can do it and I'm looking forward with eagerness to its arrival. A SPELL FOR CHAMELEON is one of the most thoroughly satisfying fantasy novels of this year, and Del Rey Books should be applauded for publishing it.

GALACTIC DREAMERS. Robert Silverberg, editor (Random House - $8.95, 1977). Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

Robert Silverberg is undoubtedly one of the better editors in the SF field; he knows the genre as only an author and/or fan could, and he is both aware of the good material previously written and literary enough to be able to cull the truly good material from the worthless trash--a talent many productive editors seem to lack.

Unlike many anthologies which attempt to establish some common theme within the stories that it includes, GALACTIC DREAMERS is a subjective anthology--that is, it includes stories with one common trait, the ability to inspire a vision in the mind of the editor, Robert Silverberg. These are powerful stories, almost visual stories, but it's not necessarily an optic/mental vision Silverberg alludes to.

To be certain, the stories are old, but none of them are the easy ones that a lackluster editor would hash together into an anthology; there's no "Twilight," no "That Only a Mother," no "Repent, Harlequin." This anthology could be of value to the new reader of science fiction or even to the older casual reader; these are not often-anthologized stories.

Of all the stories here, my favorites are Cordwainer Smith's powerful "The Dead Lady of Clown Town" and Silverberg's own "Breckendridge and the Continuum." Both stories inspire in me the same vision that Silverberg alludes to; that is, they work for me. kBallard's story fails horribly, simply because Ballard is an author who fails to evoke anything in me. Lafferty almost manages to make it work with "Sky," one of the all too few Lafferty stories I've honestly enjoyed (but as armchair editor, I'd have left it out). We can all pick and choose from such an anthology, of course,

but the final determination of quality is simply this: is the book worthwhile in its presentation of good, enjoyable stories? And with THE GALACTIC DREAMERS, the answer is definitely yes.

LETTER FROM MEADE FRIERSON (9-11-77) "First, I want to express my apologies, in print as in person, that SFC materials have been misnaming FR with an erroneous terminal "s". The discussion in your last two issues relating to George and Ga Gale and their problems (of which I am most sympathetic and did my best to avoid at B'hamacon, having been briefed by them at Balticon) makes it especially timely that I apologize for the sloppiness which held to the misnaming of your fine fanzine.

((FR, with its polysyllabic name structure, seems ripe for misnaming; Piers Anthony, in fact, makes quite a game out of trying to outwit us with new and more esoteric names for our fanzine, and Dick Geis managed to mistype it even as he was quoting from Marion Zimmer Bradley's letter in the last issue. So a final "s" added to it is hardly going to upset me...))

"I admired your piece on Jerry Page even as I admire that gentleman himself. Wade's art was a faithful rendering but there is something - I feel that the mouth is accurate but in context it does look wrong, lending a Sturgeonesque aspect which I've not caught on Jerry's visage. Since he's usually talking to me, that would be reason enough why something about the lower face is not quite on target.

((Wade was a bit apprehensive about that drawing; in the slide from which the drawing was taken, Jerry was talking with a microphone over a portion of his mouth. Perhaps that explains it; or as Hank Reinhardt said, "Maybe it's because no one has ever seen Jerry with his mouth still long enough to get any idea what it should really look like."))

"Ms. Bradley's views are certainly her own. I wouldn't consider them any longer than it takes the eyetracks to sublime from this page."

"I despair that I missed the 'awards' panel at B'hamacon and the chance to compare the views aired there with those in FR 11 and 12. Maybe it has been going on for a while but I recently bought pbs of MAN PLUS and WHERE [illegible] THE SWEET BIRDS SANG and the use (truthful in the first count and misleading in the second) of the words "Nebula Award Winner" show that the packaging masters of paperbackdom (whom I have learned may be different from the editors of the pb sf) are wheeling and dealing with abandon and and definitely reduce the thoughtful fan to read reviews before he spends his time and/or money rather than depend on anyone's words that the book was a consensus-judgment selection, even if the awards were (as I believe them to be) more meaningful than the detractors claim. The problem I have in discussions with younger fen is that the awards themselves, unlike the Oscars, do not go back to the infancy of the field. There are, even for a fan of the Hugo and Nebula like me, entirely too many earlier books which are not singled out by the two catchphrases.

"Gary's review of PRICE OF THE PHOENIX is much too kind. The writer's chief mistakes he pints down much to sweetly. The book is an outright abomination, suitable for "how not to do it" lectures in creative writing classes. I enjoy Trek-fiction as much as anyone and could not believe my eyes as I struggled to read that book. Of course, a real craftsman, Joe Haldeman, had written the one I just finished before starting PRICE and made a damn good Trek yarn, full of cute Tuckerisms and good concepts, so the contrast was a real shock, from which I've not quite recovered as my lack of mellowness will attest."

((Both of your paragraphs attest fully to the differences in literary taste. Just as you chastize Gary for not being more harsh on PRICE, others said he was picking on a masterpiece just because it was a Star Trek novel. I personally feel that those people were showing the critical faculties of a dead opossum, but...))

((I'd be interested in running a seminar/feature on the Hugo/Nebula value. The panel at the DeepSouth Con seemed to point out that the authors do see a value in the awards, particularly these authors who are looking for some sort of toehold into higher advances, better contracts, etc. But is the award an indication of a good book/story? With enough cooperation from people who are highly opinionated on this matter, I'd like to see a survey of sorts done on this topic from all viewpoints--fan, writer, editor, publisher--for a future FR.))

"I identified completely with every word of your review of Gerrold's book, which is one of the reasons (one of many) that I have based all recent reading on your reviews and will continue to do so, heavily, in the future."

"This is probably inappropriate to dither about at this point ((bah!)) but I wanted to mention a point to find out whether I share this with other readers. In the professional context, there are people who will pay $100 for a two-day con with the belief: if I can derive just one good idea from it, it's worth the money. I carry this same approach over into novels (only - I view that shorter fiction is the sf mother lode and its novels are, on the whole, inferior). If I invest my time and money in an sf novel, the whole can be disappointing, yet worth it if there is one concept, sometimes even a turn of phrase, with which I can delight myself in idle play. Sometimes, as with RINGWORLD, d there is a cornucopeia of such. The book is more than the reading time--with me it is the source of building blocks for mindgames, private or shared.

((You've just astutely pointed out the reason that, ultimately, it's almost impossible to find a book that's all bad, just as it's almost impossible to find a book that's all good; even the worst book will generally have one or two ideas or speculative digressions that make it worth the time it took to read it. That's where being a reviewer requires more than a simple "yes" or "no" on a recommendation; to be fair to your readers, you have to weigh the good points, point them out to the reader if necessary, then make a value judgment.))

((Being a novel-fan, though, I don't agree wholeheartedly with your hearty praise of the short story as the "m other lode" of sf. You'll probably get much more agreement on that from Susan...))

FRANK KELLY FREAS: THE ART OF SCIENCE FICTION. Kelly Freas. (Donning Co. - $12.95 hc, $29.95 limited edtion, $7.95 pb). Reviewed by Rich Garrison.

Possibly the first impression I had of FKF: THE ART is that it is a much more substantial book than I imagined. As you first flip through the pages, the number of color illustrations is almost overwhelming, with much more text than an "art book" (68 color, 48 b&w illustrations) of this type would be expected to have. The second impression is simply "what a bargain!"

After initally flipping through the pages and stopping quite often to admire the full-page reproductions of covers (that haven't been cropped to exclude two of the three most important aspects of the illustration and haven't had the type strategically placed over the focal point) you will settle down in your chair and begin reading. The third impression is that this is a book with very entertaining, informative text --lots of text.

Up to now, the standard in the industry for sf and fantasy art books has been the Peacock Press-Bantam art books, notably the two Frazetta volumes. While it could be argued for days about the relative merits of each of these illustrators, one cannot help but compare these similarly priced volumes. Discounting the aesthetic values of Frazetta's and Freas' art, the Donning book is an obvious value. In comparison to FRAZETTA I (96 pages), the Freas book is 25% more. The Freas book also has twice the number of color pieces. In quality of production, they are also comparable: both are exemplary. The Freas book has three problem pieces ("The Telzey Toy," 82-83; "The Gulf Between," p33; "Crash Landing on Iduna," p91). These are the results of poor transparencies, no doubt. Just as the first printing of FRAZETTA I was too intense for Frank Frazetta and was later toned down in subsequent printings, each book has its own problems. Overall, the Freas book is exceptional and will raise the standards of production in the sf art field.

Ah, but the text! Here is the real value. Freas is one of the two or three illustrators in the field who has as fine an ability in writing as he does in illustrating. For Freas, that is quite a compliment. Each major illustration contains hand-written paragraphs in commentary on the piece. There are informative, revealing and quite often very amusing text accompaniments to the paintings, and these commentaries open up new appreciation of the art of illustration. The thought, execution and even the philosophy behind the illustrations is revealed in these commentaries.

There are sixteen sections in this book (counting the introduction by Isaac Asimov) which contain sf history in the presently-popular autobiographical vein; these are, for the most part, quite candid. Candid, that is, in the sense that Freas pulls few punches, especially when talking about himself. Actually, Freas does not discuss others

unfavorably by name, but his general comments are sure to upset a few. "Soapbox," the final section, is opinionated (as noted in the PUBLISHER'S WEEKLY review) but is a moving and optimistic statement. Optimistic and positive, it arms you with the philosophy to live with sf and today's world. Perhaps I'm getting carried away, but "Sopbox" is indeed a powerful and moving piece.

Let's not forget the artwork; in the 35 full pagers and 2 double-pagers, some of Freas' finest works are represented. As stated in the Freas text, many art directors don't have any sense. The illustrations prove it; seeing these paintings uncropped and uncluttered is a joy. I changed my mind on several of the cover illustrations by Freas once I saw them "in the raw" as opposed to my initial viewings of butchered printings by ANALOG or other publishers.

Of particular interest are not too well known are "Lorelei of the Red Mist" (37); "The Mechanic (63)", an example of the change from the ANALOG covers to the "real thing"; "The Long Way Home" (79), a classic illustration (how come the Eistensteins have all the good originals?); "The Big Front Yard" (105)--the Norman Rockwell character is charming, but don't forget the Snake Oil paint he is peddling; and finally, "The Green Hills of Earth" (44-45), a recently released record cover which is perhaps the classic illustration in this book. The record cover encompasses the many phases of the Heinlein theme into a visual emotional experience. Heinlein and Freas are a very nice combination.

The only distraction in the book is the hand-written comments. I find them hard to read when 3 or 4 paragraphs are stacked on top of one another. The idea was to give the book a personal touch; it does succeed for the most part but is a bit cluttered.

As Roy Krenkel would say, "Drop everything! Sell of your wife or husband. Sell your Rembrandt over the fireplace! Rush off and buy a copy." Settle down in your chair and get ready to take a visual trip with a positive overtone that is very refreshing.
((Available from Kelly & Polly Freas, 4216 Blackwater Rd., Virginia Beach, VA 23457))

TELEMPATH. Spider Robinson. (Berkley 03548 - $1.50, 1977). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

Spider Robinson seems to be a rather unique fellow; while his book review column varies in quality immensely from month to month, he seems to steadily produce more-than-competent prose that demonstrates that, above all, he does know how to write well. The first book of his that I read was marred only by an uncalled for cheap ending; this, his first novel, is flawed only in its desperate need for tightening up; it's a fine example of a solidly-written book built around a hazy, awkward plot.

Isham Stone is the protagonist of TELEMPATH, and the novel is almost solely centered on him; oh, both his father and a scientist, Wendell Morgan Carlson, play crucial parts, but Robinson's primary concern isn't with the world he creates--a world where an acute sense of smell has caused an almost total abandonment of the polluting society as we know it today--but is instead with the growth of Isham Stone from a rather naive young man to a hardened hero who is able to establish a link between humans and an ethereal, gaseous life form known as Muskies that lives on atmospheric pollution.

Quite frankly, the novel is enjoyable in spite of its plot, not because of it. The idea of a civilization crumbling because it stinks, even when explained away by very nice pat explanations like "hyperosmia", seems a bit weak. The Muskies seem to be added to the storyline for no real reason. Stone's father and Carlson, the two scientists who were responsible for the virus that brought about the hyperosmia, are never developed to their full potential, and the downfall of a society becomes a matter-of-fact occurrence.

The feature that makes this book still enjoyable is the prose of Spider Robinson; there's no doubt that he can write, and well; but he made the mistake of building his novel on two concepts that (a) could barely have supported a short story apiece, and (b) he was unable to meld into a cohesive unit.

Problems aside, I still have a positive feeling about TELEMPATH, and I have found myself even giving out wary recommendations of the book. Even if you choose to pass this one up, don't cross Spider Robinson off the list of authors who are worth keeping an eye on; Robinson's Campbell Award hints at the storehouse of talent he has to offer once he gets into gear.

THE MAKING OF THE TREK CONVENTIONS. Joan Winston. (Doubleday - $7.95, 1977). Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

This is one book that has no reason for existence other than to cash in on the Trekkie craze; it's not that a good, professional quality book detailing sf cons couldn't be written, it's just that (a) Trek cons don't deserve booklength attention--they're not book-length interesting!, and (b) Joan Winston is a very, very poor writer, and the average fanzine con report is more interesting and readable than this book (and this comes from one who rarely enjoys reading the average fan's con report).

The book is, in effect, a mish-mosh of reports, program books, cartoons,

anecdotes and dull behind-the-scenes descriptions guaranteed to bore even the most avid Trek-fan.

Joan Winston is a tedious author, at least insofar as this book is concerned; she belabors events, tries hard to build up phony suspense and reader interest, and drops names left and right. She takes a reverential tone in discussing Trek-related items, and a gossippy tone for the rest of the book. By another person, this book might could have becme less of an embarrassment for both the readers and the publisher; as it is, the only saving grace is a handful of cartoons (mostly Phil Foglio) scattered throughout the book. Definitely pass this one up; do something to discourage the publication of further travesties like this.

STELLAR #3. Judy-Lynn del Rey, editor (Ballantine 25152 - $1.50, 1977). Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

STELLAR seems to be intended as a more traditional offering of original science fiction, as opposed to the more literary (add quotes around that word depending on your own mental perspectives) content of Silverberg's and Carr's anthologies. But this doesn't mean that STELLAR is an inferior anthology/series; in fact, the four books in the series thus far (STELLAR 1-3 and STELLAR SHORT NOVELS) have been of an overall high quality rarely equalled in the original anthology field.

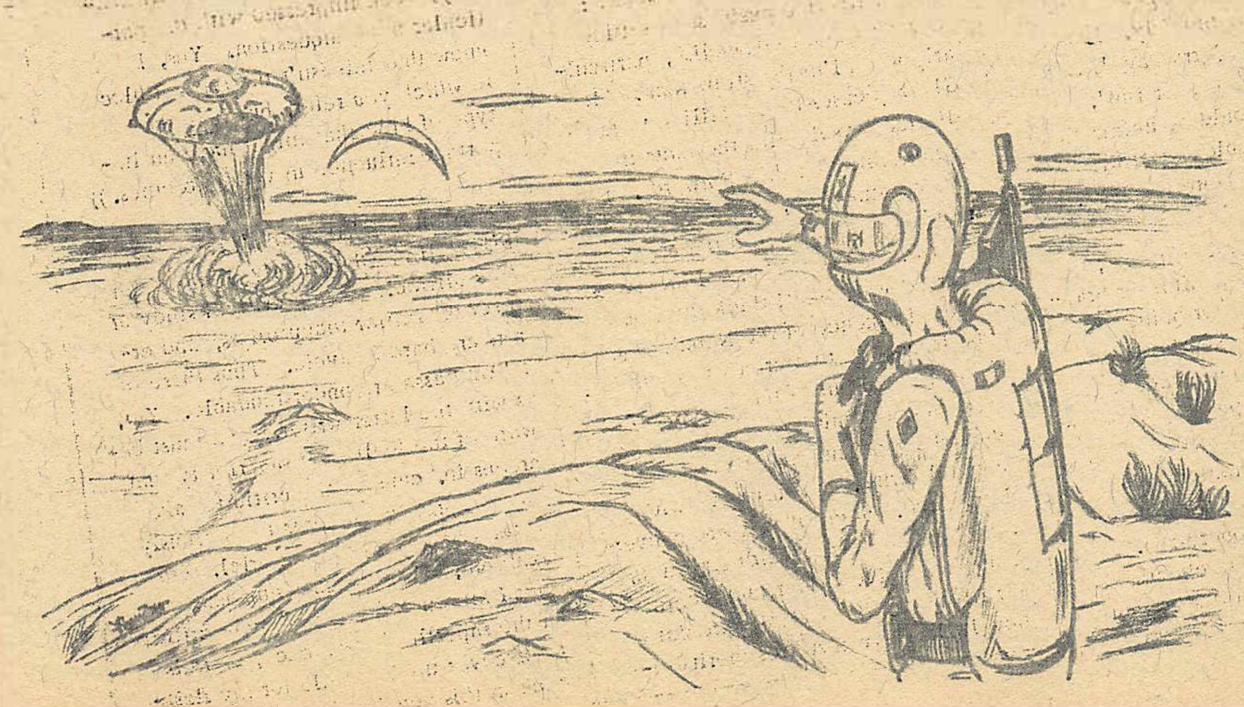
STELLAR #3 is another quality anthology; and oddly enough, the high quality isn't dependent upon big name authors. In fact, two of the most impressive stories in this collection come from relatively new figures in the field, Henry Melton and Steven Utley. Melton's "We Hold These Rights..." is a Randian/Campbellian sort of story that relies heavily on a political statement to make its point; Melton manages to pull it off well, and an otherwise-standard story of colonist-revolt in outer space becomes a provocative piece. Utley's short story is a look at two non-human scouts and the group of humans they accompany back to old earth; it's a moving story of love and doubt, and is undoubtedly the finest thing I've seen from Utley.

But nothing really fails in this book; even Bill Starr's predictable and mercifully short "The People Who Could Not Kill" is only mediocre, not poor. Gene DeWeese turns in a story that plods in places due to his unusual method of narration, but it makes its point and does it without sacrificing plot.

Perhaps that's the real secret of Judy-Lynn del Rey's anthology series; the emphasis here is on plot, and each story delivers just that. I don't think any reader will be disappointed in STELLAR #3, and those ofyou who have sworn off original anthologies might find your faith renewed after you read this one.

LETTER FROM PIERS ANTHONY

10-11-77: "I received FR#12 on September 28, but was wrapping up my novel GOD OF TAROT, which turned out to be 253,000 words long (that's 60,000 words longer than MACROSCOPE) and getting furniture moved, books unloaded, etc. Moving is horreddously time-consuming, as you will surely agree. You were moving while publishing FR, I was moving while doing the major snovel of my career. Life would be easier if we never had to move...but then, it would be easier if we never had to sleep, too.



"Well, a sketchy comment on this issue, and on my reactions to D'Amassa's double review of my book. I remember when Jerry Page was publishing fan fiction, back along 1962 or so. Then he appeared in ASF, much improved. He's a kind of contemporary of mine, his first story appearing just one month before mine. You put him on the spot by asking how come he hasn't done better faster, when the fact is hardly any writer does well at the outset, and only half ever publish a second story. (I did a statistical survey of my own once, coutning all the publications listed in the Don Day or MIT Indexes--I forget which--and concluded that SF equals 100. That is, Stories Published times Fellows or Femmes authoring them equaled 100, meaning that there might be a hundred people with but a single story published, or fifty with two published, or thirty three with three stories, or two with fifty stories, etc. The graph was surprisingly uniform, and I think it is a valid principle. So anyone with ten or more stories published is in the top ten percent of the field. So don't carp at Jerry Page; he's done all right. Here, let me get out of my parentheses.) Novels are easier to get into print, relatively; I don't know how writers compare in that area. Anyway, in stories the market is simply to volatile; good stories can get passed over while bad ones are published, and some writers capable of good work get shunted around unfairly. I have not read enough of Jerry Page's work to know how good he is or isn't, but I am sure it would be unfair to assume that his problem getting started derives from inferior work.

Oh--a letter of comment on me, already. Bless Marion Zimmer Bradley for chastizing me for being too tolerant of VERTEX! Sentiment in OUTWORLDS where my savage battle with editor Pfeil was published seemed to be that I was too hard on him, and the editor of that fanzine was unable to understand what I had against Pfeil's mode of operation. I encourage Ms. Bradley to check the OUTWORLDS record if she wants the full story; Pfeil and I did our best to put each other out of business, and in the end he lost his position, although I can't be sure that was my doing. If anyone slipped a copy of the magazine with my commentary to that publisher, then it was my doing, but I can't say that happened. Anyway, this may be the first and last time anyone calls me too tolerant, so I'm reveling in the sensation for the little time it lasts. I have admired Ms. Bradley's letters before; many women cannot seem to write effectively, but she can really express herself when she has a mind to. ((Many men cannot seem to write effectively, either)) I remember when it was being bandied about how writers are considered prostitutes, pandering to the mass market for pay, and she (I think it was her) said that before she'd let her children starve she'd be a real prostitute. That's putting it on the line, and though I am a male writer who has never been faced with that particular question, I find her position wholly comprehensible. I have children, too, and it is unpleasant to contemplate what morals I might maintain if my children were threatened; I can afford morality, by whatever definition (I'm not certain prostitution is immoral) only so long as my children are not threatened.

"And now that I'm on the letters: I don't like the business of setting up straw men to demolish, particularly when I'm the straw man. Mike Glyer accuses me of failing to familiarize myself with the facts in commenting on the SF awards. I was commenting, as the context should make clear, on the novel awards, and in that area I am familiar enough, and I think my thesis of the influence of the Nebulae on the Hugoes in that area will stand up. I have opted out of the story market, and am uninformed there, and cannot comment except in rather general terms, as I just have with Jerry Page. Back when I was conversant with the story awards situation, being an active reader and nominator in SFWA, I came to appreciate how little a given stories merits related to its success or unsuccess in the awards rankings, though, and the Hugo is not much better. I was once approached for my vote as part of a bloc-vote campaign for Piper's LITTLE FUZZY; that was a good novel and perhaps it deserved the vote it got, but it got it by that bloc vote. So you might say that early familiarity with facts like these caused me to get the hell out, preferring unfamiliarity. So let's not get snide with me in this area, please; I have had occasion to have insights into the workings of the system that most fans have not. The Hugo is better than the Nebula--but those who have not observed the power of bloc voting are missing an important element of the matter. And, lest there be confusion, let me add that once someone mentioned to me his attempt to form a Piers Anthony bloc; I bawled him out.

((I'll agree with you that bloc voting is a problem in the awards, but some of it comes about in truly innocent ways; that is, someone reads a book he thinks is award quality, and sets out to gain converts who will vote for that book. Some of his friends agree to do so because they respect his opinion, and suddenly a small bloc is started, building itself around someone who has, in all honesty, been impressed with the particular book inquestion. Yes, I know that this isn't the type of bloc to which you refer, but it is the type of bloc that might have an important influence in vote outcomes.))

"Now on to D'Ammassa's review of BUT WHAT OF EARTH? I know that it is difficult to do a critical study of a set of similar manuscripts, and errors are hard to avoid. Thus those of D'Ammassa are understandable. Yet, as with the letter writers, one must beware of the feeling of superiority that creeps in, causing the critic to take his own pronouncements too seriously at the expense of the material. For example, D'Ammassa seems unaware that I am one of the passionate critics of the superfluous flashback, so fails to discover the rationale for my flashback in this novel, and calls its dele-

tion a big improvement... then says I never bothered to have my protagonists marry his girlfriend. He married her--in that flashback, as I recall. Another error is more understandable, because I made it myself: the assumption that Coulson was responsible for all or most of the alterations made in the novel. When I got back the marked original ms. I saw that Coulson had inherited a horrendous mess of editorial diddling. He did the best he could with what he had, but his task was nearly impossible. I blame Coulson for the insertion of grammatical errors and some factual ones, but from here it looks as though the worst of the damage was not Coulson's. At any rate, I am glad to see my basic position vindicated: if the assorted change changes did not improve the novel, they should not have been made. think it might be best if all novels were published as the authors write them, and let the authors take the blame or credit for the result. Meanwhile, as I have remarked in another fanzine, if you want to see what I do with the same material when Elwood is not the editor, read the CLUSTER trilogy (that Elwood rejected) and GOD OF TAROT (featuring one of the characters of BUT WHAT OF EARTH? I wrote no classic for Elwood--because I know he would never publish a classic. As it turned out, he would not publish even the best I could do with the limitations set; he had to degrade it to his level."

YLANA OF CALLISTO. Lin Carter. (Dell - $1.50, 1977). Reviewed by Jim Brock.

Two years ago, Lin Carter loused up his otherwise passable Jandar novels by inserting himself as a character, the infamous Lankar of Callisto. Now Dell is promoting a continuation of the series as part of its stepped-up science fiction program, and the initial result is YLANA OF CALLISTO, If Lankar was the pits, then YLANA is a black hole; it's a horrible book, abominable in plot and almost plagiaristic in approach, and I'm surprised it saw print.

Ylana is your typical jungle maid (two-fisted, quick-tongued and beautiful), previously introduced in a minor series role. Her companion in misfortune is another of Jandar's supporting characters, Tomar , a naive (even bumbling) young warrior. The two are captured by the sole surviving mind wizard of Callisto, who is, of course, bent on revenge and domination.

The mind wizard seeks refuge with his prisoners on the jungle plateau home of Ylana--and Lin Carter then loses sight of his grand scheme. The novel declines into a clumsy series of escapes and chases, climaxing in a Three Stooges "battle" between warlike elements of Ylana's Cave People and their counterparts in the neighboring River People. Any two-year old with a handful of plastic soldiers could choreograph a more fierce battle.

Almost as an afterthought, the Mind Wizard is trampled to death by a gigantic beast. With his passing went any potential the novel ever possessed for a suitable plot line. This is somewhat how the reader will feel after YLANA OF CALLISTO--like he or she has been borne down by an overpriced, poorly plotted filler aimed primarily at continuing the storyline and falling short in quality. Perhaps Jandar should have been allowed to rest in peace.

YLANA does benefit from eye-catching packaging, and I suspect many fans will succumb to this (unaware of the disappointment within). Dell is now blurbing Lin Carter as the "modern Edgar Rice Burroughs;" I can only wonder what ERB ever did to deserve such humiliation.

THE FANTASTIC FOUR. Stan Lee, Jack Kirby. (Pocket 81445 - $1.95, 1977). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

Probably the greatest deterrent to a more full appreciation of older comics is the overinflated prices many of them demand. Marvel's Fantastic Four is a prime example; nowadays, to acquire the first six issues would require a cash outlay of between $500 and $1000--more than the average reader can afford.

Pocket Books has begun a series of books designed for the reader who would enjoy seeing these comics but hates to pay exorbitant prices for them; this FANTASTIC FOUR is the second in the series, and it's a fine offering indeed. Included within are the first 6 issues of FF, reprinted in color with covers and pinups; it's a handy book to have, prepared on heavy white paper rather than pulp stock, with a better quality of coloring than the originals had yet still accurate to them, and an overall better printing quality.

There are drawbacks; in the size of an average paperback, the finer lines have a tendency to blend or to drop out entirely, thus resulting in less distinction in art than in the originals. A minor problem, however, and one to be adjusted for when you consider that, even in times of inflation, you'll be paying only 3 times more for these six comics than you would have in the original editions--and these are much more permanent in design and preparation. I'm very, very fond of this series, and I hope that Pocket Books continues with it in the future, reprinting large runs of these titles in consecutive paperback editions.

WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE. Alan Dean Foster. (Ballantine 25701 - $1.75, 1977). Reviewed by Susan Phillips.

Alan Dean Foster is known primarily for his Humanx confederation stories and the Star Trek Logs. With this collection, he puts together the short fiction that he has been given far too little credit for.

His introductions are entertaining reading; if they were a little longer he could almost benan Asimov. They

give you an insight into the author and more than adequately set up each tale. In the introduction to the entire book, Foster sets up his background, telling us how he discovered science fiction to be his forte. He wanted to design spaceships, you see.

The title story open the volume: it is an old story about a confederation of aliens seeking out Earth after an interval of centuries because they are in need. They are engaged in a war--and they are losing. They find Terrans to be all the legends portrayed--and more. Foster handles his aliens very well; the ease and casualness of his descriptions underlie the strength of even his earliest writings.

The secons tale, "Some Notes Concerning a Green Box," is a creditable Lovecraftean tale. This was his first sale and wasn't even written as a story, but merely asran exercise he thought might amusee August Derleth. It did--forty dollars worth.

"Why Jonny Can't Speed" is another of the school of the-car-is-a-dangerous-weapon story. Each vehicle is equipped as a matter of course with guns and rockets and proximity mines and used in everyday challenges on the road, like lane changes and such. Herein, a father decides to take revenge on the car that kills his son.

"The Emoman" is a powerful tale about a new kind of drugg peddler. He sells emotions. Sometimes against his better judgment, but he sells emotions. This deals with anger. One of the best bits in it is a listing of all the different kinds of anger he has, and how they are different.

"Space Opera" is a human story with humor as its main emotion--and I've just realized that's why I find Foster's material so enjoyable: he deals in emotions, too. Fundamentally, this is one of the weakest tales in the book, though, and not up to the level of his talent.

When you think of a truly alien being, what do you think of? This writer thought of his back yard and created "The Empire of T'ang Lang." It is as alien a story as I've read yet doesn't go far afield to work. Somehow, you never realize what a difference a little size makes.

The next two stories, "A Miracle of Small Fishes" and "Dreams Done Green" are two of the most powerful stories in the book, if not the most powerful sf shorts I've read. The first seems to be a standard story of the grief of a young girl for a grandfather who cannot give up his dream of catching the sardines again in his little boat, even though the large companies have since diverted the sardine schools elsewhere. The second deals with what could be a crime but isn't recognized as such and maybe it will inspire a little thought. Animals have been given intelligence but remain servants to man. The horse Pericles is a genius of his race, and he has a dream. The girl Casperdan is beautiful and rich. Pericles shows her his dream, for he needs her help--and she gives it. Taking over her father's company, she molds it with his help into the fulfillment of that dream. The denouement of this story is one of the most touching things I've ever read. It's a 1974 story, but I know I haven't read it--I'd remember it if I had. And I think you'll remember it, too.

"Ye Who Would Sing" completes the trio of really strong stories herein. It describes the exploitation of a unique and interesting lifeform and the character changes that go on in a young man when he realizes that he isn't as unfeeling as he thought. It's a cry-able story, touching your heart as well as your mind.

WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE is a strong collection of stories by a strong new writer. I've enjoyed his work since he first appeared on the scene and he continueally justifies my faith. I recommend this book highly.

THE DARK DESIGN. Philip Jose Farmer (Putnam's - $9.95, 1977). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

If any one series can be proclaimed as the best this decade has had to offer in sf, and if someone had asked me to name just such a series, I would have said with almost no hesitation, "Riverworld." That is, I would have said that before the release of this third novel in the ever-expanding Riverworld series. THE DARK DESIGN is easily the most disappointing offering by a major author in the field since Heinlein's I WILL FEAR NO EVIL seven years ago.

The novel is a very self-indulgent piece of writing, something that the earlier Riverworld novels have not been--and that alone is a major strike against THE DARK DESIGN. One of the central protagonists, Peter Frigate, is obviously Farmer himself (and is acknowledged as such in the introduction). The other central characters seem very stereotyped and very much underdeveloped in comparison with Burton and Twain in the first two novels.

By the time of THE DARK DESIGN, Riverworld has developed into a society of technological proficiency far greater than is hinted at in the first two books. There are complex dirigibles, helicopters, steamships, etc.; such a development seems a bit excessive in the light of the first two books, and by conveniently skipping a rather lengthy period of time between the second and third novels, Farmer avoids having to explain a large part of the development.

The Ethicals begin to play a larger part in the book, but even their role is unsatisfying, since they merely open more mysteries than they offer solutions to.

At one point in this novel, Peter Frigate is discussing the fact that at one time he had as many as twenty

series unfinished; stubbornly, Farmer continues the same path himself, expanding the trilogy to four and perhaps five books. I have little hope that the other books will sum up a great deal more than this one did (although I'd enjoy being pleasantly surprised).

All in all, THE DARK DESIGN is a book that is comparable to the potboilers Farmer wrote in the early 60s; it isn't bad sf in itself, but it manages to give the reader such a letdown that it's difficult to find the good points in the novel. Personally, I'd have rather the Riverworld series have remained unfinished.

Farmer fans are certain to like this novel, faults and all, and I'll admit that its publication is a major event in sf in 1977. I'll even go so far as to say that the paperback might be worth the cost, once it is released. But for a $9.95 hardcover, THE DARK DESIGN scarcely offers a fifth of its value in entertainment--a serious offense in any field, particularly science fiction, where the hardcover market seems to largely rely on the fan.

Farmer promises THE MAGIC LABYRINTH, the next novel in the series, very soon; I'll read it just to see if it manages to make amends for the glaring flaws in this novel.

PRISONERS OF POWER. Arkadi & Boris Strugatski (Macmillan - $9.95, 1977). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

Studious sf fans have no doubt become aware of an upsurge in interest in the brothers Strugatski, particularly from DAW books; but the hardcover market is also discovering the talented Russian authors, and Macmillan is giving them some much-deserved recognition through its own "Best of Soviet SF" series. Their latest addition to the series, PRISONERS OF POWER, is an adventurous sf novel set in a radioactive future world where man has learned, at least partly, how to cope with his poisoned environment.

PRISONERS OF POWER centers itself on Maxim, the strange young man who seems to possess superhuman abilities. Maxim rapidly adapts himself to the military society in which he must live, and gradually moves from a loyal soldier to a hunted Terrorist in his search to discover the truth behind the world in which he lives.

While the text lacks the finesse of a great deal of American and British sf (is this perhaps due to a less-than-capable translation?), PRISONERS OF POWER is an enjoyable novel; it is, however, very reminiscent of early 1950s-1960s American sf in its viewpoints and storyline; there seems to be a very definite lag in the development of more literary foreign sf, in fact, or if there is such development, it manages to remain largely untranslated.

The Macmillan "Best of Russian SF" series is more than a historical oddity, to be sure; none of the books made available in hardcover are wretchedly bad books, and the large majority of them are rather capable pieces of writing, even if they do lack that extra spark that makes truly distinctive award-winning sf. The Strugatskis, Arkady and Boris, are also undoubtedly the most talented Russian authors published thus far in the series. While this novel is hardly up to the standards set by these two in ROADSIDE PICNIC/TALE OF THE TROIKA (my personal favorite in the Strugatski corpus; the two authors do better with short novels, it seems), it is more competent than much that is published in the field today.

As a final note, let me mention that Macmillan is doing a very fine job of packaging these books, complete with full-color Powers dustwrappers. It's a striking book physically, and worthwhile in content as well.

LETTER FROM MIKE BISHOP.

(8-31-77) "Congratulations on your winning the Rebel Award this year--well-deserved, I think, especially in light of the extent of your activities and the success of FR. I'll never forget Susan's acceptance speech: "I'm not going to say anything." Never mind. Your momentary befuddlement was eloquent, Susan. Again, congratulations. ((Befuddled? Not me. Why, that was a keen example of my biting wit and sharp sense of humor at public events...))

"I agree with Mike Glyer that Anthony's opinion about the victory of THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS in the 1970 Nebula and Hugo Awards seems a little eccentric, especially since he admits to not having read another major contender, Thomas Disch's CAMP CONCENTRATION. I admire the latter book, but I would say that, nevertheless, LeGuin's awards were simple justice. I would think Anthony's case stronger if he jumped ahead to the 1975 Nebula balloting--in which LeGuin's THE DISPOSSESSED, a fine novel in its own right, polled more votes than Disch's brilliant and too-little-appreciated 334...The interview itself, however, was fascinating, and I hope you continue to find interesting people with the willingness to sit still for your interrogation. Since you're to some extent locked into people in this general region (at least so far), I wonder if you've given any thought to having Karl Edward Wagner submit to a question and answer session."
((We have now. Thanks!))

"It's good to see Jerry Page interviewed, by the way. He's been a regular attender of conventions in this area, but, having started going to these myself only recently and having spent my entire service career in Colorado, I didn't know as much about Jerry as I would have liked--the interview helps fill in gaps, the kind that not even broken conversations at conventions are ordinarily able to fill in. What I'd like for you to do now, though, is to have him compile a list of all the pseudonyms he's used so that we can catch up on his scattered Complete Works. Wish, too, that I could get a peek at his story "The Laws of Time," which he believes to be his best and which editors apparently hurl back at him in surly incomprehension. For several reasons I'm sorry that Scott Edelstein's Aurora anthology, scheduled to contain "The Laws of Time", isn't now going to see print. A shame.

"Finally, even though I'm helplessly partial to Gene Wolfe's THE FIFTH HEAD OF CERBERUS, I very much enjoyed Ginger Kaderabek's doubt-ridden but insightful review of that book."

THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION OF THE YEAR #6. Terry Carr, ed. Ballantine/Del Rey - $1.95, 1977). Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

In years past I have always been able to count on Terry Carr's YEAR'S BEST SF collections for some really good reading; this year, however, is the first year that I have not thoroughly enjoyed at least 90% of the stories. Even when I stretch things to include some stories that I was only moderately fond of, I can come up with only half of the stories in this collection that were memorable. One explanation could be that my standards of what I consider good, entertaining sf have become higher; or it is possible that not an awful lot of good sf was written in 1976. Most likely, I just didn't agree with Carr's choices this time. Whatever the reasons, I'll start with the ones I liked best.

The most memorable story in YEAR'S BEST SF #6, hands down, was Chris Priest's "An Infinite Summer." Haunting is the best word to describe the mood of this story, for it is about the indomitable love of a man for a woman though they have been separated completely by the freezers--men and women from the future who "froze" people involved in various activities in tableaus for their own obscure and unrevealed purposes. The man, Thomas James Lloyd, is staunch in his devotion, as he has lived in the approximate area of the tableau in which his love, Sarah Carrington, has been imprisoned for almost forty years. The compassion shown by the freezers toward Lloyd and Sarah is both unusual and fitting.

Second on my list of likes was "Meathouse Man" by George R.R. Martin, another love story of sorts, but with an ending that is 180° in the opposite direction. The story concerns Trager, a young corpse handler, and his search for love which eventually ends in the realization that the stories he's been told of a true, everlasting love between two people are just that--stories. A very good tale, written in that typically engrossing Martin style, and one that I could read several times without tiring of it.

My third favorite was "The Phantom of Kansas" by John Varley; this story is the ultimate in narcissism, with, unfortunately, a totally guessable ending, which is definitely not like the Varley of years past. In a roundabout way you could call this a science fiction murder mystery, because it concerns the attempts of an environmentalist--a composer using the weather as a medium--to discover who so wants to kill her that several attempts have been made prior to the smashing of her memory cube where it has been kept in storage. Varley introduces a couple of interesting ideas--memory cubes (although I was familiar with them via his OPHIUCHI HOTLINE) and the composition of weather symphonies. The most noticeable fault of Varley's is that the majority of his endings seem to be much too rushed, a factor which detracts from the story.

Fourth and fifth place are taken by Tiptree's "The Psychologist Who Wouldn't Do Awful Things to Rats," another story of idealism metamorphosing into realism when a student psychologist discovers that there is

no place for compassion in the world of pure research, and "Seeing" by Harlan Ellison, a story of a girl with forever eyes--eyes which can see people as they really are--and her rescu rescue from the burden of this misunderstood gift by a greedy, malevolent old woman who soon regrets her desire for the eyes.

The remainder of the stories were entertaining, but altogether none were that memorable. "The Death of Princes" by Fritz Leiber--a story which postulates that Halley's Comet is really a spaceship carrying a highly civilized race as it travels the universe and sometimes leaves behind some of its inhabitants--and "The Eyeflash Miracles" by Gene Wolfe--the story of Little Tib, end product of a genetic improvement experimant that went wrong, now blinded and hunted by the people who were responsible for his existence and his search for Sugarland--were the better two of this group.

"The Bicentennial Man," Asimov's story of a two hundred year old robot who finally earns the status of a human being, has been reprinted so many times in other anthologies that I didn't bother reading it again here. "I See You," Damon Knight's story about an inventor of a television-like viewer through which a person can observe past and future events and the problems such an invention causes, and William•son's "The Highest Dive" about the discovery of the true nature of Atlas, a planet five thousand times the size of Earth, are adequate but unremarkable reading. And last of all is "Custer's Last Jump" by Steven Utley and Howard Waldrop, an extremely dry and technical discourse on what Custer's Last Stand would have been like if airplanes had been in use instead of horses. In my opinion, this story was by far the worst of the eleven included in this collection; in fact, I totally agree with any inclusion of it in any "Best of" listing.

Altogether, the first five stories I named make this YEAR'S BEST collection worth reading, but it was definitely a come-down in quality from the past several volumes. Let's hope that 1977 will offer a better selection.

WHISPERS. Stuart David Schiff, editor (Doubleday - $7.95, 1977) Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

Of all the semiprofessional magazines in the fantasy/sf field, none have managed to establish the reputation for consistently high quality that is linked with the name WHISPERS. Under the capable direction of Stuart Schiff, the magazine is a showpiece of fantasy and horror fiction, artwork, poetry and related nonfiction text. And now, for those who've been so unfortunate as to miss WHISPERS over the years, Doubleday has shown the genius to make available in hardcover form a collection of the outstanding prose and linework from a number of talented writers and artists who have graced the first ten issues of Schiff's magazine.

If you're a fan of WHISPERS, all your favorites from past issues will undoubtedly be in here--"The Glove" by Leiber, "The Closer of the Way" by Bloch (one of the most unique pieces done by a very unique author), Karl Edward Wagner's "Sticks" (which is the finest horror story I've read in the past half-decade, and proof positive that if Wagner ever chose to, he could be a tremendously successful mainstream-horror writer), and Joseph Payne Brennan's "The Willow Platform" are my personal favorites--enhanced by the inclusion of six tipped-in black and white illustrations (the only thing I could have hoped for would have been the inclusion of each illustration with the story it accompanies, rather than lumping them in random sections of the book).

This is also a rather unique book from Doubleday in another way--it marks one of the few times that Doubleday has included a full-color wraparound cover on one of their hardcover publications, and it's a beautiful Kirk piece, perhaps a bit light-hearted for an anthology under the WHISPERS name but impressive nonetheless.

This has been a phenomenally good year for anthologies, it seems; just as some years are marked by the important novels published, it seems that 1977 will be a year valued for the collections and anthologies released. WHISPERS will definitely help make it such a year, and I hope it's only lthe first of a series of reprint or (can't we hope?) original anthologies put together by Schiff.

SILENCE IS DEADLY. Lloyd Biggle Jr. (Doubleday - $6.95). Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

Lloyd Biggle is an author who has impressed me since I first read his marvelous THE SMALL, STILL VOICE OF TRUMPETS a great many years ago. As a result, it's hard for me to really dislike a Biggle book--but I came awfully close to it with SILENCE IS DEADLY. It's a novel that starts off with a solid premise, develops it to a point, then reverts to pure adventure and forgets the speculative nature that had been built up in the first segment.

SILENCE IS DEADLY is another novel concerning Jan Darzek, and agent of the Galactic Synthesis; in this novel, he is altered to pass as a native of Kamm, a planet where the sense of hearing has been forgotten by nature and scent seems to be the predominant scent to replace it. Darzek is trying to find evidence of a pazul, a deadly weapon that, logically, should not exist on Kamm--but evidence indicates that it does.

Like all Darzek novels, this is hardly a failure--it does have its mo-

ments, but the moments are rare, and the monotonous action that seems stock-in-trade for so many adventure series is even more monotonous here.

But while this is an off-novel for Biggle, it's scarcely bad; his talent with the language is still there, as are the colorful characters that populate his novels. Until the next major Biggle work comes along, this will tide us all over.

THE HAVEN. G.R. Diamond. (Playboy Press #16398 - $1.95, 1977). Reviewed by Barry Hunter.

THE HAVEN is a top-notch fantasy about the last struggle of man vs. beast. Although the book begins with a graphic and dramatic scene and then plods for almost fifty pages, accomplishing nothing, it manages to pick up speed and reader interest after this and move to a very satisfying conclusion.

Haven is a fortress city where the Council and most of the people live. Few others live outside of the six foot rock walls, and as the story progresses, we see why. Haven is the only city in a world that is forest; it is common belief, at least, that all the world around Haven is forest, but Lord Nigel, in following a path taken by Ciru many years before, discovers this to be scarcely true.

Man has allied with the birds and they live in harmony with all the other dwellers--all, that is, except the dogs and the bats. This team offers the conflict against Haven that becomes the focal point of the novel.

The forthcoming war causes Lord Nig Nigel to strive harder in his exploration through the forest to find the mythical "New Lands." He travels with the wolves, his new allies against the dogs.

Despite its slow beginning, HAVEN has many surprises that make it a very believable fantasy. The packaging may mislead the reader into thinking this is a canine JAWS, but it's far from it--instead, it's one of the more enjoyable fantasies to be published in 1977, using a tried-and-true combination of the quest and the massive war to catch the reader.

Playboy Press is on its way to becoming a name in the book world, and a few more books like this will help them establish quite a paperback reputation.

LETTER FROM MIKE GLICKSOHN

(11-12-77) "I think you miss the point in being delighted at Don D'Ammassa's Hugo nomination for Best Fan Writer despite his failure to appear in prozines, advertise his fanzine or publish a giant print run. (Did you know that Don was a 50-1 shot at the award according to the fan oddsmaker? Hell, I was only a 9-1 shot myself: a veritable shoe-in compared to Don!) He does appear in more fanzines than just about any other article/column writer around and hence he gets the exposure he deserves without having to publish an SFR himself. To me the really astounding thing is that Don Thompson got on the ballot. He appears in his own small-circulation personalzine and still gets on the list: Geis has SFR and GALAXY, Wood has Algol and AMAZING (had, I should say), I appear in a great many fanzines as does Don D'Ammassa and yet Thompson's made it twice in a row now. That's something to be amazed about.

((Good points about fan-exposure indexes (EIs? Sounds like film speed ratings...); that's one major aspect of nominations that I managed to totally overlook.))

"I'll be glad to tell you what you missed at SUNCON: you missed the aroma of mildew in the rooms, you missed roaches in the elevators & halls, you missed a surly uncooperative staff, you missed a rambling, disasterously designed hotel, you missed lousy weather, you missed a generally disorganized and sloppily run convention, you missed air conditioning that wouldn't work, you missed faucets that didn't operate, you missed a coffee shop with the skeletons of customers still waiting for their orders... Anything else you'd like to know?

((No, I didn't miss any of that. I may not have experienced it, but believe me, I didn't miss it at all.))

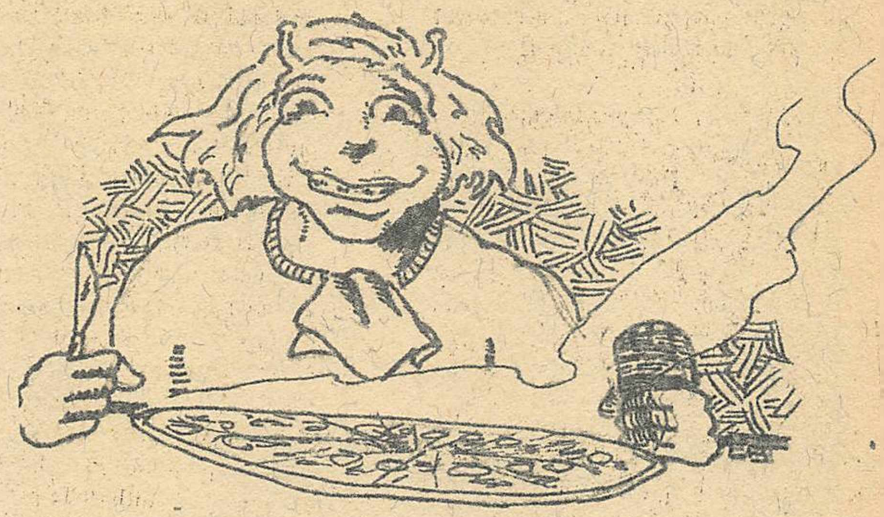
Glyer uses statistics well in his comments about Hugos and Nebulas and I found his remarks on the subject & on Anthony quite absorbing. I even think I essentially agree with him, which is a shocking situation indeed! But your remarks, Cliff, on the fan Hugos are off base. An "average fan and his average fanzine" doesn't deserve to be on the ballot and this is what Mike was suggesting I think, even though he seemed to exclude the Fan Hugos from his comment... A small fanzine hasn't won a Hugo in years and it seems unlikely one ever will again under the present system. And so I'm with you in fully supporting the FAAN awards which at least recognize quality & skill; the more qualified voters we can involve in the FAANs the more valuable the award will beeand I definitely think it's an honor well worth having.

((In the context of my remarks, I had thought it was clear that by "average fan and his average fanzine," I was referring to cost and circulation, not quality. Yes, the Hugo exists to reward quality--but the high-quality smaller fanzine seems to be an overlooked commodity at Hugo-time, and this was what I was bemoaning. I doubt we'll ever see a fanzine with less than 500 circulation win a Hugo again, even though it may far surpass its competition in quality--as the number of voters go up, the number of large-fanzine-supporters grows, while the smaller-fanzine-supporter number has probably reached its upper limit much earlier. It's simple mathematics, and that's why i tend to support FAANs.))

"Don's article on the Anthony/ Coulson mss. is definitely one of the most interesting items he's written in some time. Even though I'm not at all familiar with the book I was totally fascinated by Don's detailed description and analysis of the differences in the two versions. I've often found myself dissatisfied with the lack of analytical material in Don's retrospectives but I certainly can't complain about this very fine piece of critical writing; I wish he'd write like this all the time. (I wonder to what extent the newness of the concept behind the piece may have revitalized a critical faculty somewhat blunted by the sheer volume of D Don's recent output?)

"Don wisely stays away from the legal and ethical aspects of the problem but I'm intrigued by at least one possible legal involvement. It seems to me that the contractual situation is rather simple: either Anthony signed a contract which allowed Laser to do what they did (in which case he's got no business bitching about it in a fanzine) or he didn't sign sucha contract, in which case he ought to be suing rather than screeching. In the offchance that he is suing, or plans to, then what better evidence for his claim of breach of contract could there be than Don's unbiased article? Which leads to the thought of this FR being read into the court records as evidence in a lawsuit! Somehow I find that a delightful idea!...

"George's remarks about "proism" are, I think, of greater import than his already-established views on names. This is a problem that really hasn't seen too much discussion in fanzines and it clearly is one that deserves to be aired. I know from personal experience that it's easy enough for the partner of a prominent fan to feel overlooked and ignored and insulted so it might well be much worse for the mate of a pro. It just goes to show that fans are just as dumb and socially retarded as any other group and it's well worth bringing this to our attention..."?



((It'd be interesting to hear of any problems that have arisen relating to "proism"; I've observed in many cases that the wife of a pro will get attention based on (a) physical attractiveness (b) involvement in husband's work (c) polite reasons--that is, the foremost thing that'll be said will compliment her appearance, the next most common might deal with her feelings about her husband's work, and so on. It could be an irritating and personally frustrating experience, I imagine; having few married female professionals in this area who attend cons, it's hard to discuss proism with a female writer and a male non-pro--that's be interesting to hear about, tho.))

DYING OF THE LIGHT. George R.R. Martin (Simon & Schuster, $9.95, 1977). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

I'm not the first reviewer--not even the first in FR--to note that many talented short fiction authors are unable to convert to novel-length fiction with any modicum of success. It seems to take a rare breed of writer to meet the challenge of filling 60-100,000 words of fiction with believable characters, interesting plots and subplots, and enough suspense to sustain reader interest. That's why it's so nice to be able to say that DYING OF THE LIGHT delivers everything that a good George R. R. Martin short story does, and perhaps even more.

The story concerns Dirk t'Larien and a girl, Gwen, whom he had once loved--and who had once loved him. t'Larien comes to Worlorn to try to renew the relationship he and Gwen had once shared, only to find that she is now "bound by jade and silver" in a complicated family relationship with Jaan Vikary and Janacek; furthermore, Gwen is unable to renew her feelings for Dirk, for she admits that she felt that he wanted to reshape her, remold her into a dream-woman who did not exist. Before the story can become too enmeshed in this complicated relationship, though, Dirk finds himself challenged and hunted by Jaan Vikary's enemies on the planet Worlorn in a prolonged and tension-filled novel that will fascinate and arouse its readers with its combination of speculation, adventure and subtle characterization.

It's really difficult to believe that DYING OF THE LIGHT is really a first novel--Martin does a magnificent job of developing the book, progressing so fluidly that it's hard to believe, upon finishing, that it was a 300-plus page novel--it moves quickly, and once you start, it's almost impossible to put down. This is one book that will definitely make

it into the Hugo nominations--and is one of those rare novels that might earn its author a Best Novel Hugo his first time at bat.

Naturally, Martin's talents for creating worlds can be seen in the pages of DYING OF THE LIGHT; the civilization of Worlorn, a relic of bygone eras and a sign of the new culture that thrives there, is a brutal, savage, but always picturesque one, and it's difficult for the reader to leave the world when the novel ends.

In mood, this novel is almost reminiscent of Delany's excellent NOVA because of its introspectiveness intermingled with pure adventure; I was a great fan of NOVA, so DYING OF THE LIGHT had me from its first few pages.

And George R.R. Martin's recent concern with names can be found in a fictional form in this novel; there's a long exchange between characters on the meaning of names in the novel, and it's both emotional and eloquent in its strength; the various letters written on the subject pale in significance.

No matter how few hardcovers you buy, make sure that DYING OF THE LIGHT is one of them; it's not a simple purchase, but a wise investment in enjoyable entertainment.

THE PROBABILITY CORNER. Walt & Leigh Richmond (Ace 37088-8, $1.50, 1977). Reviewed by mike weber.

This appears to be the final collaborative effort by the Richmonds, unfortunately; it's sad that a writing team who produced such excellent pieces as SHOCK WAVE, WHERE I WASN'T GOING, and "Shortsite" should finish with this unsatisfactory effort. Of course, the Richmonds were always better at shorter lengths than at novels; WHERE I WASN'T GOING was more organized and less diffuse than CHALLENGE THE HELLMAKER, it's expanded version--and this book suffers from the preachiness and moralizing that marred HELLMAKER. There is some truth to the ideas that are espoused in this novel--international freedom of information, an end to international enmity through free exchange of scientific and technical information, etc.--but the presentation is horrid. Virtually every other chapter is devoted to the dilemma of a young CIA agent who is worrying that he is helping to suppress the same freedom that he is supposedly supporting, and to his arguments with a senior agent who feels that, in order to save freedom, we must suppress it.

The story is told on two levels: that of 13-year-old genius Oley Olsen and the CIA agent. Olsen has discovered, accidentally, a new method of tuning in radio signals that gives unprecedented selectivity and precision; it also tunes in computer processes--and Oley, by staring at an oscilloscope readout of the computer processes, can understand them. But it just so happens that the tuner he has "invented" was actually the first of his computer 'listen-in's, and that it came from a computer filled with classified information, of which the tuner is the most classified part, since no electronically stored information would be safe from a spy equipped with such a tuner. As Oley uses it on the computer, he leaves "tracks" in the computer that leads the CIA to conclude that foreign agents have the device and are searching for classified information with it. Three CIA agents are sent to the Minnesota town where Oley lives: a senior agent who believes the ends justify any means; a young, stereotyped "good guy" who wants everyone to play by the rules; and a female agent who has no apparent opinions and is planted as governess/chauffeur to the grandson of the plant owner.

If this story omitted all the secret agent stuff, it might be better, but still not good. Oley and his friends are the same sort of bright, smug, superior kids who appear in various Heinlein novels, but RAH was bright enough to make them secondary characters who could repel their elder siblings almost as much as they repelled the reader; thus, they became something close to comic relief. But as protagonists, they're nearly impossible to take; just as almost anyone who's always right and continuously contradicts those around him is impossible to take; but it's worse when it's a 13-year-old who already has a snappy comeback to whatever is said around him.

It's painfully obvious that the authors feel strongly about their subject, but their fictional handling of it is not a success as either a fiction or political tract; they have compromised the demands of fiction to meet those of political pamphleteering, and vice versa. It's a better book than most of Mack Reynolds' recent output which is the same sort of pamphleteering disguised as "extrapolation", and much more readable than much of the worst material published as science fiction--but still not what the reader could have expected from a team of the Ri Richmonds' proven ability. It's not an unreadable book--I managed to finish it all at one sitting--but it's disappointing and not what I would have wanted from a writing team of their ability

THE MULTIPLE MAN. Ben Bova. (Ballantine, $1.75, 1977 #25656). Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

THE MULTIPLE MAN is the sort of fiction that's pure fun to read; it's a suspense/mystery built around a science fictional premise, and it's slick in execution and delivery. I have little doubt that this novel should do well in the non-sf markets; it's interesting and topical enough to attract a good deal of attention.

The novel concerns James L. Halliday, President of the United States; as it turns out, there isn't one Halliday, but eight, a group of clones comprising a team-Presidency. Each "brother" has his own field of political expertise, and through their combined efforts have managed to keep their unique nature a secret. Unfortunately, members of this team are beginning to die, and Press Secretary Meric Albano tries to get to the bot-

ution of the mystery of the Presidential deaths while trying to keep the startling news out of the public eye. Albano is a rather nonheroic protagonist, but his situation is presented with such finesse by Bova that it's easy to accept the character.

The Presidential-clone theme isn't a unique one--Nancy Friedman's JOSHUA, SON OF NONE managed to give an excellent portrayal of the same premise with JFK as the "clonee" in question--but Bova's lean style manages to carry the novel straight through. It's a difficult book to put down once you begin it, and well worth reading.

LETTER FROM JOE GREEN

(10-4-77) "FR #12 inspires several comments. There are many items I feel like expounding on when reading the zine, but since most would be slams at friends, acquaintances, or pros whose work I admire, I will refrain. I do not suffer from any need to thrust my version of "the truth" upon the world...Overall, this was a very good issue. Put me down as among those who'd like to see you two continue your present policy of genzine, rather than straight reviews.

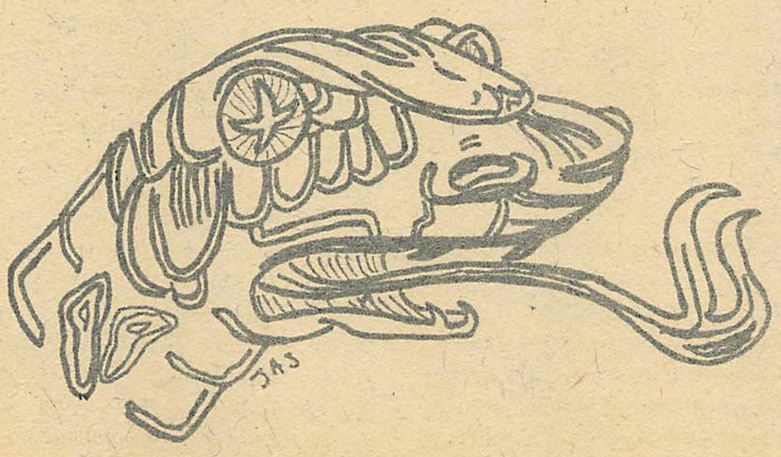
"And now a few thoughts that do not seem to have occurred to you, Cliff. On the large number of paperbacks coming out, and how you as a reader benefit: well, ol' buddy, the writers don't! The more paperbacks appear, the more rapidly they move off the newsstand! A recent survey I saw somewhere said the average e exposure for an sf novel in paperback is now 8 to 10 days! And I believe it, because sales have been trending steadily downward for the past 10 years. The superstars still do well, of course, and heavy advertising can make a difference. But the average journeyman pro (which Don Wollheim recently assured me means about 90% of us) can expect only average treatment. pr

"Fifteen yeass ago, it was fairly normal for a book to stay on the stands for three months and sell 50-75000 copies. Nowadays the average will be 30-40,000 copies. Then off the remaining covers come, and back to the publisher they go. I have no statistics, but I'd bet nine out of ten paperbacks never earn out their advances.

"You make a good point later, Cliff, when you state that most of your correspondents hack out a letter strictly from the fingertips, and don't rewrite. Expecting a reasoned, ordered presentation from a letter would be asking a bit much. Jerry Pournelle's letter makes it perfectly clear that one shouldn't ascribe important motives to statements made casually in passing. Of course George and Gale didn't know this, and reacted somewhat strongly. As they said, they have grown tired..and, of course, the they are essentially correct, in my opinion. One's name is important. I, for example, wish I had chosen a more memorable name than my legal one under which to write. Joe Green is so forgettable! On this same line...I have a very strong dislike to being referred to as "Green", preferring people to call me "Joe." If anyone insists on addressing me by my last name, I ask them to put a "Mister" in front of it. It's a personal idiosyncrasy. There are millions of people in this country addressed by their last names every day.

"'The Uncollaborated Anthony,' by Don D'Ammassa, was excellent. One seldom gets to read a critique of two versions of the same book, as written by one competent writer and rewritten by another. This was of interest to me because I had a somewhat similar experience with Laser. The copy editor rewrote my book THE HORDE far more than was justified in a copy-edit. I rasied holy hell when I received the proofs. It was a real butcher job, and while legitimately done by the editing department, was still totally out-of-line with accepted practice. After the fur and feathers had settled, I got all major problems corrected. The head editor is now gone, incidentally; I don't know what happened to the copy editor..."

"And a quick correction to George R.R. Martin's letter: I was the chairman of that first Nebula jury, the one concerning which George states we were empanelled quite late in the year "and did not have time to read the top seven finishers." Not so, George. We were, in fact, empanelled just prior to the Nebula



voting in the previous year. We did nothing that year due to lack of time. In 1975 the problem was a shortage of time between the issuance of the results from the preliminary ballot, where the top seven finalists in each category were selected by the members, and the due date of the final ballot, for which we had to select three out of the seven (with the option of adding one candidate not among each seven, if we so decided). It would have been almost impossible for all five jurors to obtain copies of all items which theyhhad not read, read them, make reasoned judgments, and get the results back in time for a final ballot by the deadline. We had attempted, during the year, to read all items which received many nominations and seemed likely to make the final ballot. This didn't work very well. Many items which were put out late in the year, or received only a few recommendations, nevertheless made the finalists list. The number of voters in SFWA is so small it doesn't take many recommendations to get that high. So, in the end, we decided it was impossible to function as a jury should, that the whole scheme was unworkable. I think the fact the jury was abolished after one more try backs up my belief. I can also tell you that every member of the original jury was asked to repeat the performance for 1976, and all declined. Which was why George and four new people had to take over.

"One final note: George Martin is quite right in saying that "proism" is a more subtle and devastating prejudice, at least in our little sf microcosm, than either sexism or racism. I know of at least two marriages ended by the situation, and suspect there are many more."

((Spouses of prominent fans/pros are faced with two choices; adapt your personality so that you can attract equal attention with your spouse, or accept the fact that you become a nonentity. Or, of course, the third choice that allows escape from the situation: either quit attending cons, etc., or end the relationship.))

STAR TREK FOTONOVELS #1, #2 and #3: CITY ON THE EDGE OF FOREVER, WHERE NO MAN HAS GONE BEFORE, and THE TROUBLE WITH TRIBBLES. (Bantam #s 11345-3, 11346-1, 11347-X, $1.95 each, 1977). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

An awful lot of junk has come out aimed at Star Trek fans and no one else; it's always nice when something comes out that, while still aimed at the Trekfan or Trekkie, at least delivers its money's worth in one way or another. And it's a sure fact that, for the fan of the series, these Fotonovels are welll worth the $2 each they cost.

Basically, what the Fotonovels are is a photgraphic comic book; it uses comic techniques, like word balloons, panels, etc., but rather than have an artist attempt to draw each scene, the Fotonovel uses original photos from the particular episode, along with original-dialogue word balloons, to retell the story.

The books are put together well; the publishers, Bantam, have used heavy coated stock paper, liberal use of photos can be seen by a casual glance (they say at least 300 per book, and they seem to be, for the most part, high quality with little grain or fuzziness to speak of) and the layout is arranged to follow exactly the flow of the original episode. All photos are full color, and the only complaint I have in terms of photography is the occasional use of mortising, complete with pica-wide borders around heads, bodies, etc. It's a technique that fails in this Fotonovel format, but it's one of the few things they do in this book that does fail.

Those of you familiar with the Italian fumetti will recognize this as the same concept; it's been tried before in the US, particularly in the horror-movie magazines, where entire movies have been done in black and white via this technique. It's the color photography that really takes an otherwsie mediocre product and turns it into something worthwhile, though.

I'm not a STAR TREK fan to speak of, but not even my disinterest in the series can prevent me from recognizing the value of these books to folks who do enjoy ST. Don't pass these up if you enjoy the series; it's one of those rare publications, like Ballantine's original novels, that aren't a total ripoff.

OUR FRIENDS FROM FROLIX 8. Philip K. Dick. (Ace 64401 - $1.50, 1970, reissued 1977). Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

Thors Provoni, the hero of OUR FRIENDS FROM FROLIX 8, has been my favorite PKD character for quite a number of years, simply because of the lunacy of a man stealing a spaceship and leaving our solar system to locate an alien race who would help him free humanity from the oppression of a mutation-government. It's the ultimate one-in-a-million shot, and only in a Phil Dick book would it happen.

OUR FRIENDS FROM FROLIX 8, I feel, is Dick's most overlooked novel; it's the most solidly science fictional of anything he's written in the past decade, the book most tailored toward reader entertainment rather than delivery of a message, and the last novel Dick wrote thus far that came to a satisfactory conclusion in my eyes. Thus, I was more than a little happy to see that Ace had reissued the book with much more handsome packaging than the original pb edition had (complete with a very striking cover by David Ploude).

The book is about the returns of Thors Provoni, but it isn't just about Provoni; it deals with the average man and how Provoni's return will affect him, the government and how Provoni's return will harm them, and the intriguing world view that makes any Dick novel a special occasion. If you haven't been happy with his last two books, then try this one--you should like it.

IN THE OCEAN OF NIGHT. Gregory Benford (Dial Press/James Wade - $9.95, 1977). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

The Quantum SF series started off with a dull novel by a major author, and I'll confess that that beginning made me wary of their future offerings. But their second novel in the series, IN THE OCEAN OF NIGHT, is undoubtedly one of the highlights of 1977, and is a must-read novel for anyone who wants to read plotting and characterization done the way they should be done.

The novel is a story of first contact, a story of love and death, and a story of human awareness of the infinite knowledge that exists in the universe. The protagonist, Nigel Walmsley, is involved in a relationship with Alexandria Ascencio, who is rapidly deteriorating due to lupus erythematosus--and her own death is imminent. As she dies, though, she becomes linked to an alien spacecraft speeding toward earth, functioning as a marionette under the control of the alien intelligence itself. The story quickly evolves into a mission to destroy the alien craft, a "contact" on the surface of the moon, and a piecing together of the puzzle of the origin of the sasquatch.

IN THE OCEAN OF NIGHT is a book that progresses rapidly without sacrificing narrative strength. Benford has a superlative command of his prose, using words to build images that linger weeks after the completion of the book. Its 276 pages move quickly, and the various plots and subplots are so carefully mixed that there are no "seams" to be seen.

Benford seems most at home, though, with emotion. Nigel's sense of loss at the death of Alexandria, his intense feelings toward his mission--all these come through perfectly, without the overdeveloped sentimentality that so many lesser authors mistake for emotion.

All in all, IN THE OCEAN OF NIGHT is an all-too-rare reading experience, and one that is well worth the price of admission. If Benford can continue to write sf with this strength, it's certain that he'll be a force to be reckoned with in the future. As it is, he's written a Hugo contender in a year that seemed to be novel-poor in its first nine months. And as a final note, the book maintains the quality packaging that Dial Press established with their first Quantum SF novel. Don't wait on the paperback of this one.

THE CORNELIUS CHRONICLES. (Avon 31468 - $2.95, 1965-1975, reissued 1977). Reviewed by S.J. Cook.

This is a real doorstop of a book, collecting four novels and pursuing the adventures of the archetypal Jerry Cornelius for 974 pages. Whew! I'm not sure but that each book might have come off better being digested and considered individually. Grouped as they are, they encourage the reader to plow straight through to an eventual apathy toward J.C. and his entire way of approaching life in the Swinging Sixties.

The four novels: THE FINAL PROGRAMME, A CURE FOR CANCER, THE ENGLISH ASSASSIN and THE CONDITION OF MUZAK trace Moorcock's development of the Jerry Cornelius concept from 1965 to 1975. This is almost sf nostalgia conjuring as it does those whoozy, psychedelic by-gone days. And this is Moorcock's forte here: summoning an aura of absurdist decadance with technological and mystical undercurrents. A consistent style is not one of his accomplishments in this book. There are passages in this mass of pages that transport, envelop and tickle the reader, really well done. But these rare moments of togetherness are sandwiched between hundreds of pages of imaginative riffs that become repetitive to the point of nausea. How many times do we have to watch the same action with different constumes and backdrops to get the point? One gets the feeling that Moorcock never threw away his revisions; this book is revisions of the same themes, ad infinitum.

Witness these plot summaries:

THE FINAL PROGRAMME. Jerry and a motley crew set out to do vengeance on his brother Frank who holds his beloved sister Catherine in a drug trance; we may not know what Jerry is doing, but we always know what he's wearing. Miss Brunner, who starts as one of Jerry's conspirators, develops into the villain and ultimately merges with him through some ill-defined technological apparatus into a polymorphous Messiah of the Age of Science. This Brunner-Cornelius creature kills off the population of Europe and heads east--slouching toward Bethlehem, one assumes.

A CURE FOR CANCER. In an inverse variation of the previous novel, Jerry is the victim rather than victor. Pursued by the forces of Order, led by the grotesque Bishop Beesley, Jerry flits from one scene to another, disintegrating personality-wise. There's a steady barrage of happenings, characters, role changes, locale alterations, etc. The book ultimately becomes one long, strange trip; Jerry ends up catatonic and the reader may feel the same way.

THE ENGLISH ASSASSIN. More of the above with time shifts added for even more confusion. Jerry passes most of his time in a coffin, but his role is filled by a host of Jerry Correlians and Jeremiah Corneliums, endless variations. A barrage of new characters join the old ones and confusion reigns supreme. A great deal of frantic activity leads to eight Alternative Apocalypses, all ending with fire and death.

THE CONDITION OF MUZAK. All of the preceding action begins to coagulate in fits. The characters assume the masks of a Halequinade and the reader begins to make sense of their interrelationships. Jerry is Harlequin, the manipulator of the world, and it finally resembles his anarchistic concept of the way it should be. Characters shift and slide, one becoming another, then the masks come off and Jerry is revealed as a hippy-

dippy dreamer. His Mom's a gross Cockney; his brother, Frank, is a slimy con man. His sister, Catherine, is a lesbian, but still desirable. All the rest of the cast is demoted to being the habituees of the local pub. Jerry, Catherine and Una Persson are actors in Harlequinade productions and the whole show grounds out in the "real death" of Mrs. Cornelius. Before succumbing, Mom rattles off the family history of repetitive names and incestuous actions and the punch line seems to be, it's in the genes. It's a long, long road winding nowhere.

For my money the best part of this collection was the introduction by John Clute. Read the book first, then the intro; it's more laughable that way. Clute would have us believe that Moorcock has written a classic on the loss of individuality in the urban malaise offering a viable strategy for personality survival. Deluded ego-centricity is not my idea of productive existence.

Experimental styles and formats are stimulating to the reader and the genre; along this avenue, Moorcock has succeeded brilliantly in other works. The danger in climbing unscaled mountains is the risk of failing, though, and in THE CORNELIUS CHRONICLES, Moorcock lands on his ass.

LORD FOUL'S BANE, THE ILLEARTH WAR, THE POWER THAT PRESERVES. Stephen R. Donaldson (Holt, Rhinehart & Winston, $10 per volume, 1977). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

Doubtlessly, this fantasy trilogy is going to be compared to Tolkein in a great many reviews; it isn't reminiscent of the Lord of the Rings to any degree, but "fantasy" and "trilogy" seem to equate themselves to Tolkein automatically. Actually, what Stephen Donaldson has given us in these three volumes is almost a literary Burroughsian adventure; the hero, Thomas Covenant, is a leper, an outcast on Earth; he is waging a silent war with the citizenry of his home town just to live a semblance of a normal life. Alone, deserted by his wife and child, Covenent's existence seems to be a mockery of the life he once led, until one day when a police car nearly runs him down. Covenent falls to the ground, unconscious, and when he comes to, he is in a strange land where nature has miraculous healing powers via the earth itself, where man lives in harmony with the earth, and where Thomas Covenant's leprosy is no longer an incurable disease. He meets Lena, falls in love with her and yet he rapes her, unable to control his own animal instincts. The daughter from this union, Elena, plays a crucial part in the later volumes of the trilogy. Covenant's rise to the status of a Lord, and his vicious battles against Lord Foul are the connecting threads of the trilogy. In each book, in an almost Burroughsian development, Covenant regains consciousness in his own world, firmly aware that his adventures in The Land were not mere dreams.

What differentiates Donaldson's trilogy from so many fantasy series is his careful avoidance of the overwritten, verbose style so many fantasy novelists inadverrantly lapse into. Donaldson's novels are grabber immediately, and rather than using the earthly problems Covenant faces--leprosy and the hatred of those who try to avoid all contact with him--as a mere framing device, Donaldson manages to turn it into a poignant vision of courage and refusal to surrender, underlining the heroic qualities Covenant later reveals. We're told that Donaldson's father worked extensively with lepers himself, and that served as the basis for Donaldson's creation of Thomas Covenant; it's easy to believe, because Donaldson's description of the leper's plight has the touch of realism and authority that can only be attributed to one who has familiarized himself with the disease to a great degree. In fact, there's little doubt that, had Donaldson wished, he could have left out the fantasy element entirely and produced a very competent novel about an author stricken with leprosy. It's to our advantage that he didn't.

I certainly hope that Donaldson isn't a one-time author who has produced his major work and will now fade away; his novels are immensely satisfying, and it'll be to the reader's advantage if he continues to produce fantasy on a regular basis. The Ballantine paperbacks of this series won't be out for quite a while yet, and I heartily recommend that you invest in the hardcovers; it may be a hefty pricetag for all three, but they're certainly worth it, for they are sturdy books, well-made and well-packages with S. C. Wyeth (an N. C. Wyeth relative or imitator? The style indicates it.) dust-wrappers that, while not dynamic paintings, have a flavor that offers a perfect accompaniment to the Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever.

FUTURE PASTIMES. Scott Edelstein, editor. (Aurora - $6.95, 1977.) Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

FUTURE PASTIMES is one of the Aurora anthologies that I've heard of for years, but was unsure if I'd ever see. It is available, though, and while not a stunning collection of new and reprint fiction, is an enjoyable theme anthology--in this case, the theme is exactly as stated in the title, a look at future developments in sports, games, the arts, etc.

The anthology offers 28 short pieces ("short" is the key word; virtually no pieces hit the twenty-page mark, and most tally in at a dozen pages or less) offering a variety of views of our future pastimes; they range from the very forgettable, like Steve Herbst's "Unexen Evening" (a look at a new leisure sport called "torming") to the totally enjoyable, such as Pg Wyal's "The Hotsy-Totsy Machine" (a man invents a machine that makes people feel good, and becomes a

millionaire while bringing peace and tranquility to the world--almost a Lafferty-esque story, except Lafferty rarely does it this well). There are a few old familiars, such as Silverbergs "When We Went to See the End of the World," and continuations of series, such as Gerald Page's "Waygift," a continuation of his Worldsong cycle, this time dealing with the death of a planet--poignant and powerful in its telling, the story succeeds on an emotional and literary level. There are a lot of stories that lack a little something, too, tales that almost make it, like Bruce Boston's "Tarfu's Last Show," dealing with a cinematic genius who uses his final screen debut as a method of suicide--or does he? It's a modest story that lacks the punch to become memorable, as do many of its companion pieces in here.

FUTURE PASTIMES isn't a bad anthology, but it suffers from overkill and underdevelopment of ideas; 28 stories is a lot, and with almost half of them in the adequate-to-mediocre category, it seems to be a lot of filler. As an editor, Edelstein isn't wholly satisfying; he offers a diet of tidbits, with no main course.

CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN (Dell - $1.50) and AFTER THINGS FELL APART (Ace - $1.50). Ron Goulart. Reviewed by Gary Steele.

I keep giving Ron Goulart a chance, because every time I decide that he simply can't write a good, enjoyable book, he turns out something that's at least readable.

CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN caught my attention because I used to read a comic book by the same title; this novel is based on that comic, and is, I believe, the first of a series.

The Challengers are people who believe they are living on "borrowed time" after surviving accidents that should have been fatal; they combine their efforts to become a group to combat various evil menaces, each using his own specialty to add to the group's effectiveness.

The novel has no overly complex plot; it's a pure adventure story, and as such is fun to read. In this book, the group travels to South America to track down something akin to the Creature from the Black Lagoon.

My main interest in reading this was to see how the characters fared in transition from comics to novel; I expected a botched job, as has happened with most comic-hero-novels, but I was pleasantly surprised to find that just the opposite held true. All in all, I was very favorably impressed by the book; Goulart did an excellent job of adapting the characters to book form, and I know it'll be enjoyable to all comics fans.

Goulart's science fiction, though, is still lackluster to me. His supposed finest book, AFTER THINGS FELL APART, is a typical Goulart novel--a lot of words strung together in a routinely boring fashion.

AFTER THINGS FELL APART is another version of the Goulartian future--a world gone mad, a world in chaos. This novel takes place in the US, a few decades in the future. The country has been torn apart by internal struggles, economic and political problems, and foreign invasion.

I had to force myself to read AFTER THINGS FELL APART, and then I experienced the feeling of having read it all before, in the last Goulart book I completed. I'm a victim of Goulart overkill, I suppose, but I recommend that you pass this one up unless you're a Goulart completist, or haven't read any Goulart at all.

FIRST WORLD FANTASY AWARDS, Gahan Wilson, ed. (Doubleday, $8.95). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

This anthology, promised for some time but delayed due to the editor's slowness, is finally out, and it was worth the wait. The book is a textual record of the WFA, offering excerpts and samplings of the work of the various winners.

It's a valuable reference book, as well as enjoyable reading; not only does it give you a permanent record of the winners in each category, it offers you biographical material about some winners, a convention report, a drawing of the award statuette, designed by Gahan Wilson, and some fictional works by the winners. It also offers a much-deserved excerpt of better material from WHISPERS, an award-winner; this has been overshadowed by the WHISPERS anthology itself, certainly, but it's enjoyable nonetheless.

The only regret I have is that Wilson has now established a precedent of being two years behind in the presentation of the award winners; it'd be nice to see this become a regular series, perhaps producing a volume every six months during this next year just to catch up, then continuing to remain about 9 months behind the awards presentation. This is nitpicking, though; it is a worthwhile book, and I heartily recommend it to all fantasy fans. It's a shame Hugos and Nebula winners araren't presented in this yearly form, offering a concise record of winners.

LETTER FROM MARY LONG

(10-4-77) "Let's hear it from everyone for smaller cons of any sort. Being a British fan, I cut my teeth on small cons, in fact among the e earlier ones (early 60s) 200 was thought a pretty good total. And 200 is as many as one can feel comfortable with, at least, speaking personally. For one thing I don't like crowds--I mean, huge ones. For another, 200 makes it a good chance you will get to see/meet everyone you want to meet in the weekend, and also it's big enough to offer an escape if you see someone you don't want to see. Also it means that the attractions are less crowded... one thing I dislike intensely about America (but it's a fact of life, which nothing can alter) is its size, which is probably how the Huge Cons came about. When you've lived all your life on an island only 200 miles long, it takes an awful lot of adjustment, let me tell you, to the wide and rolling spaces in the States! I wonder if Americans ever feel claustrophobic in the UK?

((We seem to have the same regard for small cons--in fact, some of my best con experiences have been at cons of 100 or so people, which felt like an overly-large party, not a convention per se.))

"Oh, good on yer. I like Morris--though here I'm talking more about his artifacts (shades of Kenneth Horne!) than his books. I got interested in Morris though rather late, and that through a lifelong love of the work of the PRB ((PreRaphaelite Brotherhood)) school of painting, and their lives... do you like them, too, or is Morris the chap who interests you? ((I'm fascinated by the PRB, particularly the Rosettis, Mill, and those who, though not a part of the movement, offer vital insights in their roles as friends and contemporaries--Arnold and Clough, for instance--and I'm being awfully boring, aren't I?)) If so, and you get to England for the worldcon, do not fail to go to Oxford, where the place is full of PRB and Morris stuff, including paintings, stained glass, a beautiful tapestry, and so on, to name but one place you could go. Or city, rather. I

"I shall pass on to George Martin's letter, which I can't help feeling is a bit of a fuss over something that is really very minor. I mean, if folks choose to regard me as an extension of Sam, it's their problem, not mine! After one exposure to my dazzling personality, they'll change their minds--cough!! I think that, if US society is like the British society in which I was raised, then one is taught to address wives as Mrs. Smith or whomever; and also to address anyone who appears to be a wife the same way, unless corrected. I notice, though, that in the US people use one's Christian name much more, even folk who have just met you...

"On the other side of the coin, taking one's father's name (when unwed) and then one's husband's (when wed) seems a perfectly rational and ordinary thing to do; I regard it as saying I belong WITH (and not to) either the family into which I was born, or the man whom I married. What's wrong with that?"...

THE MAKER OF UNIVERSES (Ace 51621 - $1.50), THE GATES OF CREATION (Ace 27387 - $1.50), A PRIVATE COSMOS (Ace 67952 - $1.50), BEHIND THE WALLS OF TERRA (Ace 05357 - $1.50), and THE LAVALITE WORLD (Ace 47420 - $1.75, 1977). Philip Jose Farmer. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

Farmer's World of Tiers series, while more adventure-oriented than his much-vaunted Riverworld series, is only slightly less powerful in its imaginative surroundings and complex interrelationships; in fact, I'd bet that, if it wasn't for that heavy adventure orientation, reminiscent of Burroughsian adventure touched with J. T. Edson or William Chester, the Tiers series might have gained as much fame as Riverworld (and, of course, hardcover editions--a sign of prestige, it seems--might have helped). Also, the Tiers series is an oddity in the Farmer corpus--a completed series, with the publication of THE LAVALITE WORLD as a December release.

Basically, the World of Tiers is just as it says; it's a tiered world, existing somehow separate from Earth, with each level, or tier, being a culture, a world in itself. The primary hero of the series is Kickaha--formerly Paul Janus Finnegan, an earthman, now known as Kickaha, "the trickster," he lived much of his life in the Tiered world in the Amerind level, drawing from their manners and customs. But the Tiers series is also a story of the wars between the Lords, the creators of the various worlds, for total control of all levels, all worlds. And in the beginning, at least, it's the story of Robert Wolff, a 66-year-old Earthman transplanted to the Tiers world; a man who has grown young again, and has fallen in love with Chryseis, a native of the world.

Each novel in the series is fairly complete in itself; the first one is an introduction of sorts to the Tiers World and a quest by Wolff and Kickaha to recover a horn that could open dimension--and ultimately, a quest to the top tier itself. GATES deals with Wolff's battle against the Master-Lord Urizen, with his wife as the pawn. With the third book, the emphasis shifts to Kickaha, who is trying to prevent the rebel Lords from taking over--and eliminating Kickaha as a threat. The fourth book, BEHIND THE WALLS OF TERRA, brings Kickaha back to Earth, but continues his battle with the Lords. And in the fifth and final (for now) novel, Kickaha is trying to escape from the Lord Urthona and his bizarre, constantly-changing lavalite world.

And read altogether, the series is impressive, far more so than I had remembered each of the earlier individual elements being when I first read them years before. Farmer is a storyteller, not comfortable in lit-

erary surroundings so much so as he is in the company of those who have influenced him--yet he's also a man capable of complex plots, moving characters and crisp, effective prose that paints wondrous pictures. The same man who wrote these novels wrote THE LOVERS, after all. And knowing his tendency to interrelate various series, don't be surprised to find that the Lords are somehow connected to Riverworld's Ethicals (I find the idea oddly appropriate).

Ace has packaged these newly-released novels very effectively, with Boris Vallejo covers and distinctive, bright titling and author blurbing. It's no wonder that sales should be brisk on these books--Acè has done a good promotion job on them, and this is one case where the product deserves the promotion.

NIGHT OF LIGHT. Philip Jose Farmer. (Berkley 03366 - $1.50). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

Thanks to the success of Farmer's recent work, his earlier writings are coming back into print, and that's a good sign. Berkley's reissue of NIGHT OF LIGHT, with a much more striking cover than the original edition possessed, is an overdue one, as NIGHT OF LIGHT is both one of Farmer's more bizarre and more satisfying novels. The novel concerns John Carmody (also known as Father John Carmody), who comes to the planet Dante's Joy to take part in a religious ritual, the Night of Light, where those who choose to stay awake are transformed into a being based on their own subconscious--not a physical transformation, but almost as massive.

NIGHT OF LIGHT, with its religious overtones, has always been a favorite of mine, and I'm certain that it will be a pleasant change for those who think of Farmer as only a series-author or an adventure author or a fictional-biography author. It has aged well in the 20 years since the short novel it's based on was done, or in the 11 years since the first pb printing, and I hope it staysiin print.

THE BEST FROM FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION, 22nd SERIES. Edward L. Ferman, ed. (Doubleday, $7.95). Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

More and more anthologists are using a gimmick to individualize their anthology from everyone else's; it seems to be an attempt to add a unique flavor to the book, to hook readers who are jaded to the usual twelve stories and an introduction approach to anthologies. With the 22nd BEST OF F&SF, the gimmick is simple; in an attempt to give a more complete flavor to the BEST OF anthology, Ferman has chosen to include contests, science columns and book and film reviews in order to give the "magazine" flavor to a hardcover book.

You know, it works, too.

Certainly, the fiction is good, but much of it has been collected elsewhere; with authors like Tiptree, Wellman, Bloch, Cowper, Russ, Varley, Reamy, and Pohl and Kornbluth, the fiction would have to be good. But it's the extras that really make this a "Best of;" Algis Budrys' non-review of books, the amusing contests, Asimov's perfect prose in his science column, all this is what distinguishes F&SF. And now we have a collection that gives the same flavor to a hardcover as the magazine it represents. I hope the approach spreads to other anthologies; it's a bit of fresh air, to be sure.

THE LAND OF FROUD. Brian Froud. (Peacock Press/Bantam M1055.7 - $7.95). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

My "Proud of Froud" buttons have managed to attract a good bit of attention recently; when asked "What's a Froud?", I merely smile and direct most of them toward this excellent book collecting the art of Brian Froud, one of the most exciting and innovative fantasy artists to come along in decades. Drawing on the work of Rackham and Bosch, among others, Brian Froud has created a fantasy world all his own, populaced with creatures that could exist only in his imagination, and then he's visually recorded it all to share with us. The results are stunning.

David Larkin, who edited the book and prepared the introduction, describes Froud, his work, their association with one another, and some of the Froud work we don't see--his sculpture that decorates his office, for example.

What we do see, though, is more than a little impressive. Froud's anthropomorphic creatures, his delicate faeries, his moody backgrounds tinged with menace, his wry sense of humor--all these are an integral part of what makes Froud easily the most impressive new fantasy artist of the decade. His pictures are packed with detail, and his subtle use of airbrush, reserved for special occasions, makes the pictures almost leap from the page.

The book presents 44 color pieces and numerous black and white drawings bordering the text introduction; considering the quality of the art and the quality of the reproduction, $7.95 is a worthwhile price--hurry up and get your copy and you, too, can be proud of Froud.

STRANGE GLORY. Gerry Goldberg, editor. (St. Martin's, $5.95 pb). Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

This is a strange book, aimed at a non-sf market but incorporating a great deal of sf/fantasy work; it's a collection of poems, sayings, stories, essays, art, and assorted excerpts, all segregated into categories dealing with man's growing awareness. It's described by Walter Gibson as a book that "provides the reader with deep-set expressions of contemplative thought"; and while some thought-provoking pieces are indeed included, the most frustrating source of contemplation is why so much padding was used and why the book is so poorly laid-out, with stories interrupted in the middle by poems, excerpts, etc., in a hopeless hodge-podge. Yes, indeed, it's a strange book.

The editing style seems to be the famed kitchen-sink format; the editor has thrown in all sorts of odds and ends, some of which are hopelessly out of category, under the assumption that most people would be too self-conscious or insecure to admit that they see no reason for the inclusion of such-and-such, a la "The Emperor's New Clothes." Unfortunately, I think this emperor--author, that is--is going to find his bluff called by most readers.

There are lots of nice Finlay pieces, some Fabian, some Bok, and a smattering of sf/fantasy fiction, but don't let it hook you--this is one book to avoid, unless you're a fan of books that are designed as a crutch for those who can't think by themselves.

THE VIEW FROM SERENDIP. Arthur C. Clarke. (Random House - $8.95). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

Even at his worst, Arthur Clarke is an engrossing wordsmith; and this collection of nonfiction, while nothing to inspire awe, is definitely not Clarke at his worst. In fact, it's rather entertaining reading from beginning to end, filled with Clarke's wit and intellect, offering speculative thought, anecdotes and personal reminiscings. Most pieces are very, very short, designed to sustain reader interest, and there's enough sf-related material to interest the sf fan who could care less about life in Ceylon (from which Clarke gets the title, "Serendip" being an old name for Ceylon).

THE VIEW FROM SERENDIP is pleasant afternoon reading, perfect for picking up at odd moments when there's no time or inclination to begin a hefty novel or short story. Like Asimov, Clarke can write about anything and make it interesting.

ALMURIC. Robert E. Howard. (Berkley 03483 - $1.95, reissue). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

Berkley has brought back into print Howard's excellent ERB/OAK pastiche, ALMURIC, and I'm glad of it. While the book is nothing more than pure adventure, a pastiche of the other great adventurers of his time, Howard's ALMURIC is bright and refreshing in that it retains the heavy prose and grim action that only Howard could do so well, and definitely should be read by Carter, Akers and the countless others who still continue to rehash the ERB technique, but without the integrity that REH put into his novel.

ALMURIC is the story of Esau Cairn, prizefighter who was exiled from fighting due to his own strength, and of his flight to Almuric, a world of swordplay and cruelty, populaced by humans and non-humans. It's a story of a gallant hero in the mold of John Carter, and it's mostly pure action. If you're looking for more than that, you'll be disappointed. But every now and then, it's nice to read REH and wonder why today's imitators can't do it as well.

The book also has a Ken Kelly cover and foldout "poster" (the size of a wraparound cover, or a little larger) that offers the cover painting sans type and blurbs. It's a good idea, and while I find Kelly's work too cartoony and exaggerated for my tastes, I'd like to see the same done with some other distinctive covers in the future.

CRY SILVER BELLS. Thomas Burnett Swann (DAW UW1345 - $1.50, 1977). Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

CRY SILVER BELLS is the final unpublished Swann novel, and that's almost a reason to postpone reading the book, to save it, like a fine wine, for a special occasion. Tom Swann is that sort of writer; his worlds are delicate and romantic, his characters all have a touch of purity that nothing can remove, and his prose dances in the mind long after the novel is finished. But CRY SILVER BELLS should be read right away, just to make you fully realize what a loss his death was; no one could do Swann-fiction, no one could imitate it--it was his own, and after this, there will be no more. It's only fitting that this should be one of Tom Swann's best books, and that the character of Silver Bells should harken back to DAY OF THE MINOTAUR, Swann's first American novel.

CRY SILVER BELLS is a strange love story and adventure; it's the tale of Hora, a beautiful prostitute who still has a touch of purity, and her younger cousin, Lordon. It takes place in the unique mythological world Swann created in his works, and if nothing else, it's unique in that it is the only novel of recent years to present a prostitute as ultimately, a lady of purity. No one but Swann could have done it so well. Read it, enjoy it, and then you'll understand the touch of regret I feel that the marvelous world of Swann's imagination is closed to us all nowadays, except for the all-too-few glimpses he's already given us in his earlier novels.

THE SERPENT. Jane Gaskell. (St. Martin's Press, 1977 reissue, $8.95). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

I first stumbled upon Jane Gaskell's series of novels about Atlan when I was hooked by the Frazetta covers that decorated the early paperback editions; inside, I found adventure and a unique female protagonist, Cija, who overcame one obstacle after another in her quest to escape the fate planned for her. Almost a decade later, the novel still reads well, and I'm glad to have an opportunity to add a permanent edition to my library.

St. Martin's intends to reissue the remaining novels of the Atlan series in matching hardcovers, including one that I managed to miss in pb, if it was published at all: SOME SUMMER LANDS. I heartily recommend the series--each volume continues the level of action and excitement of the volume before it--and look forward to the upcoming release of the fifth and final novel in the series. Add THE SERPENT to your library--it's a worthwhile investment of your entertainment dollars.

THE 1977 ANNUAL WORLD S BEST SF. Donald A. Wollheim, ed. (DAW Books UE1297 - $1.75). Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

Of the two major BEST SF collections published--Wollheim's and Carr's--I would definitely choose Wollheim's as being the more enjoyable. They shared only two stories in common: Asimov's "The Bicentennial Man" (this has to win some sort of award for "most reprinted story of the year") and Knight's "I See You". The remaining eight stories were much more to my taste than the ones Carr chose for his collection.

It's really hard to single out favorites, therefore I'll mention the ones that left the longest impressions. "Houston, Houston, Do You Read?", Tiptree's Nebula award-winner, concerns the reactions of 3 US astronauts who've been on a fly-by mission to the Sun and return much later in Earth's future to a much-changed world in which the only means of propagating the race is cloning. "The Hertford Manuscript" by Richard Cowper is an extremely well done "missing manuscript" type of story in which the last diary of a time traveller is passed on by a good friend of H.G. Wells to her great-nephew. This particular type of story has been done countless times before--most of them badly--but Cowper managed to keep me interested right up to the end. It's been quite a while since I read anything by Michael Coney, consequently, "Those Good Old Days of Liquid Fuel" was doubly enjoyed. It's the reminiscences of a man who had spent a good part of his youth watching the space shuttled land and of some of the facts of life he had learned while passing the time this way. "My Boat" by Joanna Russ was another narrative story told in first person about two underdog kids-- a black girl who is one of the first five students to take part in an integrated school plan and a white Catholic boy who reads Cthulhu Mythos tales--who don't quite fit in with the 1950s world and eventually leave on a journey through time in their magical boat.

Looking back over the four stories I've listed, I notice that all were written in--for lack of better terminology--a modified flashback style. I'd never realised before now that I was such a pushover for that gimmick; the things one learns about oneself when reviewing!...

The other stories in the collection--"Appearance of Life" by Brian Aldiss, "Overdrawn at the Memory Bank" by John Varley, "Natural Advantage" by Lester del Rey, and "The Cabinet of Oliver Naylor" by Barrington Bayley--were also very enjoyable, although overshadowed by the four powerful stories previously mentioned. Wollheim's BEST SF is definitely a "must read" book not only to keep up with who's writing what, but for the sheer entertainment and delight that comes from reading solid, well-written works. Don't let it sit on your shelf unread.

SEADEMONS. Laurence Yep. (Harper & Row - $8.95, 1977). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

SEADEMONS is a first-sf-novel by Laurence Yep, who's written children's novels and sf short stories previously; it's an auspicious beginning, to be sure. The book is bound to catch the eye--a stunning Frazetta reprinting on the dustwrapper will see to that, I'm sure--but in this case, you can most assuredly judge the quality of this book by the cover--for Laurence Yep's story of Maeve, the young child brought to the people of the settlement by the serpentine Seademons, is a powerful and intriguing tale indeed, short (184 pages) but trimmed to perfection, with no wasted words.

The story involves a Terran settlement on an Earthlike planet, and a young child mysteriously delivered from the sea by the seademons. The child, Maeve; becomes an object of superstitious hatred, and her existence in the settlement seems to lead to tragedy after tragedy. Finally, she becomes responsible for a final confrontation between the Terrans and the Seademons, tragic for both sides.

...

The liner notes say that Yep is working on another novel; I hope so, because I thoroughly enjoyed SEADEMONS and eagerly await more.

WILDEBLOOD'S EMPIRE. Brian Stableford (DAW UW1331 - $1.50, 1977). Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

This book would have been more aptly titled JUNKIE PLANET because that is what the entire premise of the book concerns; it's the story of Poseidon, a colony world settled by James Wildeblood and so impressed by his personality are the colonists that the setllement remains virtually unchanged since his death. The problem that the crew of the Daedelus must solve is drug addiction in the entire colony. What's worse is that the addiction seems to be a benevolent one in that the drug induces a highly pleasurable sensation when the person taking it uses his body in some kind of physical activity. Simply, it makes manual labor feel good. The drug, discovered and put into use by Wildeblood to insure the success of the colony, was intended as only a temporary means to an end, but by the time the Daedalus arrives, use has become such an everyday habit that most colonists are unaware they are addicted.

Stableford seems to have backslid since the second Daedalus novel, in which he showed promise of making this an interesting series, but now the main characters have slipped back into their old ways of long-winded moralizing. The conflict between Nathan, the Daedalus' diplomat who wants to declare the colony a success no matter what they find so that funding for future colonies will be assured, and Alex, the scientist, who also wants Earth to begin colonizing again but who is a little more hesitant about giving approval, is more prominent here than in CRITICAL THRESHOLD, but it never comes to a head, obviously saved for a future novel. All in all, this is a marking-time link in the Daedalus series; read it if you're a series fan, otherwise, pass it up until you've nothing else to do.

AN ELECTRONIC TYGER

a column by
mike weber

SPACE OPERA - SHARP & FLAT

What is Space Opera... and Why?

Space Opera, if it must have a definition, is best defined by listing a few referents. For instance, "Doc" Smith is definitely space opera--practically the definitive space opera. Asimov's "Foundation" stories aren't; and Blish's "Cities in Flight" books have strong Space Opera strains and affinities, but really aren't quite in the field. On the other hand, Murray Leinster's "landing grid" stories--particularly the Med Service ones--are. And of course, STAR WARS is practically a definitions, complete and in itself, of space opera.

Unfortunately, so much in the field of Space Opera is miserably written, using hacked-over plots, obviously produced for the word rate, that tho those of us who read and enjoy space opera (hereafter abbreviated "s. o." for obvious reasons) have great difficulty not looking like fools to non-s. o. fans. On the other hand, there is a lot of good s. o. for those who are willing to give it a chance.

As to why s. o., well... there's a demand. That explains why it's written and published: the stuff sells. I suppose the market is, basically, equivalent to that for Westersns--fast, rough and tumble action, uncomplicated plots, fairly clear (not to say simplistic) characterization and motivation, set in an at least marginally sf framework.

On the other hand, there's the formula stuff--Bat Durstan and his friends ("You'll never see it in GALAXY", the ads used to run)--mostly just Westerns with zapguns instead of six-shooters and thoatoids in place of horses. You'll never see it on my bookshelf if I recognize it before I spend money on it.

As to recent Space Opera of note, there's STAR WARS, which is the recent s. o.. It has set the country in a s. o. frenzy, even these segments of the populace and the fan community who do not normally go for s. o.

Looked at objectively, it's all there: as far as plot exigencies require, STAR WARS could as easily be a western, a conventional war film, or a costume film set some time in our own history. As a matter of fact, NEW TIMES claims that the final sequence--the throne room bit--is a shot-for-shot, cut-for-cut re-do of a sequence from Leni Reifenstahl's TRIUMPH OF THE WILL. There's not an original situation or sequence in the film; it's the direction and enthusiasm (not to mention special effects) that make the film seem fresh and new.

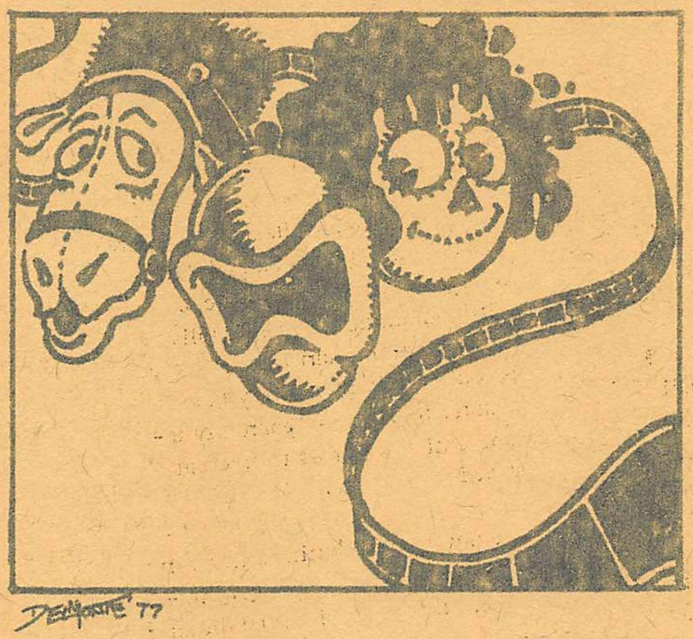
The entire corpus of the work of Alan Dean Foster is s. o., with a few original ideas and a lot of verbal fireworks (some people don't like these) and some fascinating characters to carry the plots. The books would be well worth reading of only for two ideas--the Humanx Commonwealth and the Tar-Aiym Krang (is it a weapon or a musical instrument?) It's appropriate that Foster is most probably the author of the STAR WARS novelization...

Foster's books read very much like a combination of the best parts of "Doc" Smith (adventure and epic confrontation) and Larry Niven (powerful narrative and believable, human characters); a fascinating combination, to say the least.

And on the other hand, we have recent entries in the s. o. field, like the "Farstar and Son" series by "Bill Starr" (which I'd be willing to bet a postage stamp is a pseudonym). This is the wrong kind of s. o., with miserable writing, worse plotting, and "technology" that's laughable. Perhaps the best term for this is "space opera, off key". The SF element is minimal and poorly developed. And it's not a problem of speculation, either; it's a basic failing in traditional science, as if Starr had read one physics book in his life and didn't understand that. It's the typical gobbledygook excuse for s. o. that has convinced so many that it's an inferior genre (or subgenre). Faster than Light travel is accomplished by means of some muttered doubletalk and a magical new element called "luxium", which enables ships to sail on light rays faster than the light rays are going themselves, and to tack in space in that sort of situation (an impossibility, since there's nothing to tack against). And, of course, they use rockets for FTL maneuvering. Not to mention bouncing radar beams off suns to look for planets...

Ranger Farstar and his son, (Dawnboy Cochise (continued on page 40)

MOVIE * REVIEWS



The Cinematic Eye

by

Cecil Hutto

One's usual complaint with a film made from an existing novel is that the film almost always leaves out one of the favorite parts of the story. One can hardly complain, however, that this is the case with the film version of STAR WARS. There were minor additions and deletions of dialogue made in the transition from page to screen, but none so drastic as to alter a characterization.

There were some changes in format worthy of mention, though, and one character almost totally lost in the shuffle of putting together a completed film. The Imperial interrogating device (that big, black ball which enters the detention cell of Princess Leia) was toned down quite a bit in the film, possibly not without just reason. It is described in the novel as having "incorporated into its soulless memory...every barbarity, every substantiated outrage known to mankind--and to several alien races as well." (p. 83) It is equipped with many torture devices, not just a jolt of some chemical agent as depicted in the movie. It is a machine so feared by those who know of it that the Imperial guards stationed outside the Princess' cell door must move down the hall to escape her cries.

And then there's Biggs. This was a young fellow of Luke's age, who returns to his homeworld, Tatooine, after finishing at the Academy that Luke so desperately wanted to attend. Biggs and Luke had grown up together, and we find by their conversation during their reunion, flown aircraft about the world on which they lived, mostly playing "space pirate" and the like, and getting into trouble with their elders. With this character and this conversation missing from the film, the first real evidence we have that Luke has ever piloted anything other than the land-hovercraft we see him in for a good part of the action on Tatooine is when he climbs into the cockpit of the X wing fighter at the final moments of the film. Sure, he makes claims throughout the film of having flown, even to the last minute during the briefing of the attack upon Death Star, but without that conversation, between him and his old friend, nothing is substantiated.

Biggs, by the way, is mentioned once in the film when Luke is in the farmhouse's garage/repair room cleaning C3PO and R2D2. Luke's line in the film is "Biggs is right. I'll never get out of here." In the novel, it continues on with, "He's planning a rebellion against the Empire, and I'm trapped on a blight of a farm." (p. 46) Biggs had confided in Luke that he was planning to jump ship at first opportunity and join the Alliance. Biggs shows up again in the novel later on; he is one of the wingmen who guards Luke's flanks as he makes his run on Death Star.

So far as being absolutely technically correct, the film is not. No, there isn't sound in space; no, there is no reason given in the film why the robots should have personalities. The only explanation I can give is that the film was directed at a much larger audience than those sf fans so astute and ardently researched as to notice such things. The noises, explosions, flashes and strange robotic attitudes helped make this film the first SF film to become a number one box office hit. I think it's high time; and I exuse the producers of their attempts. intended to be hardcore sf; in what it intends, it succeeds, and that is a fun two hours well spent in adventurous relaxation. The film is art, not science; the novel is a well-written escape, filled with characterization, mystery and action; see the film and read the book. The force will be with you always.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND. Written and Directed by Steven Spielberg.

A ll of us live on this planet we call Earth, or terra firma: "solid ground." It's the only place, so far, that we do live. It's been supposed for a good many centuries that this place will allow manking to have a long and happy existence, that this planet should have everything we should possibly need to live on it until the sun blows up. And indeed, why shouldn't it? So while it certainly may have all our essentials, it's entirely up to us to use them correctly. This is where we seem to have some problems.

When we look at our home from a great distance, we see a lovely blue-green globe turning slowly against the velvet backdrop of space. If we come for a closer look, however, we begin to see the beginnings of trouble. It appears that this world is not well; it has a cancer. Its cancer is an extremely complex host of multi-cellular bodies which quickly multiply and speedily mutate. These bodies drain our home of its resources, and in the name of creation, transform those resources into productsw which are usually useless and sometimes even harmful to our home. Only some of the bodies are directly involved in this process, although it is a surprisingly large number, but still almost all the bodies share in the passing benefits.

The leaders of this host, however, have begun to hear some frightened and complaining voices from the crowd. Some have begun seeing a danger in what is happening. Since the leaders wish to remain leaders, and not be assassinated or not re-elected, they seek constantly for some fast, fast relief for this growing headache to appease the masses. For instance, our fossil fuel is running out, but its use turns our air into slow poison anyway, so we'll start using atomic fuels and start dumping our wastes into the ocean or burying it on earthquake fault lines. Our cancer patient has been told to take an aspirin and wait for a better cure; but, believe me, this is one patient we don't want to die.

There are quite a number of people on this planet who choose to call themselves Science Fiction Fans. A lot of the other people here envision those Fans as being young folks with not too firm a grasp upon reality, running around making zap noises with fingers pointed, wearing DARTH VADER LIVES T-shirts and generally being pests. Can we deny it completely? Some of us are exactly that.

Some Fans, however, actually read and think about what they read, and watch the world turn around them; and sometimes they see that mankind isn't doing so well with what he's got to work with.

Fans, despite popular theory, do not believe everything that is nice, or fun, or easy, or even popular to believe in. Some, in fact, are outright skeptical about stuff, and they demand to know such dismal facts as how, why and what before they form an opinion on something. Some wonder about things that the rest of the population gave up on years ago, such as: why did we let ourselves get into this mess? How can we do something about it? What CAN we do about it?

Our headache has obviously gone beyond taking an aspirin and going to bed, but just as obviously, no one on Earth has any better solutions. So what? So we need help, and since we can't make it to the hospital, some of us are waiting for the doctor that still makes house calls.

And this is the reason that "first contact" has been a busy idea in science fiction for so long. To many, "first contact" is equal in importance to the Second Coming; to some, it IS the Second Coming; to most, it is a hope for assistance for mankind's survival. And this brings us (finally) to the subject of this novel/film comparative: CLOSE ENCOUNTERS.

The story concerns itself with an ordinary enough fellow named Roy Neary. Roy has a close encounter with something he doesn't fully understand; and furthermore, Roy is somehow influenced by this encounter to perform apparently insane actions in order to find out what is happening.

The novel and the film differ very little in basics, as one would imagine, since the writer and director are both Steven Spielberg. Why should he contradict himself? There are a few situations in the novel which do not appear in the film. Upon viewing the movie, reading the book and again seeing the film, I received the impression that Spielberg intended for those situations to appear in the movie--perhaps they were even filmed--but for whatever reasons such things occur, they were edited out.

One such change was in the Indian sequence in which the French UFO expert, Lacombe, investigates a Hindu sect which recites tones they claim came to them from the sky. In the novel, the sky sings that very night, in Lacombe's presence, while in the film, it does not.

Roy Neary's mind is touched with an impression during his initial close encounter; he is possessed of a vague mental image of a shape. He doesn't understand why, but he knows that the shape he keeps trying to see in various commonplace objects around his house in important. That it is important that he comes to know the shape exactly as it truly appears. The shape is actually that of a desert mountain called Devil's Tower, and his being impressed by the shape was his personal invitation to a meeting to take place there.

This compulsion to understand the meaning of the shape drives Roy into a frustrating emotional turmoil. In the film, his emotional imbalance is not as fully developed

as in the novel; its unpleasant aspects are not brought into the open as much as perhaps they should have been. When Roy finally grasps the image of Devil's Tower perfectly, he begins destroying his manicured lawn, ripping up shrubbery and throwing it, as well as bricks, garbage cans, chicken wire, and some shovelfuls of dirt, into his kitchen window so that he can build a model of his vision in his home. The viewing audience is caught a little-off-guard by this behavior, having not been as well prepared as to the seriousness of his mental plight as the reader. For the reader, this event comes the morning after Roy rapes his wife in their bedroom; this is the moment of his worse depression and frustration. The next morning's remodeling is, when viewed in this light, a turn towards improvement. It is this act, however, that finally drives Ronnie away and out of his life forever.

Ronnie is Roy's wife, portrayed by Teri Garr in the movie; she is a pretty, blonde-haired girl with sad blue eyes who cannot understand his fascination with UFOs. She, in fact, never accepts the fact that he has actually seen them, seeking instead to keep the whole thing as quiet as possible and forget it all.

The Ronnie of the novel comes across as being a bit more intelligent about things. She is bored with the monotony of everyday housework, she is keenly annoyed with her husband's new infatuation and, although she refuses to nag, she possesses some thinly disguised hostility at his refusal to find new employment after he's dismissed from his position at the power company.

Roy's vision finally leads him to Devil's Tower. He encounters a few obstacles on his pilgrimage, such as military guards determined to keep civilians away, but by sheer determination, he makes his way to the peak and the site of a new, secret installation known by its code name, The Dark Side of the Moon. It is here that Lacombe, his associates, and all manner of technicians and scientists await First Contact, the first official close encounter of the third kind.

Lacombe has by this time talked to Roy, while he was being detained in the aforementioned military installation, and is convinced that Roy should be present, that his invitation is valid. It is not Lacombe's political pull, however, but Roy's determination that sees him to the spot.

The implication here is very mild indeed, but if one looks into the circumstances carefully, one might see it. Perhaps I imagined it, but the base has been finished and operational for a few nights without anything happening. This night, though, the first night that Roy makes it to the site, the radar shows unidentified objects nearing the mountain. Perhaps they waited until at least one of their many invitees was present before they came. The implication is almost lost in the film; it is a little stronger in the novel.

In any case, Lacombe is convinced that Roy should join the volunteers in going with the aliens if he would. Roy would, and when he lines up with the dozen or so astronauts (who were not invited, it seems, but who have volunteered to go), the aliens come to him, and laying their hands on him, guide him towards their ship and then release him as seemingly saying, "It is up to you; will you come?" And Roy will.

In my review of STAR WARS, I said that it was a fun film and a good film because it accomplished what it set out to do. STAR WARS was a full display case of the technical wizardry of a film studio; it was a great motion picture to laugh at and with, to grip your seat and munch popcorn with and to get away from the madness of our world and the tiresome chore it is to think about it. If the characters had the depth of cellophane and the plot was a bit worn about the corners, it still didn't matter in the rare case of this film, because those things were not what the film was about.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND is also a fun film to watch. It is not the technical display that STAR WARS was, but it is not intended to be. The special effects in CLOSE ENCOUNTERS are superbly done; they are awesome; and most important here, they are believable.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS, however, is a great film. It is the serious type of treatment for science fiction that we have long awaited in film. It concerns a topic that is as old and yet as new as any to be found in science fiction. Its characterizations show depth, its plot shows sophistication and its spirit moves us to think and be uplifted, and to continue hoping for the doctor that still makes housecalls.

--Cecil W Hutto

I find myself agreeing with Ceese to a large extent in his views of CLOSE ENCOUNTERS; in my eyes, it is indeed a great film, a film concerned with the effects of first contact on humanity, and a film that presents the dignity, strength and drive of the normal man in a supernormal situation.

There's little doubt that STAR WARS will be the more popular of the two, but I see CLOSE ENCOUNTERS as the more powerful film, the more impressive film. To paraphrase Spielberg, once you see that film, you constantly find yourself looking to the sky.

And hoping.

--Cliff Biggers

when all else fails

Mike Glyer

Until late 1977, if you asked "what's happening" in the field of sf book reviewing, a field so moribund that Lester Del Rey makes news in it, the best answer would have been DELAP'S F&SF REVIEW. There Fred Patten and Joe Sanders proved every month that they were two of the finest reviewers in the field, and even Richard Delap would show up once in a while to indicate why his name was in the title.

DF&SFR did not set new standards for quality reviewing in the field, publishing plenty of typical sf reviews for its stars to rise above. DELAP'S jumpled the Stone and Atomic Ages of sf criticism, putting crude plot synopsis side by side with subtle literary and historical analysis. What publisher Fred Patten and editor Richard Delap had achieved was nonetheless a major contribution to the field. They assembled a better stable of reviewers than SFR had in the late 1960s (when Patten, Delap, Paul Walker, and Ted Pauls aided by a good many others were Geis' staff). They went to print almost every month, offset, 40-plus pages, featuring cover reproductions, Shull illustrations, and author photographs. They were a source librarians could rely on as a buyer's guide, also some place people interested in the state of the commercial art could check in without getting flooded by petty feuds.

So by now you've clued in to the fact this noble experiment has met an untimely end. Because it didn't make money? Actually, DF&SFR by report was on the verge of paying its way, perhaps even making a minute profit, after Patten had poured money into it for several years. What evidently happened was that the magazine was administered in a way that let Patten's associate take the name, the material, the review copies, and run, let the subscriptions fall where they may. After the legal dust cleared, with the principals just short of the courtroom, Patten received a promise that his initial investment would be repaid from the magazine's subsequent profits. Unjust it was, but it muddied the waters to a degree that any DF&SFR reviewer who wished to support Patten by leaving the zine can now only help him by keeping it alive. Delap and his new publisher have circulated lists of available review copies, and exhorted their reviewers by letter to produce material for the next issue. I received quite a sheaf of xeroxed titles, as one such contributor. However I am dubious about the future of DF&SFR, because the months-long hiatus between issues has dealt its credibility a severe blow, nor do its operators seem likely to have enough capital to rebuild it. Certainly the libraries must have expected to get a regular buying guide when they subscribed, and how much money will they yield in subscriptions now? A reputations takes time to create, but very little time to ruin.

Thus endeth the gossip for the day. For reasons unexplainable, my columns for Cliff get rewritten by the news even before they get through a second draft. Originally I only planned to mention DF&SFR as a source of an interesting letter by Isaac Asimov. Last spring, Asimov wrote to Richard Delap:

> I have, on numerous occasions, made it clear that I am not overly impressed with the profession of "critic," if you don't mind my referring to it, humorously, as a profession. In the review of THE BICENTENNIAL MAN AND OTHER STORIES... your "critic" considers "The Bicentennial Man", which is the title story of the book, as "weak" and considers it reminiscent of "Pinocchio." Last year, when another "critic" reviewed Judy-Lynn Del Rey's anthology STELLAR 2, he referred to "The Bicentennial Man" as the star of the collection and said that during the time it took to read it the reader was restored to the Golden Age.

People have a right to disagree and what is one man's classic is another man's trash--but then where is the value of the "critic"? What does a "critic" do but express his own personal opinion, guided as it may be by likes, by dislikes, by worship, by envy, by euphoria, by indigestion? And why should anyone want to be a "critic" except for the opportunity it gives him to become godlike in his own eyes and to hurl thunderbolts at those whom in real life he would be nervous about approaching?

Essentially the man is right. A reviewer is heir to all the weaknesses of the flesh he has described. I have been a reviewer many times ~~but I got better~~ and the only reason I wouldn't be nervous about approaching Asimov with my opinion of "The Bicentennial Man" is that I happened to write the review of STELLAR 2 referred to in the letter.

Nevertheless we are stuck with the truth that objectivity in reviewing is a bullshit concept. There is no aerie above bias, educational differences, emotional makeup and imaginative capability where a reviewer can go and evaluate a book. When he tries to filter his opinion through a set of standards a reviewer only gyps himself out of an honest expression of his feelings. Why the hell else would you waste time writing for free in a fanzine but for that opportunity? It's your time, make it your opinion. The number of impressionable children you are likely to pervert, or the number of sensitive award-winning authors whom you will offend are equally small. Asimov is perfectly right when he points out reviewers' failings. But what everyone needs to keep in mind is that if the books themselves are not long remembered, how much more transient these pencilled reactions to them must be.

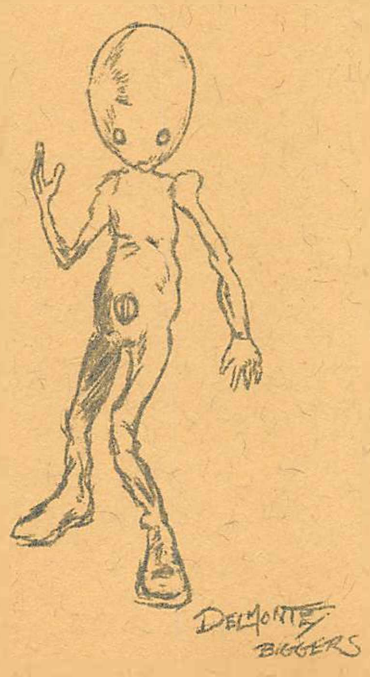
Either to earn their free books, or simply to break into fanzine print, those in the reviewing "profession" have only one business, which is to justify their private reaction to fictional works through the manipulation of a woefully inadequate critical language. The best of them rise above the mob for their ability to rationalize in lucid terms their feelings about a work. The poorest merely clip epithets from old manuscripts in a catalog of cliches worse than the ones they often attack: "cardboard characterization", "inadequate background", "hardcore sf", "New Wave", "experimental", "hackwork".

Fortunately there are few enough writers crabbing at reviewers to make me believe that most either ignore reviews (the practical response) or suffer their apoplexies privately. Decorum will still sometimes collapse, as when I received a letter from a writer famous for shooting birds at hotel managers, written to "defend" his best friend (another writer). Herein he coined a new name for my fanzines's lead reviewer, Wadcunt, and described the lad's sexual preference for animals. Out of my former enormous respect for that writer, and knowing that my readers (parents, librarians, not my fellow depraved SFR feud-loving fans) wouldn't accept it, I trashed the letter.

Ideally a reviewer should confine his opinions to the work, and an author should stoically tolerate these individual reactions to the product; they are, after all, opinions of an impersonal commodity, not psychiatrists' notebooks. So much for idealism, given the many reviews which conclude, "Mr. Weasand should retire to cesspool digging, because his last three books have been shit," or even those which in a humble tone try to imagine what abberations in the writer's personality caused him to produce defective fiction.

A good deal of this controversy would be eliminated if every reviewer were forced to write a story, and experience the pain of seeing it stomped in fans' reviews. Of course it can never be. But only then would reviewers, who impersonally buy books and read them with little idea of what kind of mind formed the fiction, understand why criticism in this field is particularly painful to some people. Your story doesn't have to sell--in fact for this purpose it might even be better if you took your story directly to a fan workshop, and saw it vivisected with precisely the same phrases suffered by the professionals. I know that experience improved my reviewing manners, if only somewhat...

Reviewing, whatever its presumptions, is a kind of personal dead end for the reviewer. It interrupts a natural interaction between fiction and the mind. One is forced to watch what is happening in the mind as reading goes on, when the usual process is to plow ahead and let the work affect one's feelings to the degree it can, promptly forgetting most of the mechanisms (style, context, sensory descriptions) that produced the feeling.



tions) that produced the feeling. In the end the book leaves a residue of intellectual and subconscious impressions that will be added to the overall whirl of information that influences one's personality. Reviewing retards that personal experience. Some reviewers find that sacrifice repaid by insight into their own thought processes. It's not important to the review whether they did or not, but for those who didn't, it's a lot of good reading time shot to hell.

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All right, I'll bite. A fanzine columnist is always hungry for response, and last issue that primarily came from George R.R. Martin, who shared my penchant for Hugo/award statistics. I've put together a quickie quiz with some more curiosities.

(1) Initiated in 1967 at NYCon III, the Best Fan Artist Hugo originally concentrated on fanzine artists. In 1972 the rule was widened to take in the important fan art appearing at art shows, and to decrease the dominance of fanzine artists. Since 1967 there have been 55 nominations for the award. How many different artists did this include? How many different artists actually won the award?

ANSWER: In its entire history only 17 people have been nominated for Best Fan Artist; since 1970, only 11! And of them all, just seven different people won. Over the same period, 30 authors were nominated for best novel.

(2) Who has lost the most Hugo Awards? (i.e., nominated but didn't win?

ANSWER: You should get this rather easily if you are a little familiar with the recent history of the Hugo--Robert Silverberg was rebuffed 18 of 19 times his performance earned a nomination. This includes three losses in '75 for novella, short story and best editor. I'm not sure if it's a record--triple nominations happen occasionally, but in '76 when Niven was up for three, he won one. Following Silverberg at a distance are Schoenherr (10 losses), the fmz YANDRO (9 losses, one win), Hiven and Zelazny (8), Anderson, Freas, Rotsler, and Ellison with (7). Silverberg obviously own the record for most nominations, but for those with better records of success, Kelly Freas won 10 of 17, Leiber won 6 of 12, Anderson 5 of 12, Niven 5 of 13. In a mini-tournament of frustration, Pournelle has 6 and Bishop 5 nominations without collecting their first Hugo. But the point of all this has just been statistical--the actual truth is that one must produce consistently good work over a long period t pile up so many nominations.

(ELECTRONIC TYGER, contd.), who is raised on the intentionally primitive Scotish-Indian planet Apache Highlands, roam the galaxy, dodging and ducking agents of two totalitarian governments which are thinly disguised versions of the U.S.S.R. and Nazi Germany. I never finished the first book, and can't recommend it as a good example of anything.

But why space opera? After all this verbiage, I really can't give a clear-cut, unequivocal answer to that question. Suffice it to say that while I read and enjoy virtually all sf, while I feel that such books as STAND ON ZANZIBAR and CHILDHOOD'S END are indeed classics in the making, and while I appreciate the opinion that so. is semi-literate at best (and even hold it sometimes), I have to say that I enjoy the classic confrontation, the escapism and the unleashed imagination. I can grow into more literary areas, but I can't outgrow it; and that's it; I like space opera simply because I like it. It's a part of sf I don't choose to forget.

INTROSPECTIVE

a look at could-haves and realities

Cliff Biggers

I first found him in a rather pedestrian office; no matter how much individuality a man may have, it rarely shows in the drabness of his office. As would be expected, there was a typewriter--what newspaperman would be without one?--and a large roll of 8.5" wide newsprint, ready for typing. On the wall, catching the eye of any visitor, was a collection of newspaper articles with one thing in common: they all possess glaring erros in grammar, presentation, or facts. Unlike many, Roger Aycock seems at home in his office; everything is arranged to suit him, and he is never burdened to find anything he refers to. His office/workroom at home is quite the opposite, he assures me.

Aycock himself has much more character than the lackluster bland brick building in which he works; he's a careful man, one who considers each word before saying anything. In his opinions he's quite decisive, yet not forceful. His primary interest lies in writing; not only the scores of SF stories he wrote in the past two decades plus, but in the local history articles he does every Sunday for the Rome News Tribune. Local history seems to be a good field for Aycock, who enjoys digging, rummaging through books of history and files of facts.

Aycock wrote sf for quite a few years, although never full time; he always kept his post office job while doing his writing. When asked why, he brings up the one thing that makes it necessary for many sf writers to work elsewhere: money. The field paid only moderately then--and now, with the impact inflation has had on costs, the pay is relatively abysmal, he says. Aycock remembers quite well a story he wrote for WORLDS OF TOMORROW almost six years ago; it was a short one, "Perfect Match," written under the Roger Dee penname he used for all his sf. "I was really surprised," he recalled, "to find out that while the costs had climbed a great deal for everything, the pay on my story wasn't substantially different from what I was paid in the early sixties, and that wasn't that differetn from what I was paid in the fifties." So Aycock never devoted himself to the field full-time, being content instead to sell a story and wait while another one developed, not pushing himself.

"In a way, this is a bad area of the country for writers; there is noddirect contact, neither with editors nor other writers, and I'm sure that makes it a lot more difficult to try to go full time than it would be for a writer in the New York area. I had very little contact, either with writers or fans. Probably the most memorable meeting I had was with Arthur Clarke in Atlanta. I'd had very little contact with the Atlanta Science Fiction Organization--as I said, I had very little contact with fans, out of coincidence and also semi-deliberately--but I couldn't miss the chance to see Clarke. This was about the time the man was becoming a real figure in the field; nowhere near the giant he is today. He told about some of his nature photography, things like that, and I was enthralled with the man. We discussed sf, I'm sure, but I really don't remember any particulars; I never really expected him to become a common name in sf, so I saw no reason in mentioning it that much. And that was my only professional contact to speak of."

Even though he writes no sf nowadays, he still reads avidly in the field. He's found quite often at one of Rome's bookstores or newsstands, searching through the new releases for something worthwhile. "There are a few writers producing enjoyable fiction, but so much of what I pick up today is craftwork, no literature." To make his point, he compares most of today's output to formula writing of the forties. "There are a lot of writers producing competent material, but it lacks any inner drive or inspiration; I feel that most of them are saying "I need the money, so here's 150 pages of novel, topic unimportant, please pay me." I don't feel angry about it, but it doesn't do anything to encourage me to reenter the field." Aycock remembers the financial pressures that urged him to try to sell stories in 1948. "There are some people, Brunner for instance, who write one or two literary novels and then churn out a lot of work, like yard goods, on their reputation. Farmer does that; he hasn't written anything with the force of his early work. And this bothers me. Many masters and prominant figures in the field are writing material far below their 1950-1960 level of quality. And I know they aren't doing it just for money--A Heinlein or an Asimov or a Brunner generally makes more money off one book than most writers make off half a dozen. It disappoints me; in the fifties, there was more of a sense of togetherness, it was like we wanted to entertain other writers, and we had a higher quality product."

"I was never too heavy on longer fiction, as far as writing went; my only novel was published by Ace in 1954, and was a rewrite of a story I did for STARTLING STORIES in 1952. My story was "The Star Dice," but the paperback title was EARTH GONE MAD. Whoever was in charge of the Doubles--Don Wollheim, I guess--had a habit of retitling everything, it seemed. I didn't mind; if hecould retitle Isaac Asimov, who was on the other side of my double, who am I toto complain? I'm not sure how well it sold--not well enough for a second printing, and I don't think it ever paid out its advance. Few doubles did."

Why did he never do another novel? A couple of reasons, he replies, mainly concerning time and the fact that he could be paid twice or three times as much if he put the same effort into short stories instead. "I write very carefully; unlike a lot of people I've heard of, I don't feel capable capable of doing a once-and-only draft of anything. With a short story, I plan out the plot, develop the entire concept and do a draft or two and then sell it for a price I feel is fair for what I've put into it. With a novel, though, it takes time to plot it out to reasonable length, particularly if you want your characters to have believable motivation, and it takes more time to make it read well enough to catch the audience. And after all the rewrites, you're tired of the story. I'm sure that's why there are so many writers nowadays who don't do novels, or do them infrequently, unless you sell it to a magazine first, you just don't get enough for your effort. That's why there are an entire group of authors whose reputations are based almost entirely on short stories, because they've done so many of them. Tiptree, Wolfe, Malzberg, people like that."

"I remember my first short story sales; in fact, one that particularly sticks in my mind was an early sale I made to PLANET, and the story appeared about the time that a really great Bradbury story came along. I liked what Bradbury was doing for PLANET, and considered it anhhonor to appear along with him. It wasn't long, though, before he began writing for the classier magazines, like COLLIERS and MADEMOISELLE and got away from his pulp beginnings. But for a while there I had something in common with Ray Bradbury, and I probably remember PLANET STORIES better than any other magazine because of that. I never wrote space opera, but that doesn't mean I can't appreciate it, moderately. I used to like semi-space-opera, like ERB. But my kind of fiction, what I wrote, was heavy on plot. My fantasy material was a little more into characters, but I generally developed them just enough to get the story told.

Of course, anyone who reads and works in a field for as long as Aycock did has to have favorites. "One man really stands out, one person whom I thought was a real artist with words. That was Fredric Brown; I liked that man's writing style immensely; in fact, I respected him for his amazing talent with words. Brown was a master writer, a great wit, and a tremendously underrated SF author. A lot of the authors of that period bored me; I won't go into names, because a lot of them are still writing today and are quite respected--but they seemed to write in a way that plodded along without catching my attention. And I was always bored by the pseudo-literary writers, those who thought they could do in sf what Joyce and Eliot and Steinbeck and Faulkner had done in mainstream and fool us into thinking it was new or different. Not Brown--I could get caught up in his stories and find myself thinking in terms of "how would Brown do this?" the next time I'd write. I never imitated the man, but I'm sure he influenced me."

"Heinlein, more than anyone else, probably influenced the writing of the authors of the fifties. His style and the strength of his plots just seemed to work. And more importantly, the publishers realized it; he made a much higher word rate than most of us, and he probably earned it in his increased sales and drawing power. I guess there were a lot of new authors who saw themselves as the next Heinlein; but his stuff is hard to imitate. I liked his writing, and I'd love to have sold like him--if I had maybe I'd have been writing full-time all these years--but I never felt that I should try to write a PUPPET MASTERS or anything like that. It was good stuff, but I never felt really urged on by what he did. Of all his books, PUPPET MASTERS is my favorite; that was the first book of his where I thought to myself, when I'd finished it, "damn, this man can tell a story!" I liked GLORY ROAD, too; Heinlein developed very human characters in those two books, and in the PUPPET MASTERS his aliens were so real, so fearsome that I can almost shudder when I think of them. And the ending, with that strong Heinlein determination--well, Heinlein was always a firm believer in the ability of humanity to survive and overcome any obstacle, and I think PUPPET MASTERS sums up what he thought of man. Nothing could overcome a Heinlein hero."

"What I did, and what I'd like to do so more, though, is fantasy, stuff based on the Georgia legends and superstitious beliefs; there's a whole wealth of material there waiting to be mined, and no one's touched it. I did a few minor things, and I even sold some SF to the ATLANTA JOURNAL Sunday magazine on the basis of my fantasy and sf work, but I never felt like I really did something with the feel of the North Georgia legends. It's a powerful, untapped setting, and I might still work on it some day."

And so Roger Aycock reminisces and speculates; he holds your attention as he talks of the writers, the editors and the markets of the era in which he wrote, pulling out ASTOUNDING and F&SF and AMAZING and other magazines to show off a story here and there. Perhaps with full-time dedication, Aycock--"Roger Dee"--could have become one of the regular authors of the fifties and sixties, maybe moving on into the seventies. And now, like so many of his contemporaries, his fiction remains in the pages of dozens of scattered pulps and digests, unanthologized and usually unreprinted. It's not bad fiction at all, but Aycock isn't a salesman, and he doesn't like to try to promote himself. So his material remains mostly memories, memories of a period in which SF was really entering its age of quality. Now, he goes back to his newspaper work, not ruling out the possibility of another sf piece now and then, but not promising it, either. He's content to remain a bystander in the field, sharing his memories of a time when he was more than that with anyone who seems really interested. Nowadays he shares those memories less and less often.

December seems to be a slack fanzine month--all the editors must have better things to do with their time, I imagine, but it's a regular pattern: the late summer and early fall hustle and bustle with fanzine activity, followed by the drought of the mid-winter.

Probably one of the more enjoyable fanzines to come through the mails in the past month was the slim, gossippy RALLY #36 ("News'n'Chatter-Zine with a Southern Accent"). Don Markstein, the editor of RALLY (currently taking applications for the position of co-editor, if you happen to be interested), manages to take news, real amd fictitious, and turn out a product that is engrossing reading, even if you only catch half the injokes and references contained within its pages.

Basically, Don is doing a newszine for the South; but the style of presentation is what separates RALLY from its competition. There's a reference or two to the New Orleans 1979 Worldcon (you didn"t know that New Orleans defeated Brighton? Must be so--it says it in RALLY.), some personal news concerning the former co-editor, Stven Carlberg, and whole lotsa gossip. It's only $1 for 5 issues, and well worth twice the price (but don't tell Don or else he might have a 100% price hike). Send your grubby bucks to Don Markstein, 1005 Willow, Austin, TX 78702.

Now, m'friend, if it's a meaty fanzine, a veritable Prime Choice of fanzines, that you want, then you're in the market for SCIENTIFRICTION #9 from Mike Glyer (14974 Osceola St, Sylmar CAL 91345). Those of you who aren't as lucky as I, and don't see Mike's work in the apa MYRIAD, will enjoy his editorial, which includes some segments of Mike's natterzine. Mike is an intriguing and talented writer, and he uses himself just enough that you always wish he had done another page or two more. The finest thing in the issue is a comparison of dogs and cats by Mike Farkash; it's my sort of humor, a bit off-kilter and very dry. Glyer uses a great many Stan Burns reviews as well, a few columns and articles (including a very strong Harry Warner piece about the writing of fanhistories). SCIENTIFRICTION #9 is available for $1 (first issue is available for cash from anyone, but then you have to work for it--art, write, loc, etc.).

Mike Bracken's KNIGHTS #19, s available for $1.25, trades, or the usual, is a fanzine that tries awfully hard to be Hugo-quality. With the 13th or 14th issue, Mike told his readers how badly he wanted the rocketship, and each issue since then has set out to convince his audience that he deserves a nomination. With KNIGHTS #19, I'm a little less convinced, because the overall package isn't as unified as I'd come to expect. All of bracken's regular contributors are here--C.L. Grant & Tom Monteleone have their columns, both of which seem less pressing in topic importance than is usual, Bracken has an editorial, there are the usual features and locs--and there's the special material:an artible on sexism and racism in fandom (the highlight of the issue) by Wayne Hooks, an overlong review of Dick's A SCANNER DARKLY, an interview with Deborah Lewis, a gothic writer, that seems to be here only to show us that sf isn't that special (I found the interview a bit pointless), and an amusing column by Robert Bloch, excerpted from one of his always-fascinating letters. Perhaps I'm becoming jaded, but I can only halfheartedly recommend it--doesn't equal the others (Mike Bracken, 1310 Ramada Blvd, Collinsville, IL 62234).

FR #14 will be available in March--look for it! And everyone, write loads of LoCs on this issue--we need mail!

future retro-spective