


FUTURE



RETROSPECTIVE

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PERSPECTIVES

Being involved in fandom certainly doesn't give me a great deal of time to contemplate things; it seems that one job is scarcely finished before it's time to do something else--an Atlanta SF Club newszine, an amateur press alliance zine, a new FR. If it weren't so enjoyable, I'd probably give it all up... As it is, though, I sigh, sit back, and start typing on the next item to come along.

The most satisfying part of doing a fanzine, I guess, is reaching the audience you want to reach; FR seems to be doing this well, judging from the letters, the tradezines, etc., that we receive. The last issue was a particularly satisfying one, though, because we actually got to turn down a few requests for FR #13.

When I phrase it that way, it makes me sound awfully cold-hearted and inconsiderate, doesn't it? If I explain that the reason we turned people down was that all copies of the issue were gone, perhaps that'll make it clearer.

It's a neat feeling to actually sell/trade out of an issue; it gives a sense of accomplishment, a sense of having something people want--and it gives a tremendous boost to the old ego. It also makes me feel horribly guilty for not getting the next issue out yet, but I've developed ways to eliminate guilt--for \$7.95, care of this editor, I'll send you my pamphlet on said topic...

At any rate, we also managed to sell out of several back issues of FR, although my files were in such disorder that I haven't realized this, even though it's been a fact since last August. I'll try to run a listing of the issues we're out of, and offer a one-for-one trade of new issues for the return of older issues that we can pass along.

MUNDANE TOPICS--

Of all the government agencies that feel a compelling need to make a profit, the Post Office would have to be the one. I'd have little complaint if HEW, HUD, CIA, or any of the other agencies had to make a gain on their cash outlay each year, but the postal system is the one and only government agency to feel compelled to do so.

And now, rates are up to 15¢ for first class, and book rate has finally reached a ludicrous 36¢ for the first lb. I can use the government's rationalization that it's proportionately less than I spent on postage with my 1965 income--but that's because I was twelve years old in

1965, and my weekly income was two bucks. Then, a single stamp represented one-fortieth of my entire weekly earnings--nowadays, it's proportionately less, but that's scant solace.

I'm really curious as to the effect of the postal increase on fanactivity; right now, the majority of the cost of an FR goes into mailing it out, including envelopes, postage, etc. The government is predicting a book rate rise to a staggering 50¢ a pound by 1980; at that price, the cost of mailing out a single issue of FR to all who receive it will be almost the same as our monthly rent!

Certainly, publications like ALGOL and SFR can thrive, even with increased prices; but most fanzines make no money at all for the editor, and few of them break even. I know of one fanzine editor who told me recently that he had raised the price on his 20-page fanzine to \$1 because no one was paying for it anyway, so he could put any price on it he wanted.

Very true. The monetary value of a free item is meaningless.

But the investment means a great deal. Will he be able to produce a fanzine when it amounts to a week's check every four months? Will he want to?

Perhaps this is one reason for an interest in apas; the postage costs are marginally small because a large number of people are subdividing the bill. Very few apa members would produce apazines if they had to mail their own material out each month or so.

FR doesn't pay its way, not by a long shot, but it does manage to get in enough money every now and then to help cover a chunk of the postage charges. Had I been shelling out all the money from my pockets, this new increase of 20% would have given me serious cause to doubt the necessity of FR.

The end result may be a decrease in the number of neo-ish crudzines--but every now and then one of those neo-ish crudzines turns into something a bit more impressive.

The final ignominy is that today, the day the rates went up, wasn't even a postal delivery day--they knew better than to get out in their distinctive vehicles where enraged fans could easily spot them...

FAAn AWARDS and BLOCS

Mike Glyer does some serious speculating in this issue about the effects of bloc votes on various awards results; after the FAAn Awards ballot came out, I was

a little less concerned. But there is a problem of sorts in the FAAn Awards right now, and it's the same problem that afflicts the Hugoes: there's already a traditional vote, a certain number of fanzines, editors, loccers, etc., who get nominated just because they were nominated last year. This sort of selective-memory nominating discounts the overall credibility of any awards results, FAAn included.

Is there a solution? Probably not, because the only real solution would be to make winners ineligible for a certain number of years, and that's not fair to the fan who produces an outstanding product year after year.

I'm also speculatively interested in the effects of a regional bloc-vote; if every fan in Podunk, Louisiana voted for Joe Schmuck, Podunk's leading fan, and his fanzine, it might make it on the FAAn ballot with a circulation of 75 or a hundred--that's how few votes it would take to slant the results.

In the Hugos, it would take few more than that; a concerted bloc vote from a large regional club could put a regional fan or a regional fanzine on the ballot easily, and could bring a lot of attention to the regional fan or the regional fanzine, even if the real win was impossible.

Gripping about this sort of thing seems unfair, though, unless I can offer a solution to the problem; honestly, I can't... Read Mike's column for his thoughts on similar topics, then let me know what ideas you have in the next FR.

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF A FANPUBBING EMPIRE

Putting together a fanzine can be an exercise in frustration; besides the usual hassles of broken tensor bands, clogged mimeo silkscreens, etc., there's always the inevitable situation where a columnist just can't come up with anything to present in a column.

Item: Ceese Hutto has no "Cinematic Eye" in this issue due partly to a lack of time and partly to a lack of any outstanding film to do a film/novel comparison. And here I am, with a fabulous column-title layout that'll have to wait until next issue.

Item: After all my grotching, there's no "Introspective" in here this time; again, the fellow who does that column says there's nothing in the files to write on this issue, but promises some big things next time. And since that fellow--Biggers, I think his name was--lives here, I think I can safely say he'll come through next time.

It's mortifying when you gripe at your columnists for being late, then you can't even do a piece for your own zine.

NEW FOLKS IN AN OLD ZINE

As a flip-through of this issue of FR may have determined for you, there is a new look of sorts to the design of FR (do you get the feeling we do this very regularly?). This time, though, it's not the amateurish work of myself, but it's the design work of Sally Cook, who's taken over the position of Art Director for FR. A position that may not have existed before now, but who's to say?...

Before I go any further, let me turn the stencil over to Sally, who can sum up her ambitions, plans, etc., much more handily than I.

MEMO FROM THE ART DIRECTOR:

Having filled a previously non-existent position (that of Art Director), I feel compelled to make a few statements regarding art contributions. To begin with, I think using the word "art" tends to be confusing since what we really need is illustration.

Let me explain: there is no question that a great deal of illustration pushes beyond its inherent parameters and achieves the quality and substance of Art. But illustration is different from art in both execution and function. Art is, or should be, a pure expression of the artist's personal compulsion to create. Within that definition, the size, materials, medium, content, etc., are chosen with little or no regard for future use or appreciation.

The function of illustration, however, is to enhance, augment, and/or decorate written text within expressed definitions and precise limitations. Above all, he must be aware of the boundaries of the box of words.

If you want to contribute illustrations to FR, for instance, you should note the immovable fact that the format allows a column width of 2.5 inches. A nifty drawing of this width, or 5 or 7.5 inches, will easily and quickly be used. Maximum height is 10 inches. Now that you catch the drift, you can begin to figure all the clever L-shapes and stepped and pyramid configurations with which you might work.

Art should be solid black--ballpoint mimeographs with scratchy vagueness. Use india ink or solid felt-tip ink.

I'm not authoritarian by nature, so if you come up with a fantastic ballpoint piece, I'll bet you that Cliff will probably use it, sooner or later...

I like illos that have pleasing aesthetic form, decorative design. I like illos that have proportion and beauty. I'd like FR to have a Unified Format; my ideas are heavily influenced by the popular illustrated magazines at the turn of the century like CHAPBOOK,

THE YELLOW BOOK, and CENTURY. Long after their topical content has lost relevance, their illustrations still fascinate and delight. During the sixties, a few alternative newspapers attempted the Unified Format with great success. The main impulse is a feeling that empty space is contemptible; every page is accented or framed by decoration. A marriage of words and design is achieved to the harmonious improvement of both.

I have done a few simple frames in this issue to offer as examples of my interpretation of this format. I have no intent of dictating the style of contributions, inherently preferring an eclectic mix.

I cannot possibly produce the full volume of work required to achieve the effect we desire. So this is an ardent appeal for contributions that aspire to this proposed format. Start sending in those frames for words!!

--Sally Cook

And a few more words on the topic from me; I, too, want a mix, and I'd particularly like to see something done with frames, borders, trims, etc., in a science-fictional vein. It'll take imagination, but the product is worth it.

SUMMING UP

I'm not wholly satisfied with the content of this FR; as I've previously indicated, a lot of columnists are missing, and that's something that bothers me. The past few FRs have been hard acts to follow, thanks to the contributions of a great many of you, and I'm striving to keep the quality to the point I expect it to be.

I'm still looking for someone to review fanzines regularly; if you qualify, drop me a line and volunteer for the job. It'd be nice if you could include a sample review, just so I can see what sort of stuff you do.

This seems to have become a talk-about-FR-editorial; I didn't intend it that way, but it happens from time to time. Susan's missing from the PERSPECTIVES page entirely this time, due to a pressing project at her job and the time that requires--next time, I'll make her type most of this section, just to watch her make up for lost time.

And so long as I'm compiling a list of random topics, I'd like to publicly thank Mike Bledsoe and the Biloxi, MS fan organization for inviting us to serve as Fan GOH's at Coastcon, in Biloxi this past March 30-April 1. It was a thoroughly enjoyable convention, and was made so by the kindness and hospitality of the Biloxi people as well as the friendliness of guests Joe Haldeman, George Alec Effinger, and Freff.

Enough for a non-editorial; back next issue with more reviews and a variety of other columns and such.

REVIEWS

TCITY TROUBLES

the interface novels.

THE INTERFACE TRILOGY

INTERFACE (Ace 37090-X), VOLTEFACE (Ace 86607-9), @ \$1.50, and MULTIFACE (Ace 54500-9), \$1.75. All books by Mark Adlard. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

The novels of the Interface Trilogy aren't truly new--the first one was published almost 7 years ago in England, in fact--but these first Ace editions make them new to most American readers. It's a shame that we had to wait so long to get a glimpse at Mark Adlard's version of the future, because it's compelling enough and well-enough-told to make the books most worthwhile.

Describing an author in terms of another author may not be fair to either, but it's hard to resist; if anything, Adlard's tale can be described as Moorcock's DANCERS AT THE END OF TIME series as seen through the eyes of a Philip Dick. It's an occasionally sardonic, wry, and compelling world, much unlike our own, and while it gets off to a weak, almost disjointed beginning in INTERFACE, it quickly moves to a rapid-fire series of images, glimpses into the lives of different sets of main characters.

Adlard's vision is a world of somewhat limited hedonism, a world in which everything is done for amusement or pleasure--but a world that lacks the childish naivete of its Moorcockian counterpart. TCity is a

world peopled by individuals who are somehow unhappy with their existence, dissatisfied with the complacent life they lead.

Of all the books, it's undoubtedly the initial one that is the weakest; Adlard takes a long time to introduce us to TCity, to familiarize us with its aphrodisiacs, the overpopulated corridors where one stumbling fall might mean death, and the stahlex-oriented business world, so rigorously controlled that a slight fluctuation, an unexpected change

in demand might mean disaster for business as a whole.

The use of rotating characters also helps prevent the books from being as successful as they might--it's difficult to conceive of the books as a strongly interrelated trilogy as the city and its inhabitants (along with the time-setting) change from book to book.

The first book establishes TCity; the second establishes the reinstitution of the work-ethic into



the culture; and the final novel is a look at the effect of this work ethic on the inhabitants of TCity.

Each book works in an almost kaleidoscopic fashion, building up to a very irresolute summation; Adlard isn't drawing any conclusions here, he's leading us to draw our own conclusions about TCity, its lifestyle and its quasi-attempts at business and work.

Most importantly, Adlard has no pretensions that the work should be taken seriously—it's moody and entertaining, but not heavy in its symbolic and literary scope. Adlard is painting word pictures, using a broad swath of color here, a more subtle gradation there, and while occasional chapters and scenes fail miserably, it's rare enough that the overall impression is still positive.

The Paul Alexander cover on the first book captures perfectly the feel of the novels: a vast, mechanized (almost absurdly so) city, filled with tiny, faceless people, almost lost in the operation of TCity itself. It's a strong piece of sf art, much better than the gaudy covers that front the other two novels, and it's very, very appropriate.

If you're in the mood for something not particularly heavy on characters but long on ideas, try the Interface trilogy: once you get well into that first book, it's hard to quit before you've finished them all.

THE GODS OF XUMA. David J. Lake (DAW UW1360 - \$1.50). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

The subtitle of this book—"Barsoom Revisited"—might lead the reader to assume this is an ERB pastiche—it certainly isn't, though, and the reader does himself a disservice if he passes it up for that reason.

What the novel is is a fine science-fiction tale of a planet that has developed an extremely Burroughsian

culture, but with differences—in places where ERB's novels drifted all-too-far from the realm of scientific probability, Lake has seen fit to change the Barsoomian tradition.

Into this sort of world enters Tom Carson; recognizing the similarity, he ventures to the planet and becomes enmeshed in a most non-Burroughsian series of adventures and exploits, discovering that his Barsoomian preconceptions are up for some rather drastic revisions!

THE GODS OF XUMA is a totally engrossing novel; it's well-written, cleverly presented and full-bodied. Lake has obviously taken the time to develop the "Xumans" into more than a Martian-red-man-carbon-copy.

Carson himself is a somewhat predictable hero, bumbling here and there in the modern style, but not so much that his misadventures detract from the plot flow of his exploits. And the final thirty pages are developed so well that it's difficult to imagine, in retrospect, how Lake could pack all that action in there at all.

THE GODS OF XUMA certainly isn't a heavyweight novel—Lake isn't writing for that market. What it is is an entertaining science fiction adventure that takes itself seriously, and it's so rare that you find one of that sort that, when you do, you almost have to recommend it.

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION, V. 2. Don Tuck, ed. (Advent Press, 1978 - \$25) Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

The first volume of the Tuck Encyclopedia was released 4 years ago; at the time, it was a worthwhile tool, for while it showed its age (it's complete in its listings only up to 1968), it was recent enough that it proved worth its initial \$20 cost. At the time, though, none of us dreamed

that we would wait four years for the companion volume to complete the alphabet.

Tuck's ENCYCLOPEDIA is a tool that, if up-to-date, would be indispensable for all major libraries of science fiction: it's a listing, by author, of all the science fiction and fantasy publications since the publishing boom in the 40s, and a great many titles published before this time (Tuck does not claim to be complete indefinitely; in the earlier years, he is more selective in his listings). While mainly bibliographical, the encyclopedia also includes some biographical information on authors, when available.

The four years has taken its toll. Besides detracting from the value of the first book (the alphabet A-L was covered in the first volume, with M-Z covered in volume two; a discouraging fact if you're researching Wollheim, or Silverberg, or Vance), the four year wait has expanded what was, in 1974, an excusable six-year lag until it is now a decade lag—and the decade from 1968 to 1978 has been the most productive ever for sf, with many major authors entering the field at this time.

Perhaps this is the problem; the disillusionment of waiting four years for a book that should have followed its companion volume by a year, at most. As it is, a third volume is promised, covering magazines and their contents, but there could very well be yet another four year lag on this. The bibliographical information is solid and well-researched, so you can't fault Tuck for his work; Advent, though, can be faulted for their foot-dragging.

As a set, the two volumes are worth the \$50 to a completist or to someone who takes his sf very seriously; to the casual reader of science fiction, though, they're not worth the money. This is the nature of bibliographical listings,



of course, and as such it's neither an asset or a liability. For the more recent collector, the one who wants to find out about sf and authors of the late 60s and early 70s, the Encyclopedia has little value. Advent could correct this by issuing an update this year or next--whether they will or not remains to be seen.

The second volume of the Encyclopedia has one other feature that has proven quite useful to me since we got the book: that's a title-listing, arranged alphabetically, to help the reader identify the author of that book he's been hunting for for years. I've used the title-listing almost as much as I've used the Encyclopedia's author-listing.

I have second thoughts about saying that the Tuck Encyclopedia is worth \$25, because of all its faults; but until its critics (myself included) can find something better, it remains the most valuable bibliographical work of its kind, and an almost mandatory addition to the collector's library.

NEVERWHERE. Richard Corben. (Ballantine/Ariel - \$7.95). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

Richard Corben, like Jeff Jones and Berni Wrightson, is a "cult" artist; his work appeals to a certain segment of the fantasy art population, while being almost totally overlooked by others. Unlike Jones and Wrightson, both of whom derived so much of their artistic flow from Frank Frazetta, Corben seems to be emulative of almost no one. His color work may touch on the Parrish-esque, but the heavy airbrush and the exaggerated human figure cannot be confused with anyone else in the field: it's uniquely Corben.

NEVERWHERE is a "visual novel;" that is, it's a fancy comic strip, done up in more than the pencils/inks/four-color printing of its ancestors. It's a mixed-media work, combining Corben's airbrush, his pen-and-ink, and his painting; and for those who want more than fancy artwork, Corben has the entire thing arranged to actually tell a story.

NEVERWHERE is an Everyman-tale with a protagonist in a world he cannot comprehend; Den, the hero, merely accepts his plight and sets out to save himself and Katherine from the evils that imperil them. His adventures pit him against monstrous creatures, decadent kings, and Lovecraftian monsters, all presented in a grand fantasy format.

As a story, NEVERWHERE is quite weak; it would make a poor novel. But it does make a good comic strip; the grossly exaggerated anatomy fits well with the surreal adventures, and the entire strip takes on an almost dreamlike quality due to the lush blending of colors and unnatural hues.

Corben certainly knows his art; for the Corben fan, this book is a steal at its \$8 price tag--the book is 96 pp. of full-color art, well-reproduced on heavy stock, plus an introduction and forward. It's large-sized, paperbound, and probably the most impressive thing to come out of the Ariel-Ballantine collaboration thus far.

If you're a Corben fan, definitely pick this up; if you're not, you can use this as a measurement of your feelings about the artist: this is pure Corben, and if you don't like it, I doubt you'll care for any of his work.

CINNABAR. Edward Bryant. (Bantam 10599-X - \$1.50) Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

The blurbwriter outdid himself on CINNABAR: "A City at the Center of Time Where Infinite Possibilities Converge..." As a result, I came to Ed Bryant's short story collection with nothing but the highest hopes; I was soundly disappointed.

CINNABAR is a self-indulgent work that does not particularly attempt to entertain the reader; it's a series of stories with a common bond, and the bond if centers around is the city, Cinnabar.

Each of the stories in the book is firmly entrenched in the existential-absurdist approach, and I'm not a fan of that sort of storytelling, unless it's well-done. Too many writers try to excuse bad storytelling as being "literary" work of this sort, which it certainly isn't; the result is that CINNABAR makes the reader feel that Edward Bryant is playing games for his amusement only, and if we happen to enjoy them, that's fine.

A brief look at the book itself, via excerpt, might make the point:

Then he turned and distributed the tea. They sat and sipped and talked of science and the arts.

"I firmly believe," said the inventor, "that science is an art."

"Yes," said the flirtatious lady. "I gather that you pay little attention to either the practical or commercial applications of technology." She smiled at him from behind steeped fingers.

"Quite so. Many at the Institute call me a dilettante."

The tall lady said, "I believe it's time to go. Tinnath, we thank you for allowing us to impose. It's been a pleasure." She dashed her teacup to the tile floor...

Ultimately, the reader doesn't care.

Letters

Dave Minch
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I can get my teeth into Mike Glycer's column dealing with reviews and reviewers. I think he has identified some issues in reviewing and failures among reviewers, though he's wide of the mark in some points.

I agree most heartily that reviewers will all bring prejudices and personal opinions to their reviews. I do not agree that this makes "objectivity in reviewing a bullshit concept." I think that here Mike has mistaken a sort of Heisenberg uncertainty for the results themselves.

Even in the physical sciences, observers will bring deliberate or unconscious prejudices to their work. In the physical sciences, this is recognized so that double-blinds and multiple observations will iron such things out. In reviewing, one cannot hope to discard personal feelings. These feelings make reviews what they are. This is analogous to the Heisenberg principle. That states, to physicists, that the observer alters the results he observes. This does not make the observations invalid.

One can, however, discard intentional alteration of the review to agree with presentiments one has. An "objective" review, to my understanding, is one in which the reviewer uses his personal opinions to reach an assessment of the work he reviews, while still avoiding judgments formed from personal opinions which are irrelevant to the judgment.

If a reviewer gives the next Gor novel a rave review because he's been paid by the publisher, that is

not objective. The reviewer's personal profit is not germane to the literary quality of a Gor novel. If he reviews it on the basis of his feelings about adventure fiction, current literary tastes and models and John Norman's ability to write cogently, fine. I think that's "objective." That's the way I'd like to have books reviewed. If a reviewer bases a published review of a Gor novel on his personal feelings about ERA, I don't think that's objective. That's personal taste, though, because I don't think politics should judge literature.

Mike touched on an underlying theme, the function of the reviewer, but I don't think he explored it enough. It is a good question--what is the review supposed to do?

From the reviews I read, I want a purchasing guide. I have not the time and money to read everything. To find those books I should read, or movies I should see, I look to the reviewers. I know, from experience, what their reviews mean. With some, a good review makes me rush out & buy. With others, I know that I won't like it if he did. Some reviewers I read only to see what has been recently published. I know that I can't tell a thing from the reviews.

It's all like this. There will never be an objective review which is the final review of any work. The simple reason for this is that there are two opinions, at least, of any work. Nothing will ever have a universally favorable or unfavorable response.

If there were a reviewer making his judgments solely on the attractiveness of the typeface employed in a book, that's fine with me, so long as he tells me the criterion used. It won't help me decide which book

to purchase but I'm sure there must be somebody who can use it.

The GUIDE MICHELIN is useless to a cannibal. It is useless to a resident of Otumwa, Iowa, also. If you're looking for a restaurant in Paris and agree with the opinions of the GUIDE, it's the only place to peruse. The fact is that all reviews are useless to most people. There is only a narrow fraction of the world population that any reviewer can reach and narrower slice that he can influence.

Both reviewers and writers are overly impressed with the importance of reviewers. If writers lend credence to reviews, I think they have no one but themselves to blame. If reviewers take up the notion that they are the arbiters of taste and value, their reviews will diminish in usefulness and they are the only ones to blame for that.

((A reviewer generally knows the size of his audience, and the percentage of that audience that will react to what the reviewer says. A fanzine will probably have a far greater percentage of reactive readers than TIME or NEWSWEEK, because the audience is selective and interested. Perhaps this is why reviewers in fanzines seem to get a strong reaction from professional writers.))

((I think your use of the word "objective" is largely semantic, but I agree with your meaning--we must all use standard criteria to judge a work, and the reader must know our criteria, or the entire review is of no use to anyone. That's why readers trust a fanzine they've known for a while--they know its criteria.))

HOTEL TRANSYLVANIA. Chelsea Quinn Yarbro (kSt. Martin's Press, \$8.95) Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

HOTEL TRANSYLVANIA is an interesting oddity--it's a cross between a fantasy novel and a historical romance; fans of either genre will undoubtedly like the touches of their particular favored genre and be anything from indifferent to hostile towards the other genre's particular conventions. As a fantasy fan, I found the fantasy touches (centered on the hero himself, Comte de Saint Germain, who is immortal due to his vampiric state) enjoyable and, at times, possessing a rare artistic flair in transcending the archetypal vampire tale.

Yarbro's biggest problem with the novel is precisely this intermixing of the two genres; she's already proven herself a capable storyteller in her earlier writing, but HOTEL TRANSYLVANIA lacks the unity that marked FOURTH HORSEMAN OF THE APOCALYPSE.

Ignoring this problem (the major symptom of which is a constant use of clothing descriptions throughout the book--an irritating and useless habit), HOTEL TRANSYLVANIA is a well-paced book that's reminiscent of a 1930s horror film; Comte de Saint Germain grabs the reader's attention immediately, and Yarbro's development of him away from the typical vampire image and into something more heroic and erotic enhances reader interest in the character. The story is a simple one of virginal kidnapping and satanic sacrifice, but it's more than an imitation of a tried-and-true plot. If you like 1930s horror films, you should enjoy HOTEL TRANSYLVANIA; Yarbro has captured the feel of the genre well.

CLUSTER. Piers Anthony (Avon 34686 - \$1.75). Reviewed by Frank Love.

I'm not sure this book fits the traditional definition of a novel--it's

more like a series of short stories--but it's certainly a good book. It's a threefold success in that it (a) held my interest, (b) made me think, and (c) aroused my sense of wonder. Any book that manages to do all three in this day and time is certainly a success.

This novel relates the adventures of Flint of the planet Outworld. Born and raised in a stone age culture, he is suddenly thrust into the role of Galactic Ambassador by virtue of the fact his Kirlian aura is 200 times stronger than average. Anthony makes this important to the novel in the following way: matter transmission is feasible over interstellar distances but the costs in terms of energy are (no pun intended) astronomical. The only way of transmitting people from one alien culture to another is by personality transfer. A personality with a strong Kirlian aura is beamed at a known planet of high civilization, where it is picked up by one who is either insane or freshly dead.

There are problems. For one thing, you can't get back home without building a new personality transfer machine. For another, the longer you stay in the host body, the more your own aura declines; eventually, your personality will merge with that of the alien that was--ergo,

the more powerful your aura is, the longer you have to achieve your goals and persuade the alien culture to build a machine to get you back home. This makes Flint a valuable commodity.

What reason is there for going? Of course, there's a Menace, which requires that Earth contact and get help from as many alien cultures as possible. The Menace as created by Anthony actually serves as a frame to allow Flint to visit alien cultures and learn as he goes.

Here is where the book really shines: its alien cultures. Without the care and imagination that Anthony put into creating them, this book would be a rather lackluster affair. With this care, though, the book is exceptional.

If you think that there is nothing more to be written about alien cultures, that you've seen all the new and different ideas, you're certainly in for a surprise. There are no less than three alien cultures developed fully and believably. Each is progressively more alien in form and orientation; in addition, there are at least five other alien cultures developed to a believable level. It's almost too much originality--the book works best if stretched over two or three reading sessions.



The only sour note in the entire book is the ending; it's primarily a come-on for the next book in the trilogy. If you prefer to read trilogies at one sitting, you may want to wait until this summer, when the final volume will be available from Avon. However, even with its weak ending, CLUSTER can be read as complete in and of itself.

I think that CLUSTER is the best think Piers Anthony has written since ORN. Once you get into it, I think you'll agree.

IF THE STARS ARE GODS. Gregory Benford and Gordon Eklund. (Berkley -- \$1.75) Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

One of the best novels of 1978 was Greg Benford's IN THE OCEAN OF NIGHT; now Berkley has brought out a paperback edition of a collaborative effort that's almost as powerful as Benford's solo work.

IF THE STARS ARE GODS is the story of Bradley Reynolds, beginning with his initial voyage to Mars to discover the possible origins of life on the planet, and following his adventures with alien contact, a search for his place in his own world, and a final search for life around Jupiter. It's an episodic novel, covering 69 years of a man's life, showing us what developments make Reynolds the man he is.

IF THE STARS ARE GODS is one of the most satisfying novels I've read in a while; the readily available paperback edition should make it far easier for those who missed the hardcover to read it.

The episodic format of the novel is reminiscent of the same approach in IN THE OCEAN OF NIGHT; and while this book lacks the drive of Benford's solo effort, it offers an ending that's much more satisfying. Be sure you don't miss it--it's worth the time and money.

COSMIC TRIGGER: THE FINAL SECRET OF THE ILLUMINATI. Robert Anton Wilson (Pocket Books 81669 - \$1.95) Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

COSMIC TRIGGER is definitive proof that an author can indeed take himself too seriously; when Wilson was amusing us with his paranoid ramblings in the Illuminatus Trilogy, it was entertaining in a sardonic way. Unfortunately, Wilson chose to take himself all too seriously with this book, and the result is one of the most self-indulgent, uncontrolled examples of disorganized rambling you'll find from a major publisher.

COSMIC TRIGGER is a basic non-fiction presentation of the same ideas that are given a less-than-serious treatment in the Trilogy: the Illuminati Conspiracy, the Kennedy assassination and the truth behind Lee Harvey Oswald, and so on. It also offers insight into the secrets behind the number 23, UFOs, and psychogenic drugs. And there's a section on pyramids in which Kelly Freas plays a prominent role.

Unfortunately, the book has no semblance of order; Robert Anton Wilson has thrown together whatever came into his mind, assembled it into a set of unrelated ramblings, interspersed with a few lucid moments of speculation, and then he somehow coerced a reputable company into publishing the end result.

Frankly, it's boring and almost irritating; not because of the subject matter, mind you (that could be handled provocatively), but in the lack of concern for communicating anything to the reader. Pass it up, by all means; the waste of valuable reading time is an unpardonable sin.

THE QUEEN OF ZAMBA. L. Sprague de Camp (Dale Books 89559 - \$1.50) Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

L. Sprague de Camp is an Old Reliable; whenever I see his name on

a book, I can feel confident that I'll get my money's worth in entertainment from the book. For as long as I've been reading SF, de Camp has yet to let me down (of course, I've made a point of avoiding his sword-and-sorcery because of a personal dislike for the genre). QUEEN OF ZAMBA managed to keep his record unsullied for yet another book.

THE QUEEN OF ZAMBA is one of de Camp's Viagens Interplanetarias novels; this tale deals with an intrepid hero, Victor Hasselborg, whose job it is to track a missing person. He tracks said person to the planet Krishna, where a sort of non-interference pact makes it difficult for him to carry out his job of finding the missing maiden; the novel details Hasselborg's efforts to carry out his job while taking as few chances as possible.

This is a typical ASTOUNDING novel; it's long on action, short on speechmaking, and features a hero who can overcome almost any problem, however seemingly insurmountable. It's also lightweight entertainment all the way, and it's one of the more pleasant things by de Camp that I've read.

The paperback also offers an extra in the form of a Krishna-set short piece, "Perpetual Motion," dealing with a charlatan trying to make a lucrative living on Krishna. It, too, is amusing entertainment, wry and amusing.

QUEEN OF ZAMBA is one of the first releases in the new Dale Books line of "Asimov's Choice" paperbacks; unfortunately, the cover design is so poor that it'll be a wonder if this book sells well. The top 60% of the cover is taken up with text and a photo of the good doctor, leaving only a little room for a sketchy Jack Gaughan sf painting. If you like entertainment-SF, overlook the cover and buy it.

FANTASY BY FABIAN. Stephen Fabian (Gerry de la Ree - \$15). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

The specialty publishers continue to deluge us with a variety of art books; so many, in fact, that it becomes difficult to get enthused over the genuinely good ones. Stephen Fabian seems to have been a target for a good many art volumes, and it's easy to assume a jaded "oh, another Fabian art book" attitude. FANTASY BY FABIAN is a little more than just another Fabian art book, though, and as such deserves a bit more attention.

FANTASY BY FABIAN is an 8.5 x 11 volume reprinting some of the rarer Fabian collections; it contains both volumes of Fabian nudes, the Letters Lovecraftian volume, and The Fire Fiend and the Raven, as well as a selection of pieces from his fanzine, semi-prozine, and prozine work. It's all black and white, which should be taken for granted if you're a Fabian fan--he hasn't become adept enough at color work thus far to warrant inclusion of any color pieces in such a collection.

The book is one of de la Ree's limited edition hardcovers, with a print run of 1200; as a result, it's quite possible for the run to be nearing the sold out stage even as you read this. And that's another reason to consider it; like Don Grant or Arkham House books, de la Ree publications can be looked on as investments, certain to go up in value as the books go out of print.

To make a confession, though, I'm a bit disappointed in the volume, artistically; one thing it does reveal is that Fabian has a great tendency to rely on the subject itself to carry the picture, and the result is a lifeless nude study in which the fantasy elements seem almost extraneous. His portraits of Ayesha from SHE and Lylda from THE GIRL IN THE GOLDEN ATOM are prime examples of this failing; both of them appear to have been taken from one of a number of men's magazine centerfolds, and have just as much vitality as the foldout of the month. So much better are the illos for the Zelazny HAND OF OBERON, reprinted herein, or the Finlayesque material this volume presents.

Fabian is rapidly becoming a cult artist whose most serious competition is his own work, the bulk of which looks entirely too similar. If you like his use of litho crayon and stipple effects, you'll love this volume; if you're less than impressed, you can flip through it to see some sides of the Fabian talent you were unaware of, then make your decision. But you'd better hurry; it won't be around long.

TIME STORM. Gordon R Dickson. (St. Martin's - \$10) Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

Gordon Dickson is an author capable of a great deal, but one who seldom comes through with the quality you'd expect from him--not since NECROMANCER have I really been satisfied with one of his novels. Thus, it is a very proud moment when I can

honestly say that TIME STORM is the most moving and powerful piece of fiction I've ever read from Gordon R. Dickson.

TIME STORM is a look at one man, an almost Heinleinian hero named Marc Despard, as he struggles to survive in a world where time storms have turned the country into a jigsaw-puzzle world, with each piece being set in a different time era. It's a world that's unorganized, chaotic, and deadly to most--but Despard is a survivor. Along with Sunday, a leopard whose devotion to Despard is boundless, and a girl who seems to have been a victim of the psychological trauma of the time storms, Despard sets out to find the cause of the storms, and a way to overcome him. The novel details his exploits in other times, with humans and non-humans, and the ultimate development of a new civilization to withstand the time storms.

Marc Despard is the most carefully-delineated protagonist Dickson has created, and one of the few protagonists in SF who might survive, by name, in the genre's literary history. The book reflects Despard's emotional states, his intensity, just as the superb PUPPET MASTERS keys itself around the emotions of its hero. And it works--the reader can feel what Dickson wants him to feel, can sense the loss and feel proud of the victories--all thanks to Dickson's careful writing. Dickson is a writer who wants to entertain, to tell a story, and he does both in this book's 342 pages--it well deserves its place on



the Hugo ballot this year--in fact, I'd have been sorely disappointed if it had failed to appear there.

Of all the books I've read recently, there have been few that managed to involve me so much emotionally that I reacted emotionally at the climactic moment of the novel--the final few pages of TIME STORM even managed to pull that sort of reaction from me--and when an author can make a rather jaded reviewer react where a dozen other well-written novels have failed, that author has accomplished something. Don't keep waiting for TIME STORM to go into a paperback release--this one is worth getting in hardcover or in a book club edition.

DEATH IN FLORENCE. George Alec Effinger (Doubleday - \$6.95). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

DEATH IN FLORANCE is an absurdist game, a non-novel; it's George Alec Effinger having fun (and making fun) with and of the reader, the novel, and the author. I wish it were as fun to read as I know it must have been to write--it's not, though, and in fact it's the most disappointing thing Effinger's turned out in his career, with the possible exception of his PLANET OF THE APES novels (I studiously avoided them).

As Effinger has professed himself, DEATH IN FLORENCE is only marginally a science fiction novel; it's more of a bizarre, poorly explained fantasy in which a handful of characters are allowed to run free over an evacuated Europe. (The cities are vacant because everyone is staying with relatives--that's the kind of novel this is...)

I have trouble imagining a serious reading market for this type of writing; I find such frivolous games as including messages to the reader (usually coy ones), "cute" games and puzzles, tests, trivia quizzes, etc., to be a waste of my reading time. I've never seen such an

indulgent work pulled off successfully, and DEATH IN FLORENCE is no exception.

Furthermore, Effinger's characters are becoming more and more "speechy" as his career progresses; what used to be conveyed in action sequences is all too often told to us nowadays, generally in lackluster terms. This is a technique I cannot appreciate, because it reads all too much like a novel summary and all too little like a novel itself.

If you think you might be able to wade through 184 pages of this kind of fluff, then you'll want to pick up DEATH IN FLORENCE. If you prefer your science fiction more like steak than celery (a lot of noise but little worthwhile substance), then I doubt if you'd ever complete this latest offering from Effinger.

A FAR SUNSET. Edmund Cooper. (Ace 22819-4) \$1.50. Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

Although this isn't a new Cooper novel, it doesn't suffer in the least for being almost eleven years old. The theme--survival on an alien world, in this case by the crew of a crashed Earth starship--is not new either; Cooper, however, handles it in a refreshing way that makes it seem as though you're reading the idea for the first time.

The progression of Paul Marlowe is traced from the time of the ship's crash when he is nothing more than an alien about to be executed until rescue does arrive, at which point he holds the highest and most revered position in the planet's culture. During this time, the reader becomes so involved with Marlowe's struggles and soul-searchings as he tries to leave behind a past filled with memories of his life on Earth, memories which no longer apply to his current situation, that the end is almost incredibly sad. One finds himself identifying with Marlowe and judging what decisions one would have

made in Marlowe's place.

A FAR SUNSET is not a highly visible novel, in that it garnered a great many favorable reviews and critical attention. It is a powerful novel, though, in its portrayal of a man completely cut off from his native culture and thrown into an alien one, then forced to adapt or go insane. The action may be low-key, but the memory of the plot and characters stays with you after reading, and that's high praise nowadays. Cooper is a reliable author for delivering good quality, and a novel like A FAR SUNSET helps keep that reputation alive.

A SPLINTER OF THE MIND'S EYE. Alan Dean Foster (Ballantine 26062 - \$1.95) Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

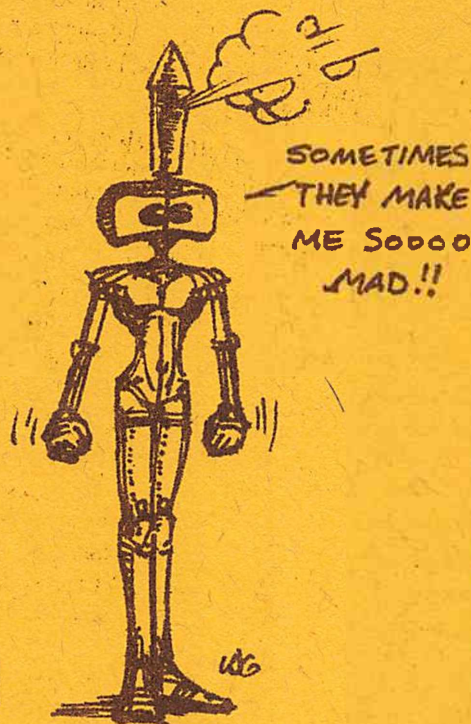
Alan Dean Foster, the rumored author of the original STAR WARS novel, is back with the second novel in the adventures of Luke Skywalker. As most of you are undoubtedly aware, this novel has no relationship whatsoever with the movie script by the late Leigh Brackett--and that's probably for the best, for while SPLINTER OF THE MIND'S EYE is modestly entertaining fare, it's much less visual than its original inspiration, and would make a very lackluster film, with the possible exception of the final segments, pitting Skywalker against Darth Vader.

SPLINTER is a solid adventure novel, showing Foster's keen eye for pacing and plotflow. It's a bit weak in characterization, particularly in its rather superficial coyness shown between Luke and Leia, and that's its big fault. The story places Luke and Leia on Mimban, a planet of barbaric customs, covered with mines and swamps. On this planet, they seek to find the Kaiburr crystal and avoid Darth Vader--and they're only halfway successful. Don't expect quality sf, but it's an entertaining bit of space adventure, well-crafted.

Letters

Piers Anthony Jacob
The wilds of Florida

Read your triple-female column on women in sf with interest; do you think the ERA amendment will improve the situation? (I support ERA, but find it frustrating to see this real estate agency using the letters, and of course in baseball it means earned run average. Well, I suppose for some men ERA might mean the number of times they've scored... never mind.) I've always considered it a challenge to understand the incomprehensible, and the female mystique is one such challenge. A couple of years ago I talked with Katherine McLean, and asked her whether she agreed that the adage about the man desiring the woman, while the woman desires the desire of the man could be translated to the reader desires the writer, while the writer desires the desire of the reader? Since she was a female writer, I thought she might have access to both viewpoints. She did not understand the parallel, but her college-age son was present, and said it made sense to him. Anyway, rightly or wrongly, it has seemed to me that there are parallels between the art of being female and the art of writing, so that maybe through my writing I can understand the female viewpoint. If you want the truth, I suspect the female mystique is mainly the absence of personality; it is the man who has the ambitions and drives that the women do not comprehend. It is not merely sexual discrimination that puts men in all the top political and business situations: it is drive. A man will kill himself, literally, through his driving ambition; he will go into sports so violent as to be



deadly, he will fight, he will work so hard that his heart gives out. A woman, generally, won't. So the mystery is not why the woman doesn't do these things: it's why the man does. And I, as one of the hardest-driving, most combative men in the genre... cannot answer.

...I hope you do ruin your feature on the value of the Hugo/Nebula Awards, but please don't limit it to these two. There seems to be a growing host of awards, so many I can't keep track of them. This proliferation renders any specific award less meaningful, of course; but even so, some awards may be more authoritative than others. I'd like to know which are good ones and which are poor ones. I admit there is more than idle curiosity involved; twice I have been granted awards more or less by surprise, and had to decide within seconds while being notified by phone whether to a

whether to accept them. That's awkward. In each case, I decided to accept, but in each case I had serious doubts as to whether it was the right course.

And a comment on Mike Glicksohn's comment on suing. He poses a good question: if LASER's treatment of my novel was legal, I have no complaint; if not, why don't I sue them? Well, I was blacklisted some time ago because I did just that, almost; I didn't sue because I got what I wanted without going that far, but it was an object lesson in how vindictive publishers can be when an author catches them dead to rights. In the case of LASER, there was contract violation, but since this was done as a fait accompli, there was no way to undo the damage. All I could go for was, in effect, revenge. I made a detailed protest to my agent, who faxed the letter and sent it to editor, publisher, and Coulson's agent; the publisher replied that Elwood had deceived them about this matter, too, and apologized to me, reverted the rights to the novel to me, and closed down the series; very shortly thereafter, Elwood was fired. What point was there in suing at that stage?... How many other writers had their novels diddled with as Joe's and mine were?... Contract violations are not rare, they are common. Most violations occur incidentally, not maliciously; a polite letter suffices to get the matter corrected. Publishers are indeed people; they make mistakes...

REVIEWS



writing in sf and fantasy. This collection has educated me in that regard, and in a most entertaining way.

THE FADED SUN: KESRITH. C.J. Cherryh (Daw Books - \$1.95). Reviewed by Stella Nemeth.

C.J. Cherryh has given us a mix of aliens and humans in *THE FADED SUN: KESRITH*. As in her earlier books, the humans are isolated in an alien environment. They are forced to deal with societies whose basic philosophies are unknown. Later these seem twisted from a human point of view. And as usual, her human protagonist comes off surprisingly well in an environment meant to totally crush a weak person.

Nor that Sten Duncan is a superman. He isn't. He is a frightened man; he is a prisoner who grows more and more powerless as the book progresses. He is an expendable pawn to every other person in the book, human or alien. But he is also a man who is capable of growth. And grow he does; in the end it is his own sense of honor and this ability to grow which makes him valuable and permits him survival.

Niun is a kel'ein of the mri; a kel'ein is a warrior and Niun is trained in all of the war-lore of his people. But he is a kel'ein who has never been to war, although war has raged around him for forty years. He is the youngest child of a dying Edun and a member of a species which has just lost an interstellar war. For Niun, the planet Kesrith is a place of frustration and shame. Niun is the unknown tool of his people, trained for a time when he will be thrown like a as'ei (a throwing knife) in a cosmic game of shon'ai, to find a way off Kesrith for his people.

Hulagh, an adult regul, thinks he is

in control of the situation on Kesrith. But he, also, is an expendable pawn for his people. He has been sent to Kesrith to salvage something out of the aftermath of the human/regul-mri war. His job is to transfer the planet Kesrith to human rule, while destroying as much of the planet as possible. He must also keep the knowledge that there are humans on Kesrith from the mri.

To the mri, Kesrith is homeworld. They are a species whose culture is based on codes and ideals of honor. As a people, they feel betrayed by the regul.

C.J. Cherryh has produced a book filled with interesting people, human and alien, faced with nearly unsolvable problems. I would recommend this book to anyone who has already read one of the author's other books.

This isn't a good introduction to C.J. Cherryh, though. The book seems unfinished; the ending was particularly unsatisfying. I won't say more about it--but it was almost as if this was the first book in a series. It would make a satisfying part of a greater whole.

CASEY AGONISTES. Richard McKenna. (Ace 09227 - \$1.50). Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

McKenna's *CASEY AGONISTES* is a poignant book, and I'm thankful for it because it made me aware of a writer whose talents I had known little of for years. The name "Richard McKenna" had immediately associated itself with *THE SAND PEBBLES* in my mind, but I was unaware of the further extent of his writing in sf and fantasy. This col-

"Casey Agonistes" is the most powerful story in the book, a tale of dying men and the dreams that keep them striving to survive. It's a story that garners an emotional response without trying to, which is one mark of a successful story.

"Hunter Come Home" was a difficult story to beat, though; it's a tale of extraterrestrial life, the balance of nature, and the intrusion of man; it's also a love story, and the way McKenna manages to interrelate the two ideas is the basis of the tale. How this story failed to get some sort of award is beyond me--it's a quality piece of writing.

Three other stories make up this collection, and each of them has the spark of talent that separates a memorable story from simple entertainment. The blurb-heavy packaging may make the book a poor seller at the newsstands and bookstores, which is a shame, because this is the best short story package to come from Ace in quite a while.

SOLO KILL. S. Kye Boulton. (Berkeley - \$1.50) Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

SOLO KILL has sufficient idea and panache to make a successful short story; in fact, it was originally published as a series of short stories in *ANALOG*, and when taken one at a time, with long lapses in between readings, it was up to par with the average *ANALOG* short story. As a group, though, it's a very weak "connected-novel," and an effort to finish.

S. Kye Boulton (a pseudonym for William Cochrane) presents a world in which near-humans in earth-type biplanes fight winged creatures, while being aided by (and aiding) river people in an effort to eliminate the winged Draks. The story seems to

have been built around the vision of biplane vs. winged men in a fight to the death, and it's only these conflict sequences that show any real verve. The remainder of the "novel" is a dragging mass of wordage and poorly delineated characters. Cochrane/Boult never makes me care for these people or their problems, and that's a disappointment for me as a reader as well as a reviewer.

Unless you're enthralled by the idea of winged men vs. biplanes (and I'll admit I liked the mental pictures it evoked initially), don't expect this book to entertain you a great deal--it just doesn't do it. I'd like to see Boult try his hand at a real novel, with a real novel-length plot; I get the feeling that, as an author, he has the potential to do something worthwhile, but hasn't found his place yet.

LUCIFER'S HAMMER. Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle (Playboy Press - \$10) Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

I keep thinking the disaster novel is a thing of the past, and a new member of the genre pops up to remind me that there's a big market out there for a book that shows us how our lives can be thrown into turmoil if only this one little event on the cosmic scale of things were to go wrong...

To compliment Niven and Pournelle, **LUCIFER'S HAMMER** is one of the best disaster novels I've read; the disaster this time is a runaway comet that slams into the earth (and I most assuredly use the word "runaway" facetiously, since Niven & Pournelle are very clear in their scientific explanation of the cosmic probabilities and results of such a collision).

The novel takes an almost cinematic approach to the disaster, cutting from one set of protagonists to another, splicing in scenes of individuals overcoming (and being overcome

by) the effects of the disaster. This novel is perhaps a bit more "preachy" in its attempts at explanations than I would have preferred; there's one sequence, where Forrester and Sharps are explaining the comet's impact force, where it's obviously a lecture that's presented to us, almost extraneous to the flow of the story. Also, characters are disposed of too suddenly or unbelievably to suit me (particularly a surfer who's riding the waves as the first tidal effects are felt by the coastal areas).

The simple fact of the matter is, though, that I'm a real sucker for a well-done disaster novel, and all flaws considered, **LUCIFER'S HAMMER** is just such a well-done book. Niven and Pournelle continue to impress me as one of the most successful collaborative teams in science fiction, and this book is as solid as its joint-effort predecessors, **A MOTE IN GOD'S EYE** and **INFERNO**.

As people begin to accustom themselves to what's happened, the book takes a very Heinleinian turn, and it's reminiscent of **FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD** in its philosophy (but where **FREEHOLD** was a poorly done novel, this one shines). There seems to be a definite RAH influence in this team's novels, this being the second book that seems to owe a good deal in theme or direction to the dean of SF.

It's also a pretty weighty book, almost 500 pages of entertainment. If this is any sign of what Playboy Press plans to publish in their expanding science fiction line, then they're going to become a force to be reckoned with in the field.

HASAN. Piers Anthony. (Borgo Press - \$3.95). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

One of the great Unanswered Mysteries in the publishing field (for me, at least, has been the reason that this excellent fantasy, serialized in

FANTASTIC almost nine years ago, has never appeared in a book format until now; it's one of the most moody and evocative fantasies I've ever read, and it was this book that led me to realize what talent Piers Anthony had with the language. Others' mistakes are Borgo's gains, though, for they've finally brought **HASAN** out in book form, as a trade paperback with an attractive George Barr cover, at a reasonable price.

HASAN is a rewritten tale from the *Arabian Nights*, and while it remains loyal to its source, it's presented with the richness of language that Piers Anthony displays so well. It's a formal fantasy, following the traditions inherent in its source, but the story virtually sings with the life behind its composition, and **Hasan** comes to life under the author's guidance.

Anthony gives an extra touch of dimensionality to his characters, a definite bonus over the original version (which Anthony's lush fantasy convinced me to look up back in 1971).

If you haven't read **HASAN**, you owe it to yourself to acquire this tale of a young boy's adventures as he becomes a man--it's a rare gem in the field of fantasy, and certain to be one of the pinnacles in Anthony's career.

STAR TREK FOTONOVELS: META-MORPHOSIS (11349), **ALL OUR YESTERDAYS** (11350), **THE GALILEO 7** (12041). \$1.95 @ from Bantam Books. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

Bantam is continuing their Fotonovel campaign with three more Trek episodes; furthermore, they have them on a once-a-month schedule now. I don't go wild over the books, but I still maintain that, to a Trek fan, these fumetti/novels (photographic comics) are one of the best buys on the market. The production quality on these books is excellent--take a look at them before you pass judgment.

Letters

Michael Bishop
Pine Mountain, GA

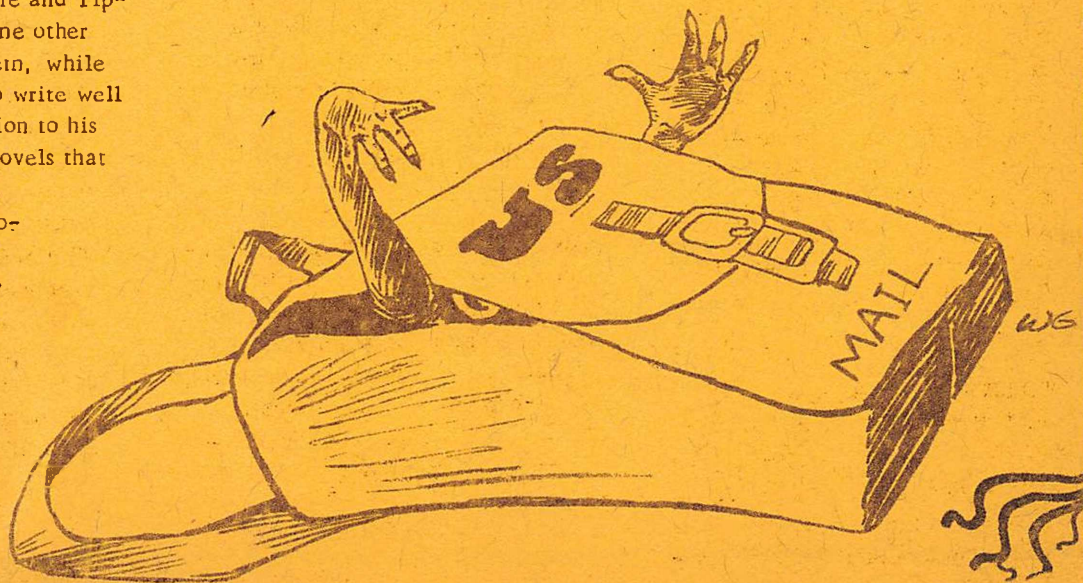
Received FR #13 yesterday and plowed right through it--if flipping back and forth at random until the entire magazine was read qualifies as "plowing". Anyway, I enjoyed it a great deal. In addition to reviews, letters, and your usual editorials, you gave us a section on women-in-sf, film reviews, and several interesting columns. I particularly enjoyed Cliff's "Introspective" about Roger Aycock, alias Roger Dee, an article which managed to convey a good deal of the man's feelings about our field and a strong sense of his own self-reconciliation with his lot as a writer in this field. There was more than a little melancholy in that piece too, and I can't help wondering, like Cliff, what Dee might have done had he found it possible to support himself as a writer of sf. The trouble is, of course, you have to write novels if you want to earn a living, even if your preference is for short fiction. It's significant that of the three people whom Aycock cited as having established their reputations on the basis of their short stories, Wolfe and Tip-tree have sources of income other than writing to sustain them, while Malzberg also managed to write well over sixty novels in addition to his short stories--it was the novels that provided him the security he needed to remain a professional writer. Aycock is certainly correct, however, when he points out that a novel is harder to arrange and orchestrate than short fiction, even when it falls below the level of quality

of even a mediocre short piece. Given my druthers, I'd probably forsake the novel altogether and concentrate on shorter pieces--but I can't do that and hope to keep food on the table... Anyway, "Introspective" was an extremely intriguing look at a man whose work is altogether unknown to me. Again, Cliff, how about giving us the titles and the bibliographical information pertinent to discovering and reading some of Roger Dee's stories?

((While I haven't heard it direct via Roger, second-hand news informs me that a collection of Roger Dee short fiction is being negotiated right now; I hope to know by next issue, for sure.))

Glyer's "When All Else Fails" was also interesting. The letter to DELAP'S F&SF REVIEW which Glyer quotes--the attack by Asimov on the profession of "critic", as Asimov sardonically likes to call reviewers and other of their notorious ilk--was a letter of which I too, received a xerox copy; the missive also contained a rebuke for my failure to cite THE GODS THEMSELVES in a list of those books which have won both the Hugo and the Nebula

Awards, and the rebuke was well-received since I indicated in my footnote that the list was supposed to be complete. Nothing like being caught in an error for inducing humility... In any case, I find much to agree with in Glyer's comments about the pitfalls and pratfalls of trying to be a reviewer of other people's work. I would also like to second his avowal that if every reviewer were forced to write a story and experience the pain of having it done to dirt in print, his moral position toward his reviewing would undergo a significant and perhaps salutary change. Criticism is a two-edged sword, and it sometimes slices the reviewer in ways he's unaware of as he's writing. The poet Elizabeth Bishop said that she'd rather have friends than review other people's books, and it's easy to see how she could have formulated such a telling either/or proposition...



REVIEWS



HAWKSBILL STATION (Berkley 03679 - \$1.75), **TO LIVE AGAIN** (Berkley 03774 - \$1.95). Robert Silverberg (reissues). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

After a long lapse, Ace began the major reissue of the works of Robert Silverberg with their reprinting of early Silverberg novels and short story collections, complete with new introductions. Now Berkley is continuing the Silverberg Reissue plane with new editions of two of Silverberg's finest works (these two novels, along with **THORNS**, **UP THE LINE**, and **NIGHTWINGS**, constitute the best of Robert Silverberg as far as I'm concerned).

HAWKSBILL STATION is a novel dealing with political prisoners who are sentenced to the most unique imprisonment of all--sent back in time to the late Cambrian period, where their political ideas and beliefs can influence no one. Expanded from an award-winning novella (actually, a nomination-winning novella, since it never managed to win), this is Silverberg in top form. Certainly, there are problems--Silverberg conscientiously ignores the entire issue of homosexuality, for instance--but this novel manages to convince the reader to overlook its flaws. This is the writing that helped make Silverberg's reputation, and it's nice to see Berkley bringing it back into print.

TO LIVE AGAIN (Silverberg seems fascinated with the continuation of life, at least in his titles--**TO LIVE AGAIN**, **RECALLED TO LIFE...**) is a novel set in a world where the body is but a vehicle for the recreated psyche of other individuals, a novel of characters in conflict

with other personae in their own minds. It, too, is from the most impressive period of Silverberg's career thus far, and is a taut, well-done novel, filled with the spark of insight that made Silverberg the writer to emulate in the late 60s and early 70s.

I sincerely hope that Berkley will be continuing their reissuing of the better novels by Silverberg; the point he made upon resignation, that none of his best works were in print at the time he resigned from sf writing, was a point well taken, and one now being corrected. The packaging on the books is also quite good; the cover illustrations may be a bit weak, but the foil imprinting and the neat graphics of the design make these books rather striking on the newsstands.

ZANDRA. William Rotsler. (Doubleday - \$6.95). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

Every now and then, a book comes out that's so obviously the first part of a rather lengthy series that you feel like you're watching the first reel of a serial. **ZANDRA** is just such a book, and it's nothing like what I'd come to expect from Bill Rotsler.

ZANDRA is more of a novelized comic book than anything else; it's a story of four protagonists who are on board a plane that crashes in the Bermuda Triangle and ends up in another world, a semi-barbaric world, drastically different from earth. The novel details the attempts to find a way out of the world, their confrontations with the aliens who inhabit Zandra, and the division of the four into two groups, each working with a different faction of aliens in an effort to

control their planet.

The biggest flaw in **ZANDRA** is the poor characterization; Rotsler has used comic-book stereotypes for the most part, and some of them seem so close to the Marvel comics' version of the same idea, **SKULL THE SLAYER**, that it's almost uncanny. If you can accept the characters and the Bermuda Triangle gimmick doesn't irritate you, then you should have no trouble with the remainder of the book. It's simple action adventure, a step in another direction for the author of **PATRON OF THE ARTS**, but it's pleasant enough reading.

Now, if only Doubleday could do something about the art and packaging of their sf line; **ZANDRA** has a rather lackluster dustwrapper, a very poor cover design that only marginally ties in with the book. But that's really out of the editor's hands...

THE NECRONOMICON. George Hay, ed. (Neville Spearman, £5.50--UK) Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

THE NECRONOMICON itself, as a creation of HP Lovecraft, needs little introduction; it's the central supernatural tome of much of HPL's writing. What this publication of **THE NECRONOMICON** claims to be is an English translation of that famous book, along with introductory and explanatory material by a number of figures connected with the discovery of the real manuscript of **AL AZIF** (**THE NECRONOMICON**).

Colin Wilson's 44 page introduction to the book, telling how he discovered Winfield Lovecraft's connection to the Egyptian Freemasons and to the secret magical volumes that

the Freemasons purportedly have, is undoubtedly the highlight of the book--Wilson's contributions to the Cthulhu Mythos cycle have always been exceptionally well-written and enjoyable and this non-fiction (or perhaps the word is "pseudo-non-fiction") piece is just as enjoyable as THE MIND PARASITES.

Yes, the text of THE NECRONOMICON is contained herein, along with a lengthy piece on how it was translated, what procedures were used, what computer was utilized, etc. The book also offers a brief piece by L. Sprague de Camp on HPL, and two interesting analytical essays by Christopher Frayling and Angela Carter.

I'm not certain what the American price will be on this book--with the constantly fluctuating dollar/pound balance, it will undoubtedly change as I put this issue to press--but for entertainment in a Lovecraftian vein, it's pure entertainment. As to whether it's true or not--well, you believe what you want to... but the fun isn't in the factual nature, it's in the illusion of reality the authors create.

SWORDS OF SHAHRAZAR. Robt. E. Howard (Berkley 03709-6 - \$1.95). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

Robert E. Howard continues to be a viable market for publishers; this is the paperback edition of the Fax hardcover of a few years ago, which presents the adventures of Kirby O'Donnell, American soldier of fortune in the land of Arabs.

The stories are typical Howard, heavy on action; this is better than some of the recent REH reprints, and makes for an enjoyable hour's reading. There's another Ken Kelly cover--he's certainly getting better--that makes into a center-fold, if you're interested.

CAPRICORN ONE. (Ron Goulart - Fawcett 1-4024-5 - \$1.75). Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

There seems to be more than one Ron Goulart--I'm very familiar with the one who writes black comedy and sardonic humor in a neat combination with sf ideas and gimmicks, and I enjoy his fiction extremely much. The Ron Goulart who did the novelization must be a different fellow, though, because this book is neat, crisp, to-the-point action, with little humor and little let-up in the suspense. Maybe this is the Goulart who wrote those Avenger novels under the Kenneth Robeson by-line a few years ago...

Whoever it is, there's little doubt that this novelization of Peter Hyam's screenplay for the film CAPRICORN ONE is one of the best film adaptations into book form that we have seen in the past few years. The story itself is a good basis for a suspense thriller: due to a faulty spacecraft, the crew of Capricorn

One, the first manned mission to Mars, is told they must fake the mission here on Earth. At first they go along willingly, but then they discover that they will no longer be allowed to live their normal lives, for they have supposedly died on Mars. It quickly becomes a battle of wits between the government and the astronauts as to who will overcome the other.

Even without a film, CAPRICORN ONE would be a taut novel of suspense and conspiracy; as it is, though, this is almost a teaser for the film to come (albeit a well-written teaser, indeed). It's not typical science fiction--in fact, it's reminiscent of Alistair McLean--but I think most SF readers will enjoy it. Be sure to give it a try.

A WINTER WISH. (H. P. Lovecraft (edited by Tom Collins). Whispers Press - \$10. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

If you've been active in any major part of the horror/fantasy/sf fannish circle, you're undoubtedly aware of the phenomenal popularity of HPL, both through his own works and through the wealth of material written about him. Lovecraft's proselhas been a matter of serious study for quite a while now, and Arkham House has done quite a job of keeping it in print. With the exception of one slim volume, though, HPL's poetry has been overlooked, as has his large body of material for amateur press alliances and amateur magazines. A WINTER WISH brings the HPL collector a single-volume edition that contains a large amount of the poetry HPL did for his amateur journals. For a great many of these selections, A WINTER WISH marks their first appearance in permanent collectible form.

Certainly the poet lacks a great deal in the polish and finesse that makes it lasting literature,



WG
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HPL seems to have been well-received as an amateur poet, much of this literature never rises above the amateur label. It's the satires and epigrams that are the most enjoyable and the least affectations.

This is not a book for the average buyer, however; the market for A WINTER WISH is the Lovecraft collector and the academic library, and the volume is a welcome addition to both collections. It's a well-made, fairly priced edition, complete with an attractive Steve Fabian dustwrapper (a complaint: the spine of the dustwrapper has no print overlay, so the book is almost unidentifiable when shelved--an oversight, I'm sure). If you're a serious fan of HPL's be sure to get this volume (as a limited edition, it may be ordered from Whispers Press, Box 1492W, Azalea St., Browns Mills, NJ 08615).

IN MAYAN SPLENDOR. Frank Belknap Long. (Arkham House - Sauk City WI 53583 - \$6) Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

IN MAYAN SPLENDOR is one of the better poetry volumes to be produced by Arkham House; Long, in fact, is a poet who impresses me more, on the whole, than HPL. While he may lack the vitality of Lovecraft's most outstanding poetry, he has an overall quality that surpasses what HPL did in the corpus of his poetry.

IN MAYAN SPLENDOR is a slim volume, 66 pages hardbound, and five of those pages are occupied by Stephen Fabian illustrations (it seems that Fabian has taken on the mantle of "the in-demand fantasy artist" of late). But Long's poetry, while sometimes stilted and artificial in meter, is generally smooth and sonorous, and in poems such as "A Man From Genoa" and "In Hospital" (a sad escape from the pain and suffering) and "The Goblin Tower" are pinnacles of Long's poetic career, showing insight and a command of the language. Of course, the closing "H. F. Lovecraft" is a sentimental but eloquent

piece that will appeal to fans of HPL or FBL.

The price tag may seem a bit steep for such a slim volume, but the book is up to the quality of most Arkham volumes in production and materials, and its 3000 copy edition makes it a good investment, for once this run sells out, the book's value will escalate. Investment aside, though, the poetry itself is worth the cost; if you enjoy Romantic and Pre-Raphaelite stylism, you should find Long's poetry delightful--it has the scope of bygone days will dealing with its subjects in a more modern style.

LAMARCHOS. Jo Clayton (DAW Books #JW1354 - \$1.50). Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

DAW Books seems to have moved into the surprising position of having almost all its finest writers new additions to the sf field--and most of them women. Tanith Lee, C. J. Cherryll, and now Jo Clayton.

LAMARCHOS is the latest novel in the Diadem series; it's a fantasy tale of Aleytys, wearer of the Diadem that gives her strange powers and makes her a target for those who originally possessed the Diadem. It's a tale of those who travel with Aleytys--Maissa, the unscrupulous, hardened woman who has no loyalties, Miks, loyal to Aleytys, and Aleytys' son, a pawn in Maissa's plan to destroy Aleytys.

Clayton has a clean, direct style that accents the strength of her plots; she relies on action and adventure to carry the reader up to the very end--and she handles it so well that the formula works like a charm. Her characters are seemingly real, their reactions all too human--and their adventures fantastic enough to satisfy almost any science fiction or fantasy fan. Furthermore, LAMARCHOS stands alone, independent of the other book in the series; that's particularly interesting to those who,

like myself, managed to miss the first novel in the shuffle. There's a bonus in the form of a very attractive Michael Whelan cover on this volume, a painting that sets the mood for the novel inside perfectly. Jo Clayton is undoubtedly a writer to pay attention to; DAW's found another real talent here.

THE BEST YE BREED. Mack Reynolds (Ace 05481 - \$1.50) Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

The cover blurbs this as being the third volume in "the fabulous North African Trilogy"; it may be fabulous, but not particularly famous--while I've been able to deduce that BLACK MAN'S BURDEN is a part of the trilogy, I've never been aware that such a three-volume work existed until I saw this blurb. As it is, though, THE BEST YE BREED reads quite well to one totally unfamiliar with the other two books--and it's much better than the average Mack Reynolds novel.

The premise of the novel concerns Homer Crawford, American black who has taken the role of El Hassan and is leading North Africa to its own independent destiny, primarily via the economic power of its oil holdings. Paul Kosloff and Sean Ryan are both hired to prevent El Hassan from reaching his goal; El Hassan is so well organized, however, that it seems if he's almost unstoppable.

Naturally, Reynolds has packed the novel with his own political views and ideologies--the most irritating habit he has is one of almost delivering a sermon or a propaganda speech, or of turning a novel into a political theory text. I find this a major flaw in any novelist, and it's the main reason I can never seriously consider Mack Reynolds a major figure in the field. The book is enjoyable, well-plotted and paced, and manages to entertain for the most part; but if Reynolds could only take himself seriously as an author of sf and not a theorist, he'd be doing much better.

Letters

Norman Masters
720 Bald Eagle Lk. Rd.
Ortonville, MICH 48462

FR is a good zine, reminiscent, in ways, of YANDRO and earlier Geis-products. The reviews of books I might be interested in were appreciated, and will probably affect my buying--the mark of success of any review magazine, no? I'm purchasing less and less sf--50% as opposed to 90% of my purchases a few years ago--that I need a guide to the good things available in the field.

The review of YLANA OF CALLISTO, summing up with "I only wonder what ERB ever did to deserve such humiliation," caught my eye. What he did was repeatedly regurgitate the same kind of stuff himself, just as Lin Carter does. ERB too did poor ERB imitations. The entire Jandar series is as close to plagiarism as you can get, but it makes money for the publishers--that's why Burroughs churned out hack-work as well as good material. But Lin Carter has never done anything but imitations; some are done as labors of love, and are totally en-

joyable; others are churned out for a quick sale, and they show it.

I particularly enjoyed "Introspective" and its look at Roger Aycock. One Roger Dee story still reverberates in my memory: "The Obligation," and I have always had intentions of reading the rest of his small output. Your own handling of the article, Cliff, shows writing of the caliber of a professional newspaper feature writer--good job.

((The Roger Aycock piece was a piece I was unsure about; there is so little interest in sf fandom for the lesser-known writers, the lesser-known figures of sf (editors, etc.) that I felt the piece might be poorly received. Even worse, I feared that it wouldn't be received at all, for I feared that many FR readers would skim right by it in search for other things. As a result, I'm most pleased for the kind words, and I'm glad to see readers showing an interest in this aspect of sf--the fact that, for many, it's a field that can't support its own.))

((Your points on ERB are well-taken, but you bring out the most valid point of all regarding Carter: he has no memorable, non-imitative work.))

Dave Bates
355 Kennedy Drive
Putnam, CON 06260

Received FR #13 some time back, but wanted to send off a bit more of a comment. The Roy Krenkel cover is lovely, and to score a Krenkel original is terrific to say the least.

((Here I need to graciously thank Rich Garrison of Heritage Press, for it was he who helped me locate the Krenkel piece from his own collection.))

There is an odd thing in fandom in recent years to downgrade Lin Carter, and I find that deplorable. Oh, I don't blindly adore each book he writes, but most of the time I find him a good, skilled craftsman for the type of fiction he elects to write. There are damn few sensible and serious fans and collectors who do not admit to the debt owed to him for his fine editorial job with the Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series. If he had never written a book himself, this would certainly earn him an honored footnote or two in fandom's history.

((This is a bizarre thing for me, a BAF collector, to say, but I think you overemphasize the importance of Lin Carter's contribution to the Ballantine Adult Fantasy line. Oh, he did a superlative job of story choosing, but it's a job that a dozen other editors could have done if a company had been in a market for the product. I value an editor not just as a selector, but as a researcher--something Carter isn't.))



SOMETIMES I WONDER
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AT THE TOP...

REVIEWS



THE FAR CALL. Gordon Dickson
(Quantum SF/ Dial Press - \$8.95)
Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

THE FAR CALL is an unusual addition to the Quantum SF line; after two hard-sf novels by two outstanding newer talents in the field, the series has followed up with a semi-science fiction novel, a la Alan 'Drury's' THRONES OF SATURN, by a figure who's been a major part of the sf field for two decades now, more or less.

THE FAR CALL is a look at the first manned Mars mission, but its emphasis is heavily centered on the people who remain on earth, the space program directors and personnel, the wives and family, as well as the crew of the mission itself. But if the book has any one protagonist, it's Jens Wylie, the Undersecretary-for-Space; this is primarily his story.

Ironically, while this is the least science fictional of all the novels in the Quantum series, and certainly a new direction for Gordon Dickson, it's a book that has a good chance of succeeding in the mainstream market; it's not a book of sf ideas, but a book that dwells heavily on human interrelationships. And while Dickson doesn't handle it anywhere nearly as well as he did in his TIME STORM, he manages to make the book modestly entertaining.

THE FAR CALL is far from Dickson's best, though; the book develops its plot slowly, almost laboriously, and its 413 pages seem overlong in retrospect. It's not a bad book, but not an outstanding one, either; I hope for more from Dickson and from Quantum sf in the future.

RIME ISLE. Fritz Leiber (Whispers Press - \$10 -- signed edition, \$20)
Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

Fritz Leiber's Fafhrd and Grey Mouser series is one of heroid fantasy's greatest moments, and RIME ISLE is the latest short novel featuring the two roguish characters. It's a story of piracy and adventure and sorcery, every bit as good as its predecessors (no, Leiber's not one to let us down and live on his laurels from bygone days).

While this short novel has appeared in the Ace SWORDS AND ICE MAGIC, this edition from Stuart Ziff's Whispers Press is a quality book, using sturdy binding and heavy paper to make a lasting addition to any library. Furthermore, the book is illustrated by Tim Kirk, who contributes a color dustwrapper and ten black and white interior illustrations. The Kirk work sometimes seems a bit rushed, but overall is an adequate illustrative job--somehow, there's a bit of finesse missing, a touch that would make this book an excellent limited edition. Whispers Press is new, though, and that special touch will come with time and experience.

As it is, RIME ISLE's 2500 copies will undoubtedly sell quickly, so I'd recommend you order before the volume goes OP; the 276 copies signed by author, artist, and designer are nearing OP already, so act accordingly. Like all limited edition volumes, this is designed for the collector; if you qualify, be sure to order RIME ISLE before you have to pay exorbitant collector's prices from out-of-print-book dealers.

VESTIGES OF TIME. Richard C. Meredith (Doubleday - \$6.95).
Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

VESTIGES OF TIME is one of those novels that starts off with promise but degenerates in the final chapters to an uneventful, almost disappointing shadow of what it might have been. It's disappointing that Meredith, an author who shows such talent at times would allow this to happen to his novel--particularly after so many of us have waited so long for a new work from the man.

VESTIGES OF TIME is an alternate worlds/time travel novel, something Meredith has done well in previous works; somehow, though, this novel of the Timeliners and the Shadowy Man is missing that spark that sets it off from all the other works in the field and makes it something special. Perhaps it's the narrator, who never seems real as he's telling us his story; it's hard to pin down what makes VESTIGES OF TIME a disappointment from Meredith.

Not that it's a bad book, of course; in fact, it's a fairly well-crafted tale that appeals to my interest in the time travel sub-genre. From another author, it would be an enjoyable and wholly satisfying work; from this author, though, I expected a bit more. It's well worth reading, though, and if you haven't read Meredith before, you'll thoroughly appreciate this story and the introduction to a very underrated author in the field.

BLOOD. Hanns Heinz Ewers (Valcour & Krueger, Inc. - \$5).
Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

BLOOD is blurbed as "three tales of the ultra-cruel," and the blurb seems accurate; while the gore seems a bit weak in this, the age of JAWS, it's definitely more powerful than the average tale from the era in which

it was originally presented. Each story in BLOOD deals with violence and gore, and as such the title is quite appropriate.

The quality of the stories leaves something to be desired, though; Ewers obviously feels that the power of the violence itself will carry the stories, and as a result the writing is turgid and weighty.

The book presents a few rather amateurish interiors by Steve Garris, and a much better cover by Phil Garris; all in all, though, this isn't up to the quality of the average Krueger/Valcour product, and I'm not really sure it's worth the \$5 being asked for it. In fact, I'd have been disappointed had I bought it sight unseen--the product doesn't live up to the "reputation."

AQUARIUS MISSION. Martin Caidin. (Bantam 11267 - \$2.25) Reviewed by Gary Steele.

Each time I read a novel by Martin Caidin, I find myself thoroughly entertained. I feel I've gotten my money's worth in this book, but most importantly of all, with each novel of his that I read, I find myself upgrading my opinion of Caidin as an author.

The first Caidin book I read was one of his Cyborg novels, and I had a low opinion of both book and author. I expected little more than a Six Million Dollar Man episode in print. The difference was profound. Caidin's writing was solid and believable, and his hero was based on scientific fact. This same thing holds true with THE AQUARIUS MISSION.

The novel, set in the not-too-awfully-far future on an Earth ruined by nuclear war, opens

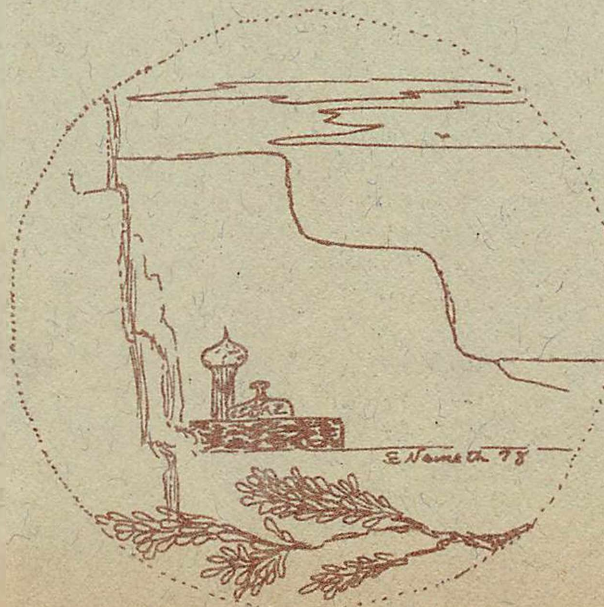
simply with two men prospecting for oil in a deep sea trench. What they found certainly wasn't oil; at this point the military involved itself, and received the shock of their lives. The military in turn asks for help, and the novel is underway.

Caidin sets a nice fast pace for the book; fast enough to avoid getting bogged down in the science, but not too fast to prevent solid buildup. THE AQUARIUS MISSION revolves around its characters as much as it does around the first contact theme, and these two aspects are well-balanced in the book.

AQUARIUS MISSION is not what one thinks of when considering SF books--it leans more toward mainstream's concept of an sf novel, as almost all of Caidin's novels seem to do.

The book is attractively packaged, with a double cover and even a color "centerfold" containing yet another painting and a diagram of the sub in the book. All of this offsets the rather steep price tag of the paperback.

However, don't let the price tag influence you too much; once you buy this, you'll find you're the owner of a very well-done novel, and one that I highly recommend to anyone who enjoys well-written fiction.



NEBULA WINNERS TWELVE. Gordon Dickson, ed. (Harper & Row - \$9.95). Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

If you're like I am and you don't have the time to read all the sf published in the magazines each year, you probably miss out on a good number of the award-winning short fiction--it doesn't always end up in the "Best of..." anthologies. That's why I consider a library of the Nebula Award winners volumes indispensable in any well-stocked sf library; NEBULA AWARD STORIES TWELVE is a fine addition to the collection.

Everyone has favorites; as a John Varley fan, I was glad to see "JIn the Bowl" again, and I enjoyed the opportunity to read "A Crowd of Shadows" by C.L. Grant. And while most of the other stories were familiar to me through other anthologies, Algis Budrys' essay on "SF in the Market Place" and James Gunn's piece on the academic viewpoint were both informative, interesting reading.

Harper and Row is to be praised for this, the latest series of outstanding sf anthologies; for many libraries, this is the one sure bet in sf. Don't pass it up.

THE GIRL WITH THE JADE GREEN EYES. John Boyd. Viking - \$8.95 Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

THE GIRL WITH THE JADE GREEN EYES is John Boyd's seriocomic version of "Visit to a Small Planet," a tale of aliens who have come to Earth in search of fuel to carry them to another planet. Kyra, the female leader of the aliens, quickly finds herself attracted to Tom Breedlove, and the two of them set out to achieve their goals, including happiness with one another.

It's hard to say if this is a typical John Boyd novel or not; it

is, in a way, a regression to an earlier John Boyd, more sure of himself and more in control of his characters. In his most recent works, Boyd seems to lose direction in his writing, and each novel has degenerated into a slapstick farce, or a sexual orgy with occasional glimpses of plot; while there are touches of that here, it's somewhat more refined, less strong, and less irrational.

I'm feeling positive towards John Boyd for the first time in a while; he's still not the writer he was in his first novel, *THE LAST STARSHIP FROM EARTH*, but he seems to be heading back that way. If you've abandoned Boyd recently, *THE GIRL WITH THE JADE GREEN EYES* is a good book to rediscover him with--it's a definite step in the right direction.

RAVENS OF THE MOON. Charles L. Grant, (Doubleday - \$6.95). Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

I seem to have recently acquainted myself with the work of Charles L. Grant; I wish I had made the acquaintance earlier, because I'm very happy with the relationship thus far.

THE RAVENS OF THE MOON is the latest novel, and the first one I've read by this author. The book is a compelling one, mainly due to the strength of plot, but also thanks to some strong characterization.

Shanlon Raille (an anagram I'm sure you can figure out yourself) is a minor cog in the great machineries that run Noram, the consolidated future version of North and South America. Raille lives in a world where today's urban sprawl has reversed itself, forming urban clumps, and a world where political intrigue and suspicion is at a high point.

In this world, in this tension, a Senator is assassinated, and Shanlon

Raille is falsely accused of the murder. Raille hides, then sets out to find the truth behind the subterfuge.

Grant is a fine wordsmith; *RAVENS OF THE MOON* flows well, reads quickly, and leaves a very positive impression. It may not be a major novel, but it's entertaining and controlled, and who can ask for more in the end?

THROUGH THE EYE OF A NEEDLE. Hal Clement (Ballantine 25850 - \$1.75). Reviewed by Mike Weber.

Here it is: the sequel to *NEEDLE*. Through the good offices of one Scratch Bacharach, who won some sort of bet with Clement, we are treated to this book.

In essence, this book, as was its predecessor, is a mystery, though it's less the "play-fair" type of mystery, and more a novel of suspense.

The setting is eight or so years later than *NEEDLE*. Bob Kinnaird, the host to the amorphous symbiont, the Hunter, an interstellar policeman, returns to his home on a Pacific atoll to work for the company who owns it. But the Hunter's mere presence inside Bob's body has caused problems; unfamiliar with human biochemistry, the Hunter has, in eight years, made enough mistakes that by now Bob has become a Hunter addict--his immune reaction, his blood clotting, and his endocrines are completely haywire. If the Hunter loses control for a moment, Bob could well die.

With the aid of Bob's father and mother, the local doctor and his wife, and as few others as possible, Bob and the Hunter set out to find the wreckage of the Hunter or his quarry's starship, in hopes that the Hunter's people may have traced the pursuit to our solar system; if they can contact the Hunter's people in time, there's a chance to correct whatever has been done wrong--it's a race against time, with Bob's life the stakes.

This is an excellent book, rather better than *STARLIGHT*, the sequel to *MISSION OF GRAVITY*. But I was disappointed a bit, as well--there is no exposition as to what the Hunter did wrong or what has to be done to cure it, just some discussion of symptoms.

One thing that caught my attention was that this novel is clearly set in an alternate universe, since it's taking place in 1954 or thereabouts, and in a world in which cultured bacteria have been producing large amounts of the world's petroleum since WWII.

Despite my gripes about an insufficiency of "hard" science, this is an excellent book, with all the qualities that made *NEEDLE* a classic, and a somewhat smoother writing style as well.

ESCHATUS. Bruce Pennington (Simon & Schuster - \$19.95 hc, \$8.95 pb). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

The writings and prophecy of Nostradamus are provocative and mystifying; they're vague and unclear, yet seemingly touched with amazing accuracy of vision at times. Obviously, Pennington feels the same way, for in *ESCHATUS* he has presented a fantasy/futuristic interpretation of the works of Nostradamus, complete with applicable quatrains.

Pennington's art is, at its best, stunning, but it rarely hits this peak; some pages have a rather sketchy, poorly-defined quality to them, almost unfinished in appearance. But the works do seem to develop the writings of Nostradamus well, and it's a pleasant enough coffee-table book to make the softcover edition a worthy investment.

My one complaint with Pennington is his tendency to pack the volume with symbols; almost every picture is literally cluttered with symbols to be interpreted, often at the sake

of the overall effect of the painting itself. This seems to be a common malady in occult-theme paintings, and I really wish artists would avoid the random use of pentagrams, astrological symbols, and arcane items to add an air of occult to their art--it really doesn't work very well.

If you enjoy large (this is 12" x 12") art volumes with a fantasy slant, give ESCHATUS a try.

STORMQUEEN. Marion Zimmer Bradley (DAW UJ 1381 - \$1.95). Reviewed by Sue Phillips.

Once I found out there was a new Darkover book out, I searched and found it, a June release, at the end of May--and finished it right away.

It is an extremely fine book, even when considered in the light of *THE FORBIDDEN TOWER*, her last opus. The latter was a bit wordy for my tastes and dealt with events that had already occurred in the chronology of Darkover.

This is set in the Ages of Chaos, when the Comyn were breeding for laran, when sons were expected to wed women not only because of political purposes but because her laran wed to his would produce such-and-such, the Comyn of that time were genetic engineers who modified even their own genes if it would produce the desired results.

The story is basically this: Lord Aldaran's wife bears only stillborn so he takes to his bed Aliciane of Rockraven, and fosters her son Donal. Aliciane dies bearing him a daughter, a daughter who shocks everyone who touches her unbidden. Her name is Dorilys.

Allart Elhalyn is called back from the cristofores at Navarsin by his father to wed Cassandra Aillard, whose genes have been modified before puberty and who is expected to give control to the Elhalyn gift of seeing all futures.



Allart, though unhappy with this situation (he does not approve of genetic manipulation) marries Cassandra and persuades her to seek shelter and safety with him in a Tower. As the war with the Ridenow breaks out again, a messenger, Donal, asks that someone from the Tower come to help teach his sister some control over her laran. Allart and his brother, the head of the Domain, become involved.

The book runs fast and furious, and I don't believe in all its 364 pages there is a dull moment. It's full of treachery and intrigue, and the characters respond in a way you'd expect people to. Dorilys, in particular, is a well-drawn person, a girl of eleven entering puberty yet not understanding herself or her power.

Bradley writes about people who are people within their own worlds. There are few spots that could be improved in *STORMQUEEN*; read it and I think you'll be just as moved by it as I was.

THE DEVIL IN IRON. Robert E. Howard (Grosset & Dunlap - \$7.95) Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

THE DEVIL IN IRON is something I never expected to see: a trade paperback edition of a Don Grant Conan volume. This book is a facsimile

reproduction of the deluxe edition Grant produced a year or so ago, with the type, art, and all photographically reproduced from the Grant edition.

In a way, perhaps this is a good idea for the collector who missed out on the earlier editions; the Donald Grant Conan volumes are exceptionally fine examples of the book designer's art, and certainly deserve the reproduction entailed in making this G&D trade edition.

The price tag is the key issue here, though; is it worth \$8 for a facsimile when, for \$15, you could have had the genuine hardbound limited edition volume? According to a local dealer, *THE DEVIL IN IRON* is now totally O.P., so the point is moot with this volume--but it can apply to future volumes that Grant may produce.

Given my druthers, I'd much rather invest \$15 in the original than put over half that much into a trade pb of the same book--but this is advice for the future, and has little concern with this volume. The G&D edition contains the Dan Green color plates, the excellent typography, and the powerful REH prose of the original--that's enough to recommend it. Howard by himself is a joy to read; this is the Conan material in its purest form, and the \$8 price tag is a fair admission price...

Letters

Gene Wolfe
Box 69
Barrington, IL 60010

FR dropped into my box today; its sole companion a note from Jack Williamson... ah! that's mail.

"Darth Vader Lives!" tee shirts are okay, but I'm much fonder of one I saw at Suncon: "Vader's Raiders." My own favorite tee shirt reproduces a sign I spotted in Disney World: "This attraction one-way to Fantasyland."

Anyway, the weather here in the greater Chicago area shows signs of letting up, and when it does, Woodfield Mall--the largest enclosed shopping center in the world--will once again become a prime tee shirt spotting area. It was there I saw "Polish Princess," "Pavement Princess" (CB for a hooker), and "Happiness is a tight pussy." (With a picture of a tipsy kitten in a champagne glass.) All these were worn by women, as was my top choice, "Big Tits." Which reminds me of a charming young writer I know whose tee shirt--the last time I saw her--read "How big is a moop?" The word moop was on the lowest line, and thus visible only if she stood and the reader knelt.

...George RR Martin has a Hugo Losers tee shirt, but I think Gail made it. Harlan fancies "Rick's Cafe Americane" and so would I if he hadn't thought of it first, but neither of those are going to do much for mundanes. How about "Warren Peas" for lit majors? Or "Call home!" for us parents? "Moby, duck!" for us

Save the whale people? "Staple commodity" for fanzine editors?

((Personally, I always liked my "Jesus Saves--Datsun Saves--Jesus is a Datsun!" tee shirt...))

Stan Burns
Box 1381
Glendale, CA 91209

I find that I, too, turn to mystery reading for pleasure. Reviewing takes away the pleasure from reading ordinary sf--and I find that the novels I enjoy most are the ones I reread from years past. There are four or five novels each year that I really like, but they tend not to be ones that garner awards.

I don't agree with you about Gerrold's MOONSTAR ODYSSEY--he does the same thing. Tanith Lee does with external motivation; first he goes on about how difficult the choice is that his main character has to make between what sex he/she wants to acquire at maturity, and then throws the choice away from her by forcing a choice at her from left field via a disaster. Up until then, that choice was one of the major themes of the novel--and then David takes it away from her and from us, the readers.

((The choice may have been a prime factor of the novel, but it was also the deprivation of that choice that added a strong tragic element to the story; just because a writer firmly establishes something as a part of a culture, he is not obligated to include it as a part of the plot of the novel at hand--I can't agree with you on this being a flaw or a point of frustration with MOONSTAR ODYSSEY.))

David Parsons
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Pompano Beach,
FL 33061

I found your INTROSPECTIVE piece to be a very fine work of journalism; further, I'm inclined to agree with Roger Aycock's views of SF. It seems to me that a whole lot of debris, flotsam, etc., has found its way to the book racks. The "old hands" seem to write because "it's expected of them" and for no other reason. Publishers seem to feel they should put out 4 or 5 titles a month, whether they deserve to be published or not. I suppose it's their business how the they go about wasting paper and ink...

((That's precisely it: it's their business, and they regard it as just that. Books will sell a certain number of copies irregardless of quality, and it pays to have them on the stands each month. Of course, the other side of that is that there are some first-time authors who might not have been published had an editor not been forced to release so many titles a month.))

Part of my problem is that I'm reading looking for inspiration--which has nothing to do with whether the book I read is escapist literature or not. I'm generally looking for ideas; so what happens is I read a bit of Dunsany, who could put more in a sentence than 90% of today's writers put in whole novels. ((Like Meade Frierson last ish, you seem to feel that a book is worthwhile if it inspires thought--a valid view, if not the accepted one.))

Letters

Mary Long
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Mike "Knees" Glicksohn raises an interesting point in his loc. I must say that if I thought a fan was only socializing with me because of their person to whom I was married, I should be inclined to poke that fan in the eye with a blunt stick and tell him to be off! I suppose that such an attitude would be another manifestation of the pro-ism thing George Martin was objecting to. But it does rather sound as if it's jealousy of the other person's status in fandom, when you boil it down...

((Not necessarily--it could be a case where one of the partners has no real interest in fandom, but still dislikes being "the-spouse-of-blah-blah."))

On CE3K & STAR WARS: CE3K is much more hardcore sf, I think. I found it very moving in places, as I have remarked elsewhere. STAR WARS is the only film I've been to where the audience pours out grinning over jits collective face and shouting "you'll love it!"

Stella Nemeth
61 Zornow St.
Rochester NY 14623

Although it may be true that books only stay on the shelves of newsstands and drugstores for a month at a time, I can't believe that of bookstores. It certainly isn't true of this city; more and more folks get pbs at bookstores these days, and many stores have trouble keeping copies of, say, DAW books, and have to reorder constantly.

((Here in Atlanta, that's not so true; some books are in constant stock, but most new titles are there for a month or less and never restocked. I've managed to miss things due to this "constant-flux-of-stock" syndrome.))

I liked the 3-part "Women in SF" series. I've noticed the tendency of authors who want to portray a strong active feminist character to ignore the fact that women give birth to children--and someone has to care for them. Most of those "wonder women" would fall apart if held responsible for another person.

Brian Earl Brown
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Mishawaka, IND 46544

I was shocked to learn that the average sf book today sells 30,000 copies as I'd heard 50-100,000 quoted 10 years ago. This supports Joe Green's point that the volume of titles cuts into the per-title sales.

I think there've been relatively few winners of Hugo and Nebula Awards who shouldn't have been. What irritates me is the use of "Hugo Award Winner" as a blurb on a book that hasn't won an award, although the author has--I'd like to see the SFWA try to restrict use of the Nebula name in this way...

Lynne Holdcm
PO Box 5
Pompton Lakes, NJ 07442

I work for a bookstore and we have DAW books until they sell out. One problem with DAW and others is they do not publish many more copies than the advance orders, so if a book is popular, it goes OP very fast. We also have a high turnover in SF which

limits shelf life and a much better selection than most stores around here, as I do the ordering for that department. We are willing to order for customers, but it's difficult getting older books from DAW and others because of the OP problem.

Truckers don't care about pbs either because they don't make much profit on them; what they do see gets delivered is semi-porn like PLAYBOY and PENTHOUSE, because it means huge profit.

Heinlein's women make me nauseous; they're all maternal. I'm not maternal, and know scads of women even less so than me. As Susan says, their role is to support a man.

Irvin Koch
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Atlanta, GA 30309

The Sally Cook-Susan Biggers-Sue Phillips piece was well-thought-out. We seem to have excellent thinking femmefen among us. What was even more surprising was that all three kept up the good summarization and analysis, a mark of a critic at his best.

Bob Tucker

Thanks for FR 13; it was appropriate. In about 2 weeks I will be at Texas A&M (the "Aggiecon") where Foster is a guest speaker, and in my intro I plan to quote Sue Phillips' opening lines to her review. Thank you, Sue, for that...

When all else fails. MIKE GLYER

So far this column has provided me with an outlet to speculate about things that I seldom have answers for--I've been able to organize my thought processes without feeling committed to a conclusion. Part of this is from my ability to simply write it and send it on its way--rather than submitting it to my own fanzine where I would wind up typing and rewriting the text a couple of times. Another part of this is a feeling of privacy--I mean, is there anybody out there reading this column?

A WOMAN'S APA in the past couple of years has served as the focus for feminist activity in sf fan circles. What I know about the whole area could be engraved in boldface on the head of a pin. I have never read any zine from AWAPA, and know nothing about its founding or history. Perhaps it's time I learned.

Within the past couple of months feminism has been spotlighted by Harlan Ellison's "Statement of Ethical Position". Ellison, Guest of Honor for this year's Worldcon in Phoenix, announced that Arizona's failure to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment had compelled him to choose between giving up the GoH spot or turning it into a media event in support of ERA and feminism generally. He selected the latter alternative, and urged fans to make the same choice, and pointedly spend as little money in the state as possible. Ellison would even withhold business from the con hotel by living in a tent at a distant campsite.

Not long afterwards it became public knowledge that A WOMAN'S APA had voted to expel male members (in one way I had wondered why any

were admitted). Apparently most went willingly and immediately started up one or two separate apas devoted to similar material.

Then within the last six weeks Hugo and FAAn balloting began--the nominations phase--and a significant bloc vote emerged from AWAPA and its sympathizers. JANUS seems to enjoy wide enough support that its spot on the Hugo ballot can be said to be fairly won. FAAn results, which are not yet public, are more susceptible to bloc voting, though, and that is one area where I have sound information that it occurred. It only remains to be seen whether that bloc was sizeable, or a handful. A bloc vote, in this case, is described as limited to candidates from feminist publications.

There has been a string of conventions with subprograms devoted to feminist topics, "A Room of Our Own" featured at the '77 Westercon, and this year's Wiscon more devoted to that than anything else.

I have little information and insight into the character of the people responsible for this crossover of special interests, nor their motives, aspirations and political mindset. If I had that insight, though, I could still not guarantee my easy acceptance of the strangest of these events: the conversion of the worldcon to a media hype, the reorganization of AWAPA solely on a sex-oriented basis, and bloc voting in fan awards. Perhaps someone who has experienced these decisions first-hand can explain them as tactics that further feminist ideals rather than the natural behavior of a self-interested fan clique.

Probably I misunderstand feminism as a movement, but I had tended to assume that it was essentially a humanist movement, while being specifically devoted to the personal liberty and economic welfare of women. I have tended to assume that this movement had goals of consciousness-raising, and sought concrete social adjustments which could benefit both men and women by helping to actualize the rights to choice and expression guaranteed by the Constitution but inadequately enforced. I consider their promotion of rape prevention and fairer procedures for prosecuting offenders, of abortion for women who want it (and self-determination in health matters generally), of job equality (in opportunity and benefits), etc. etc. all worthy of my support. I have tried to keep these points in mind because I wished to believe that certain feminists writing in genres, consumed with hostility and selfishness, could be transcended by the less public work and goodwill of other fan-feminists. Generally I think this is true, for I have read less prominent people in JANUS and DON-O-SAUR dealing reasonably with the matter. And I doubt anybody gives a lukewarm damn about my passive political beliefs; I only listed them to provide a feedback point of reference. After all, there are enough fans who know less about feminism than I do (which is hard to imagine) who have already decided it is an unwelcome intrusion into fandom. I am still checking over the evidence before I join the blathering around the ice-filled tubs of beer at the next con...

The real question may not be between feminism and fandom, but between

those who pay lip service to a set of ideals, and those who can't be bothered. There have been previous combinations of fans and politics--supporting anything from atheism to white liberalism to 'head culture' and libertarianism. But the acid test is: did any of these people take their sermons out of the apas and into the streets?

Out of the lot, the libertarians have gone the farthest along that line, I would think. You may know Sam Konkin 3, Neil Schulman, Vic Korman, Bob Cohen, Charles Curley and a cast of bunches from NEW LIBERTARIAN NOTES--famous in fanzine circles for the massive Heinlein interview published there. They relocated to Southern California in 1975, and may not have withered away the state yet, but do keep plugging away at anarchoeconomics. (A term I just made up; that's part of the mystique--put 'anarcho' in front of any social studies jargon and it becomes an instant theory.)

When Harlan Ellison issued his statement, much of it was specifically addressed to science fiction writers and readers who fell in love with the progressive social ideas embodied in speculative fiction but never made a commitment to furthering them in the real world.

The stumbling block there is that Heinlein can get everybody to agree that the blood drive is good for humanity, but if every fan actually did make a physical commitment to his point of view, a few might agree on ERA, while the rest would be wildly and violently in favor of a confusing array of opposite views. This is not a unifying issue, and contravenes the purpose for which the worldcon exists. It's simply party-time.

Who dares think it's a bad idea to campaign for the rights of half of humanity, Ellison shot back at me when he phoned to complain about my coverage of the worldcon situation in my newszine FILE 770. What is with these people who claim it's so terrible to inject a serious subject

into an event where people only go to be silly, get drunk and vomit on their shoes? (He liked that last phrase enough to use it three times during his monolog on the phone before I hung up on him.)

Isn't the real question what difference does it make whether the ERA passes? By now it seems doomed, and has primarily offered a vehicle for organizations like NOW to acquire political support for their special interest legislation. The tersely-worded ERA amendment seems to provide no protections not offered by the Reconstruction Era rights amendments and the manner in which the courts have interpreted them. So whose benefit would this worldcon demonstration actually be for?

Ellison also mentioned that he "wished to Christ" he could get out of the GoH spot, and that his mail had been plagued by an extra load of inanity (considering what he has to put up with anyway). What I have never understood is why anyone who hates fandom as much as he claims to ever accepted the spot in the first place.

• • •

Referring back to my column last issue, DELAP'S F&SF REVIEW has actually produced an issue under its new arrangement. It is an "all star issue" with most of its reviews written by pros. However it has by no means resumed a monthly schedule. And as soon as I find a smooth way to tie off this installment of my column, I'll write it...



HEROIC FANTASY & CIJA

critique by
deb hammer-johnson

There are books and there are "books."

Books you read, collect, and enjoy as passing fancies of whimsy or wisdom. Books are landmarks of personal development, reread, discussed, and kept for decades. Every serious reader of any genre has several tucked away, with extra copies to loan and recommend to friends. They act to extend personal affections and explain the deepest aspects of our fantasies, ideals, and "imaginary selves."

In my life, I've known several books of this caliber: Oz books, ERB's series, Panshin's RITE OF PASSAGE, Gormenghast (in book and symbolic form), and pre-eminently the "Cija" series, or Atlan Cycle, by Britisher Jane Gaskell. I first read them over eight years ago, when abysmally bored and dismally trapped in a friend's apartment. I started them backwards and worked my way up to the beginning of the diary from perhistorical times. The next day, I reread them again, and soon went out to buy my own copies. It was the beginning of a long and relentless championship and love affair with the books and their unique heroine.

Since then, I've gotten a number of lucky fools equally hooked on Cija's exploits. I scored a few maniacal points with getting a letter published in an early SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN extolling her virtues alongside Red Sonja's, and did a preliminary Master's Thesis study of the Atlan Cycle for a graduate seminar. Now, thanks to St. Martins' Press reissueing, in hardcover, the entire series (plus a new, fifth volume, unreleased as of yet), I have the opportunity and the excuse to combine aspects of all these readings and perspectives into a look at what I

still believe is the most unique, different, and exciting series in the sword-and-sorcery field.

Historically, the Atlan Cycle was written before the modern wave of female fantasy writers, before the days of the Ballantine Adult Fantasy editions that focused attention on the total scope of fantasy fiction, before it was fashionable to be individual, sexual, and female. As a feat of popular literature, it is composed of conventions (elements in common with all other s&s stories) and inventions (elements different from them) couched in the skeletal formula that gives it the shape and feel of a fantasy experience. The conventional attributes are, ironically, the weakest. The heavy prose and sultry mood of Howard, Merritt and others gives way to colloquial mid-sixties British expressions; the monster/brass brassiere action orientation of Conan, Kull, and the countless imitations thereof is disjointed by the emphasis on personal interaction of the heroine with her lovers rather than in ripping out bellies and cracking skulls. The Atlan Cycle has all the necessary accoutrements but gives them a totally fresh treatment by using them "inside-out." Through the looking glass. We see these familiar, exotic worlds with their barbarian emperors and arcane heroics from the viewpoint of their women. Fantasy, by its very nature, is outside the realm of ordinary, everyday experiences. The Cija tales inject a solid, three-dimensional character back into the fantasy setting and the result is nothing short of uncanny.

Personal opinion being what it is, there are many who groan with dismay when they see such total adulation from me. Don't misunder-

stand: the books are far from perfect. The language, for those who are picky in that department, is full of anachronisms. The action slows down at awkward moments; the plot jerks from scene to scene sometimes; proper explanations of the cultural background of Atlan and other civilizations are sketchy and frequently illogical. To tastes pampered by the likes of Tanith Lee, Anne McCaffrey, and Marion Zimmer Bradley, she is crude, sordid, and somewhat unrefined--a daisy in a field of roses and chrysanthemums. The feminist flavor is simply too strong for many male readers who find the role reversal to be uncomfortable and too "soap opera-ish". The following excerpt from THE CITY is the example (complaint?) most often pointed out to me. Women invariably love it, finding it humorous; men... well... the discomfort should be obvious. It concerns a mating between two thunderlizards spied by Cija and Ung, her ape-lover, from the safety of a tree.

And a rapport, an electric glee, passed between myself and my companion as we realized that after all the two would now engage each other.

The female snapped tusks each like a mastodon tusk. It was a preliminary, maybe even a love play, though it echoed and clashed like iron in a chasm. The male's robot claws came up together and fastened on her neck wattles.

He swung her round. She resisted no more. How could she resist this supremist of all males, this glittering metallic reptilian terror? He was behind her, this we could see between the in-

tervening fronds of wood. Now he clasped her. He was moving, jerking in regular giant spasms, the slit eyes immobilized without change of anti-expression, the mouth open in a rictus that let loose the chewed pulped victims in a drizzle of mangled limbs, of blood and saliva. She stood still, her smaller head motionless, her little hands cuddled up against her breast... The male was nearing his paroxysm. He shuddered... He folded on the female, whose back now supported him. Leisurely, she turned and began to devour him, tearing those magnificent teeth into the side of his face, drawing his limp body up as more and more of it disappeared fragmentarily into her jaws, while the rest lay twitching and feebly resisting to the end...

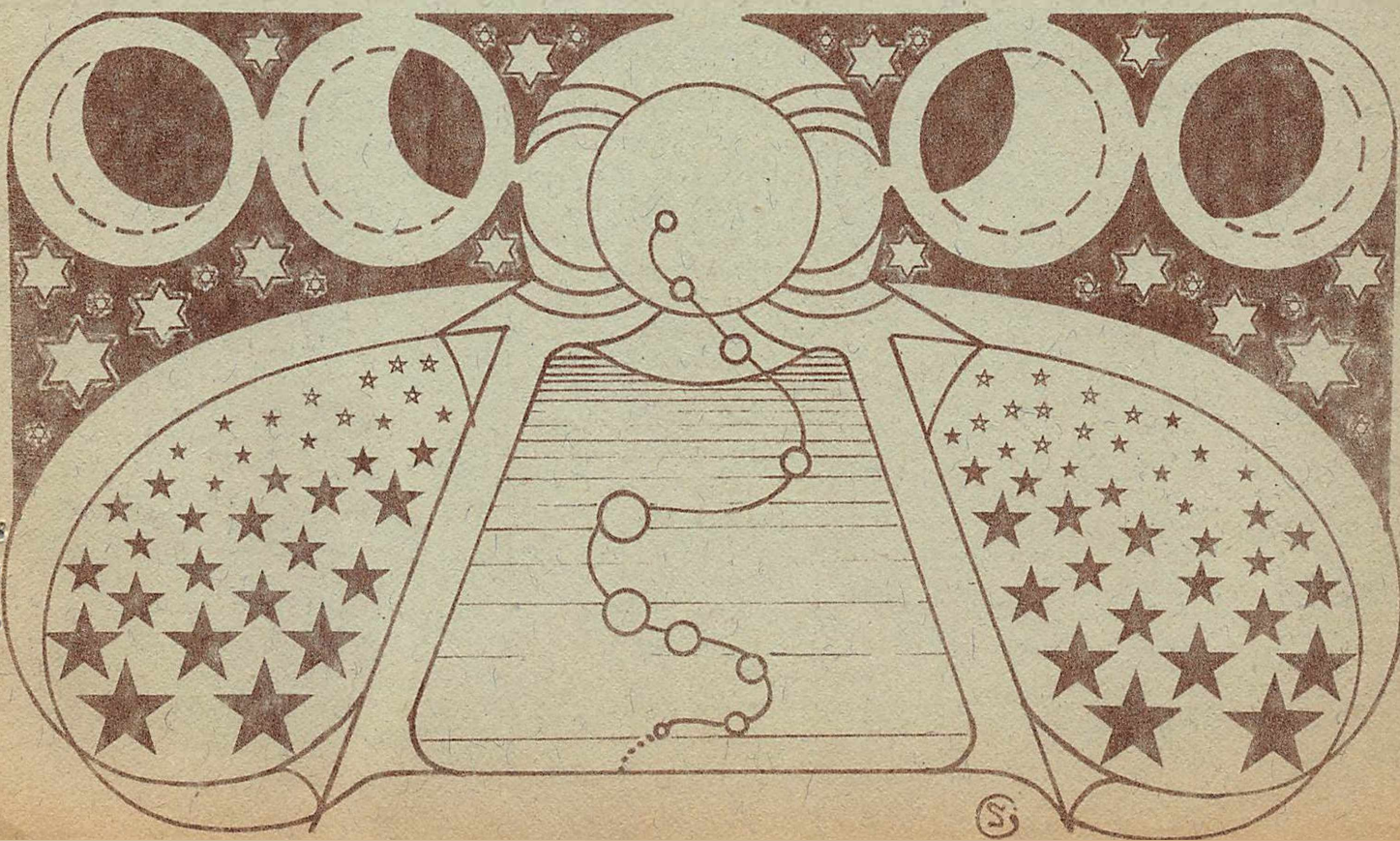
(from *THE CITY*, Jane Gaskell, St. Martin's Press)

Whatever complaints readers level against the Atlan Cycle from the conventional point of view, it holds up, bold and impertinent, from the inventive point of view. The crux lies with Cija herself; told from the first person point of view, her narration is poignant and dynamic. There is simply nothing like her within my scope of experience. She isn't good looking (almost the opposite), does an awful lot of stupid things (blundering her way between adventures), and manages to get herself into more scrapes than out. She is raped several times, escapes from a brothel with the help of her first client (some fancy persuasion there), hikes barefoot across a continent disguised as a boy, and winds up every other book stretched out on a sacrificial altar, about to be done in. That's for starters. Cija is very much a spectator of the dramas she's involved in--conquest, the building and destroying of empires, volcanic disasters, massive battles with casualties in the tens of thousands--but is powerless for all her scruples and strong sense of conscience to act beyond the whims of her lovers, husbands, or captors. She is a woman in the deepest physiological sense, which means she gets pregnant via

her three different main mates during the course of the series. Her child children are the focal point of her independence; used and abused, her supreme property is herself and the children that come with it. Cija goes through roles of virgin princess, camp follower, cook and tavern maid, empress, and "she-ape." She has no special endowments, arcane abilities, or protective goddesses to act as daus ex machina. Inside of most female fantasy readers who indulge in such exotic thrills is a voice that says it's all too foolish. The Cija series is the "voice" elevated to a guffaw and shout of outright glee.

I'm glad that the Gaskell books are once more going strong, in print, and so much a part of me and my collection. They're something to live for and live with...

The books in the Atlan Cycle, available from St. Martin's Press, are *THE SERPENT*; *THE DRAGON*; *ATLAN*; *THE CITY*; and forthcoming, *SOME SUMMER LAND*. Each book is \$8.95, and all are written by Jane Gaskell. The final book, *SOME SUMMER LAND*, has not appeared in paper before.



An Electronic Tyger

commentary by mike weber

Trilogy

I thought of three possible subjects for this installment of TYGER, but all three of them were a touch too lightweight to bear up for a whole column. So, in a sudden fit of inspiration, I decided to combine the three (with the permission of the Kindly Editors of This Fine Journal) into one portmanteau column.

Subject One: Why You Should Not Vote a Hugo for CE3K

I've been following, to some extent, fannish reaction to the two blockbuster SF films of last year, STAR WARS and CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND. Both are nominated for Hugos (and I'll go out a short distance on a limb and predict that SW cops the rocket), and both are flawed.

Listening to reactions, both films seem to have a high acceptance quotient; in either case, I can only call to mind about two negative opinions. One of them was mine, on CE3K, and it's the reason for this article.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS is a hell of a cinematic experience, granted; so is STAR WARS. But CE3K is, sadly, a touch too cinematic.

SW is a "movie movie"---a film made by a film buff in an attempt to recapture the spirit (if not the dreadful technical quality) of the films he knew and loved in his youth. Lucas knows his film history and he chose the old serials as his model. A lot of fun for those who can enjoy the result, to be certain.

CE3K is a "cinematic film"; Spielberg has obviously been extremely impressed by the "auteur" theory and by European cinema in general. This

is obvious in his casting of Francois Truffaut, one of the biggest names among the "auteur" crowd, as his UFO expert. And, unfortunately, CE3K shows both its director's interests and that his reach exceeds his grasp. It's not quite the film tour de force Spielberg had visualized.

The film is deliberately rather obscure, playing to the "insiders" who will immediately supply for themselves the missing data to understand what is going on; the "outsider" will in the director's view be suitably impressed when the answers are revealed. This isn't too bad an idea, in good hands---it worked extremely well in 2001. And it makes points with those who like to think they're "insiders."

Unfortunately, Spielberg is neither Kubrick or Clarke. His script is decent and workmanlike, if somewhat lacking in characterization and somewhat unevenly paced, but he is not able to hide his cinematic contrivances. Too much happens only for the sake of the plot that nothing else is ever done with, and too many characters act in ways that

have no apparent motivation save to help the writer/director set up his next scene.

Some examples: Both Roy Neary and Gillian Guiler are terrified by their initial experiences with UFOs. (I don't blame them---Spielberg and Trumbull make the experiences horrid.) Neither one of them shows any other reaction for most of the film, even during attempts to see (and document) UFOs again, attempts made in an effort to prove to skeptics that they did see something and that they're not crazy. (The expression on Neary's face, the second night at Crescendo Summit, as he



watches the "UFOs" approach, is one of both joy and fearful/awed anticipation, as if he doesn't want to be there but has to be.)

But by the end of the film, and very suddenly, both undergo a complete reversal of attitude, with no given motivation. I'm not particularly afraid of the unknown, myself, but you wouldn't catch me walking into that saucer until I knew something about it.

Characters are introduced only, and this is obvious in the light of my analysis, for the purpose of allowing other characters to react off them, and then dropped with no real reason when they no longer fit the plot requirements. Teri Garr's character is absolutely and obviously there only to play the Determined Skeptic to Dreyfuss' Unwilling Believer. When Spielberg no longer requires a Determined Skeptic or a Captive Audience (the kids)--write them out. In plot terms, Neary's dirt-in-the-kitchen-window routine is necessary, really, but only in that it gives an excuse to write out Garr and the kids. Larry from LA is only there, really, to prove that others are obsessed, in the same way that Neary and Guiler are obsessed, with Devil's Tower. As soon as this is accomplished (via some very staged dialogue), out he goes.

And so on. Too much in CLOSE ENCOUNTERS, quite simply is manipulated to fit a rigid plot structure; it's not allowed to flow organically from events that apparently happen of themselves. There is a feeling of control by an omnipotent, external force that determines events with no regard to natural motivation of actions (and I don't mean UFOs).

On the other hand, STAR WARS' plot, contrived and reliant on managed coincidence as it is, gives the feeling that the characters are acting of their own will, reacting to events in a fashion appropriate to themselves and their stated motiva-

tions. (There is only one case in STAR WARS of a character who acts against a previously-established characterization: Han Solo in his return, and I can accept that without too much strain--it's actually in character for his Humphrey Bogart/CASABLANCA role.)

I won't go into comparing the special effects, except to say that those of CE3K are excellent by the standards of the art as it stood after Trumbull did 2001 for Kubrick. Those of STAR WARS, on the other hand, set the standards for a whole new generation of special effects men to come.

All in all, CE3K may be less juvenile than STAR WARS, but I feel that SW, as a film and as a visual spectacle, is more deserving of your Hugo vote.

Subject Two: Why the Dorsai Are Not Beloved in Fandom-at-Large

Fandom is a rather anarchistic group at best. Granted, clubs, apas, convention committees, and the USPS (in descending order of effectiveness) may impose some small local reversals of entropy in some areas, but fandom overall is possibly the best example of the chaos that physics tells us will be the probable end of the universe.

This anarchy must be, to some small extent, broken down, and order imposed in order for conventions to work well, as noted above. But fandom as a whole--and most fans as individuals--resent this, even when they submit (with ill grace) to it.

Okay, as we know, con committees and fandom exist in a mutually incestuous love/hate relationship; each is necessary to the other, yet each is trying to get away with as much as possible while at the same time limiting the amount the other pulls off.

All is well, even today, at small

regionals and lightly-programmed large ones. But at Worldcons and some of the larger, more structured regionals, there is more and more friction between the anarchistic tendencies of fandom at large and the (unfortunately) more and more rigid structure made necessary by the sheer unwieldy size of the thing. Rules. Security. ID. And so on.

Fans don't like being told what to do and when to do it. They react badly. They badmouth the committee. They attempt to evade rentacops. They do their damndest to evade, avoid, and defeat ID checks. They generally cut up cranky. Not thru any deep-seated criminal tendencies, you understand, but just because they resent the (apparently) arbitrary strictures being imposed from without. (A note here: I am firmly convinced that con-hotel room packing is done as much for the sheer defiance inherent in the act than for the money saved.)

To mix a metaphor, here we have people attempting to herd eagles like sheep. And the eagles don't want to be sheep, so they become wolves, snapping at the sheepdogs and shepherds.

The person we resent most, usually, is the turncoat, working against his fellows and for the money. Our choicest scorn is reserved for the collaborator and his quislings.

And I suspect that, subliminally, much of fandom sees the so-called Dorsai in that light: their uniforms and quasi-military organization make them stick out like a sore thumb.

"But they're us," we think. "Why are they working for them?"

The answer that immediately springs to mind, in response to a question phrased in that manner, is "Because they crave power." I do not believe that that is the original reason for the existence of the Dorsai; I doubt very much that anyone could actu-

ally seriously believe that they could seize power in fandom by any means, much less such an obvious one.

No, I think it's simply a sincere belief that we must police ourselves (whether this is right or wrong is really immaterial), along with a simple desire to stand out, to be noticed. All fans are exhibitionists to some extent--it's not surprising.

They sure do stand out. And, rightly or wrongly, fandom as a whole perceives the Dorsai as representing budding authoritarianism; almost as budding Storm Troopers, plotting the eventual subversion and domination of all fandom (or at least con fandom). I suppose it's the uniforms and apparent regimentation that does it...

I believe the founders of the Dorsai acted in a simple desire to have some fun when they offered their services to con committees as security. I am simply afraid that their position has been misinterpreted by fandom and that fandom really doesn't want this kind of help (or need it), nor are they capable of accepting it.

Subject Three: THE GOODIES

Recently, I've discovered a new source of merriment and enjoyment. For some time, the local PBS stations have not been carrying MONTY PYTHON, and the local NPR station has not been carrying the GOONS SHOW. I've been missing my weekly dosage of British Silliness.

Well, for some reason, I decided to try watching a program called THE GOODIES. It had something to do with the Goodies being engaged in becoming Masters of a Lancastrian martial art called Ecky-Thump, which involved the use of black-puddings. I decided to watch.

I watched, and it was a hilarious parody of KUNG FU and the kung fu craze. I was hooked.

Since then, the Goodies have helped Emperor Roy Kinnear (a name that should be familiar to AVENGERS fans) run ancient Rome; entered the Le Mans 24 Hours Race on a bicycle built for three; been swallowed by a frozen tyrannosaurus; attempted to dispose of a 6 foot high can of tomato soup (actually a chemical warfare agent that turns you into a clown); and run a newspaper.

They are, simply put, hilarious.

I suppose that, more than the Pythons, they resemble the Goon Show brought to a visual medium--two of them (Graeme Garden and Bill Oddie) do most of the writing, and all three (the above plus Tim Brooke-Taylor) are masters of the comic satire.

They take one given situation per episode and go from there, frequently using elaborate (and somewhat ridiculous) disguises and/or quite a bit of visual effects (during the "tomato soup" episode, in an attempt to dispose of the giant can, they used a catapult and a "160ton" weight that Tim and Bill were to drop onto one side of the catapult to launch the can into the sea. After showing us a sign on the device that said "Acme Catapult Company" and throwing in a Roadrunner "beep-beep" on the soundtrack, they proceeded to do about five typical RR catapult gags). If you like the Goons or Python, check your local PBS stations for THE GOODIES and try them.

See you next issue, inspiration and editors permitting; meanwhile, you can keep reading here for news on my personalzine/genzine.

