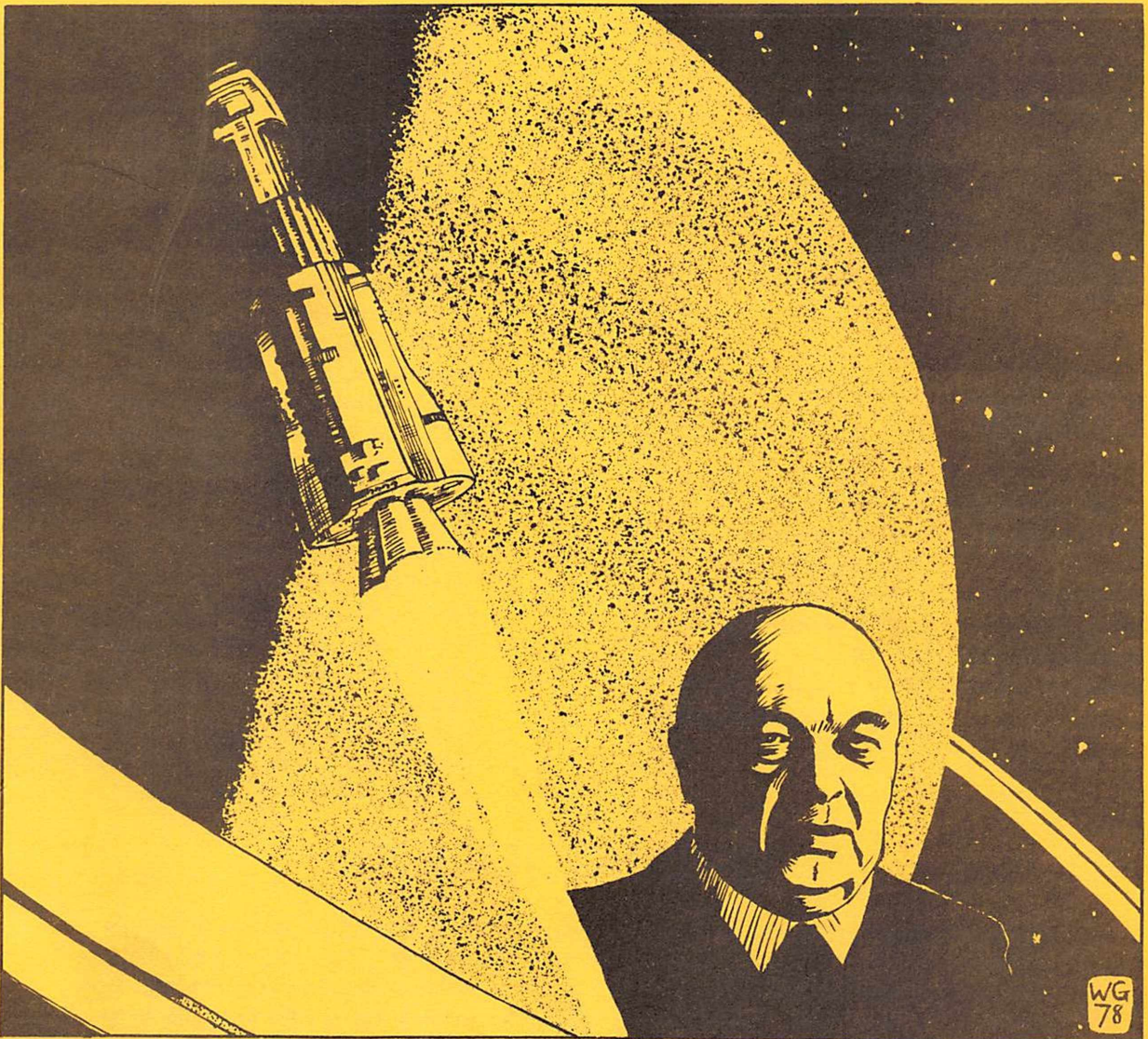


# future retrospective



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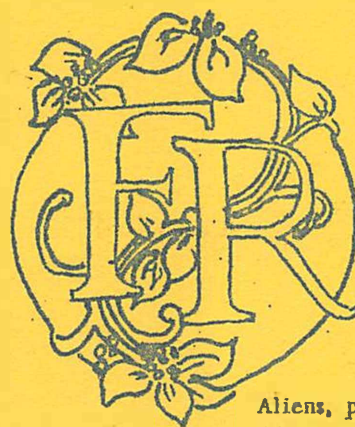
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# Subscription

FUTURE RETROSPECTIVE #15-16 is produced by Cliff & Susan Biggers, editors (1029 Franklin Road Apt 3-A, Marietta, GA 30067.) © 1979.  
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Bad luck comes in threes, I remember reading somewhere. As you might expect, I mentally dismissed the saying as nonsense.

On June the 1st, as I detailed in my last editorial in FR, postal rates for book rate went up from 30¢ for the first pound to 36¢ for the first pound. Number one.

On June 15th, the price of mimeograph ink and stencils rose 15% in the Atlanta area. Number two.

On July 3rd, the post office, without publicity, raised book rate 33% above the raise of a month before. As of now, December 15th, book rate is 48¢ for the first pound. Third class, my only alternative, is 40¢ for four ounces. Number three.

This FR, as you may have noted on the cover, is a double issue, #15-16. This is done partly because, at the old subscription rates, the per-issue cost would not even cover the expense of postage to mail this issue of FR to you. A double issue allows some small amount to be carried over towards printing costs after paying for postage.

This will make little or no difference to those of you who trade for FR, or who receive it as a contributor or via complimentary copies; for the rest of you, the new subscription rates of 4/\$3 or 6/\$4.50 will cover the postage in the future sufficiently to enable me to afford to mail this fanzine out.

To make up for the fact that it is a double issue, I've added some extra pages of reviews, letters, and columns; I hope this is sufficient justification for that double-number on the cover.

Since it is appropriate for me to use this space to discuss FR, I will. Mainly because I have some specific goals in mind for the zine, and I want to state them here.

Colin Lester's INTERNATIONAL SF YEARBOOK describes FR as "the South's leading reviewzine." The quote did not come from me, but I thank whomever gave him that line. I'd like to make FR live up to that reputation in the future, and I feel that this issue, somewhat later

# PERSPECTIVE

## cliff biggers



than I would have liked, is a good start towards that. From this point on, every feature in FR will have some relationship to sf criticism, whether it's via reviews, superlative columns like Mike Glycer's "When All Else Fails," which I've always felt fit in well with the idea of FR, or film/tv commentary, interviews, etc. This will rule out particularly faanish items--while I enjoy them immensely, I can't in good faith find a place for them in FR. It will also preclude poetry and fiction, something I've gotten a lot of in recent months and have returned with an explanation of why I can't use it here.

I have some pieces that are quite good and yet don't fit in with this theme/goal of FR: one of them is a piece by Binker Hughes on how the DSC bid was won by Atlanta in 1971--when Atlanta had, in reality, no bid at all. I have an intriguing, though lengthy, piece on alien intelligence by Dave Minch. I have several other offers for columns, articles, etc. I do plan to make use of these pieces in some way, perhaps as a supplemental publication to go along with FR occasionally, or perhaps in a different fanzine entirely.

What you will see in FR is criticism and reviews of the sf field, of sf fandom and trends in fandom, of awards, of events in the field, and occasional interviews with people who make all this happen. I plan on continuing the features we have at present--this includes the columns I've been running plus a few others I hope to add, as well as the reviews and the lettercol--but publishing more often and in a smaller size, page-wise.

#### FREE PLUG

In addition to FR, I publish the newszine ATARANTES. ATAR is the official newszine of the Atlanta Science Fiction Club, is edited and written, for the most part, by me, and comes out monthly--it's in its 19th issue now. Subs are 12/\$3.50, or issues are available for useable news items, letters of comments etc. If you do sub, you can make checks payable to the Atlanta Science Fiction Club, if you wish.

Who says I won't stoop to any levels to get publicity for my own publications?

#### AND IN MY SPARE TIME...

One project that's been taking up a bit of my time recently is a history of Southern fandom; the far 'om of the DeepSouth is a group that's been paid little attention nationally, but it has a varied and complex history

that predates the 1960 Worldcon in New Orleans. As far as I know, there's been no attempt to do an organized history of fandom in this region--oh, there have been some local histories, such as brief articles on the development of NOSFA, or ASFO, or Tallahassee fandom. What I'd like to do is a series of articles on the history of fandom in the South.

Boy, do I need help.

What I need most of all is fanzines. I have acquired a few issues of QUANDRY from the 50s, a few COSMAGs and SF DIGESTs, a handful of Alabama and Georgia and Tennessee fanzines, several New Orleans publications from the mid-60s on--but the collection is skimpy.

If you have any fanzines from this era, either fanzines published in the South or fanzines with articles relating to Southern fandom, I'd appreciate hearing from you about it. This would include information on conventions, con reports, club information and news, etc. I don't have to have the fanzine itself--copies of pertinent items would do.

I've been interested in this project for some time now, and have talked to various people, such as Rich Garrison and Hank Reinhardt and Jerry Page, about it as early as March of 1977. It's been in the talking stages long enough, though--I'd like to get it moving.

#### TIDBITS

I have on hand an interview with Freff that I will feature in the next issue of FR, plus supplemental material to accompany it. If I hadn't had a horrible time with my transcription of the tapes--I promptly lost all my cards with all the transcriptions on it, one question and one answer per card--it'd be here. Next time for sure.

The cover on this issue of FR is, as you have probably noticed, a piece by Wade Gilbreath. Due to those dreaded Technical Difficulties, the cover is designed and executed entirely by Wade--Sally Cook, the art director, was out of touch when plans for the cover were changed, and therefore Sally and I have co-directed the art aspect of this issue of FUTURE RETROSPECTIVE.

Also, this issue's CINEMATIC EYE is done, not by our usual Cecil Hutto, but by Sue Phillips. Ceese is busy moving into a new house and Sue volunteered to fill in the gap for him. Have to give credit where credit is due and all that...



# REVIEWS

THE STAND. Stephen King. Doubleday, 1978- \$12.95. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

There's little doubt that one of the most successful authors of the 1970s is Stephen King; in fact, I still recall the strength of CARRIE, a strength that was almost too much for the rather predictable plot the first time I read that novel. Try as I might, I was unable to communicate to friends just what it was that made that Stephen King novel so powerful.

I take it as a minor triumph that the person who mocked my admiration of that novel most loudly those years ago just recently called to tell me how glad he was that his copy of THE STAND finally arrived.

There's no doubt about it: King is probably the most forceful fantasy/horror author writing at present. His first three books have all been mood-evoking and plot-heavy--if there's been any problem standard to Stephen King's books, it's been the slow start that mires the reader down. Thankfully, that slow start has been left on the wayside in THE STAND; the novel starts quickly, moves quickly, and winds down to a startlingly weak conclusion that still can't take away from the book.

The novel is a deadly-disease-disaster novel, but one with more scope than popular authors like Michael Crichton ever dreamed of. The disease, sometimes called Captain Trips and sometimes known as the superflu, has a 99.4% fatality rate. The people who are left alive, few though they may be, are faced with the immediate problem of survival in a world that no longer wants

to function. It's a world that seems a mockery of the life they had before the superflu struck--a world in which power and running water become luxuries, and burial of the corpses is a full-time job.

It's also a world of fear. The dark man, known alternately as WalkinDude and/or Randall Flagg, is just beyond them, on the fringes of their reconstructed civilization. And he haunts them in their nightmares, he intimidates them through their thoughts, and he ultimately brings ruin and death to some of them through his disciples.

But this is getting ahead of the book; the novel is a massive 823 pages, and the first third of it merely details the general falling-apart of American society. Most authors would have quit there, satisfied to call that their disaster novel. King goes on, to show us the struggle to rebuild, the struggle to bring new life to a dying world. And even more authors would have said, "Alright, that's enough." King continues, though, with the conflict between Randall Flagg and the heroes of the Free Zone--a conflict almost surreal, yet tinged with the reality that is an integral part of all of King's novels.

As I said, it does have its problems; for all intents and purposes, the book ends chapters before the author finally concludes the tale, and the result is a particularly uninspiring anticlimax/denouement. After 700-and-some-odd-pages, even the most diligent of readers would have been ready to leave the novel.

There's also a minor problem with the large number of characters populating the initial third of the book--as King cuts from one to another, you begin to forget what happened to a favorite character before the author can get back to his plight.

Minor problems, though. This book will almost certainly be a big seller,



something almost guaranteed by the King name on the spine. It deserves the honor, too--there's no doubt that THE STAND is an enjoyable sf novel, a substantial chunk of reading that'll please almost any reader. And since the price is high enough that it deters some from buying it for themselves, it makes an awfully good Christmas present.

**SKIRMISH: THE GREAT SHORT FICTION OF CLIFFORD D. SIMAK.**  
Berkley Books 1978: \$1.95. Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

Some of my earliest memories of sf include reading vintage Simak novels; works like TIME AND AGAIN, THE WEREWOLF PRINCIPLE, or CITY. So it was with genuine enthusiasm that I picked up this collection of Simak's fiction--and just a tinge of disappointment touched me as I completed it.

As a novelist, Simak is nearly unbearable; he writes strong tales, with fully-developed, intriguing characters. His short stories, though, or too much cut from the same mold. Read over a period of time, a story here and a story there, they might be entertaining and effective; read in one doze, as they're presented in this collection, they're almost too much too soon, to the detriment of both reader and author.

The Simak short-story form, as is seen in the majority of these stories, is as follows: brief introduction of situation, flashback to give background material, then the resolution. It's a tried-and-true format, but the variety is lacking.

The book has some good selections, though. There's "Sitters," one of my favorite Simak pieces now--but one I was totally unfamiliar with until I read this book. It involves alien babysitters/childrears who find their own niche in a small community. And there's "The Big Front Yard," a tidy, if somewhat gimmick-oriented, story of a dimensional warp

and an interdimensional barter system that proves beneficial for everyone. The man-made man of "Goodnight, Mr. James," the robot in search of a home in "All the Traps of Earth"; no, there's no denying that the strong plots are here. Somehow, though, the book overall becomes a bit too much, and all those individually-satisfying stories lose their strength.

If you're a Simak fan, this is a book you'll not want to miss, but I warn you to try it in small doses, so as to appreciate what's there. And as a final course, try WEREWOLF PRINCIPLE one more time--it's Simak at his best, and it stands up all the way through to even the most discriminating reader. SKIRMISH does not.

**WHO GOES HERE?** Bob Shaw.  
Ace 88575, 1978 - \$1.75. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

When Bob Shaw is on stride, as in his "slow glass" material, or his superlative TWO-TIMERS, few writers can approach him. He tells a taut story, with just the right dash of characterization and fire.

He is not, though, a humorist, at least not in his science fiction. As a result, WHO GOES HERE? was one of the most tedious novels I've read in recent memory, and a major disappointment for anyone who thought he could expect a regular level of quality from Shaw.

The novel is a lighthearted piece about Warren Peace, who has enlisted in the Space Legion to forget something from his pre-military life. Unfortunately, the treatments have succeeded all too well, and Warren is unable to recall anything of his pre-military life--including his own past experiences and identity.

As Warren bumbles through one adventure after another, bits begin to fall into place, culminating with a final, slapdash discovery of all that he had forgotten before.

Ron Goulart might have been able to pull it off. Robert Sheckly could have almost definitely made the idea work, even made it sparkle.

But Shaw doesn't translate well to this light-hearted humor, and the novel has the feel of a joke-story grown over-large. The humor becomes simple silliness overall, a bit like Monty Python in a very bad skit.

If you're after sf humor, I think you can do better than this. If you're after Bob Shaw material, I know you can do better than this.

**CYBORG.** Martin Caidin. Ballantine Del Rey 27487, 1972 (rep. 1978). \$1.95. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

I never really liked THE SIX MILLION DOLLAR MAN, and I went into this novel with the presumption that it would have the depth of its television incarnation. The Lee Majors image decorating the front cover certainly helped form the initial prejudice. Oddly enough, I was wrong; not only is CYBORG a solid piece of writing, it could have been made into an awfully good film. Maybe someday it will.

The story is the familiar one of Steve Austin, nearly dead after a crash--and rebuilt bionically to be better than he was before. It's a story of man and machine, and where one ends and the other begins. Surprisingly, it's a story of people and feelings and change, and it's a lot better written than a good deal of the stuff I read in sf magazines nowadays.

The novel has so many things that the series failed to touch on--Austin's bitterness, his acceptance of his situation, and his struggle to retain his identity and his dignity. CYBORG will never be an sf classic, but it's a book that'll probably stay in print for a long time, and deservedly so. If sf fans can just forget the series, I imagine they'll be engrossed with the novel within the first 50 pages; I know I was. It's nothing heavy, but that's not necessarily a flaw--try it.



**LIFEBOAT EARTH.** Stanley Schmidt. Berkley 03820 - \$1.75, 1978. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

Since Schmidt has just taken over as editor of the prestigious ANALOG, I suspect there will be some interest in this title, if only to give readers some idea of the literary aims of the man holding ANALOG's reins. I know I picked the book up as much for that as for any other reason.

I came away a bit disappointed. It's not a devastatingly bad book, but it has nothing to really recommend it, either; all in all, Schmidt has given us an average-quality potboiler that will probably have comfortable sales and might appeal to some adventure-oriented readers, but it's a book whose flaws outweigh its virtues.

The premise of the book centers around an attempt to move Earth from its present location to an orbit around a sun in another galaxy. At first, the trip is undertaken slowly; then, in order to get there while there is still an earth-civilization left, the trip is speeded up. While not as unbelievable as SPACE: 1999, the book is hampered by this premise that I had trouble accepting--the idea that the planet would hold together and that enough people would move beneath the surface in order to survive that a culture could be kept going is more than I think Schmidt can expect us to accept--and he does little, if anything, to make the premise more palatable.

The only saving grace of the book comes midway through, with the introduction of a trio of dolphins, the last dolphins to survive on our planet. The interaction of dolphin and man is handled remarkably well, and Schmidt does a believable job in giving the dolphins (particularly Pinocchio, the male) personalities. He doesn't do quite as well with Clark, the Heinlein-esque hero of the novel.

While it's a notch above Perry Rhodan, I can't recommend LIFEBOAT EARTH to anyone who wants any-

thing more than simple adventure. All in all, a most unmemorable book.

**NIGHT'S MASTER.** Tanith Lee. DAW UE1414 - \$1.75. 1978. Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

Perhaps it is from too much exposure to barbarian-fantasy, but I am not, generally, a fantasy fan. I am a Tanith Lee fan, though--in fact, of all DAW's new authors, I think Lee is their greatest find--so I gave NIGHT'S MASTER a try. I'm certainly glad I did; the book sparkles with

The book is the story of Azhrarn, the night master of the title and a demon of immense power. He dwells within the Earth of an unidentified antiquity, and uses his diabolical wiles to bring happiness and horror to mankind as suits his whims.

More than anything else, NIGHT'S MASTER is reminiscent of John Brunner's superlative TRAVELER IN BLACK stories in that the author makes use of ironic twists of fate to drive home the point of the story, and the book seems to reflect the Taoist "good within bad, bad within good" philosophy that is such an integral part of the Brunner collection.

The book is episodic, presenting a variety of incidents concerning Azhrarn. Each can stand virtually alone, although there's enough connective fiber to integrate everything into a novel quite well.

If you're a fantasy reader, you should be thrilled with Tanith Lee's latest book; and if you haven't read anything by Lee before, you have a double treat in store for you when you read NIGHT'S MASTER.

**A ASSAULT ON THE GODS.** Stephen Goldin. Doubleday - \$6.95. 1977. Reviewed by Jim Brock.

A ASSAULT ON THE GODS is on one level a thought-provoking study of religion and on another level an intensely exciting adventure. Once begun, it is practically impossible to put down and even when the actual reading is finished, the questions Goldin provokes still flood the mind.

A small trading mission on the planet Dascham receives first-hand knowledge of the local gods when one of the crew is destroyed by the gods' mechanical angels. These angels are the enforcement arm which, along with a planet-wide network of bugs and microphones, enable the gods to enslave the Daschamese in the ultimate Big Brother set-up.



I MISS WRITING  
THOSE MAN, WOMEN,  
MONSTER THINGS  
FOR FANTASTIC  
THRILLING TALES.  
BUT HARLEQUIN PAID  
BETTER AND NOW  
IT'S MAN, WOMAN  
AND STUPID MIS-  
UNDERSTANDING.  
\* Sigh \*



When the remaining crew members are presented the challenge to attack and destroy the gods in their mountain stronghold, individual motivations of greed, compassion, and obedience of orders lead to first-rate action. Goldin's well-developed characterization comes to focus in Ardeva Korrell, captain of the space merchant and driving force of the assault. Dev is a native of Eva, a planet whose religion teaches that the ultimate faith is in one's own self. Her resulting viewpoint, strong self-reliance and thought processes should delight those fans who appreciate well-done female protagonists.

My only complaint comes from the inclusion of numerous quotes from the prophet Anthropos of Eca concerning sanity and the sane mind; it's an overused gimmick that could have been eliminated for the sake of a better book. Even this doesn't prevent ASSAULT ON THE GODSA from standing as a first-rate adventure novel, though.

SCIENCE FICTION AND HEROIC FANTASY AUTHOR INDEX. Stuart W. Wells III, ed. Purple Unicorn Press 4532 London Road, Duluth, MN 55804 \$9.95 pb. 1978. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

I'm a voracious accumulator of sf reference works, as those of you who recall my firm recommendation of the expensive Tuck ENCYCLOPEDIA may recall. Thus, for me, this AUTHOR INDEX is invaluable; but I suspect the price and the convenient size will make this a worthwhile purchase for any collector of sf--in fact, for a great many readers, this could be the only real reference work they will ever need.

The perfect-bound pb is, in effect, a large bibliography of all sf and heroic fantasy published in America since 1945. The book is quite up-to-date, unlike Tuck's bibliography, which only goes to 1968. I've found several listings for 1978 in Wells' book--Ellison's STRANGE WINE is in here, for instance, a June 1978 release.

It's this coverage of recent releases that will make the book so valuable to so many readers. In the past decade, some of the most important authors and books in the field have been published, and their absence from the Tuck ENCYCLOPEDIA will stand as a flaw until an update volume is issued as a supplement. This AUTHOR INDEX lacks the full bibliographical information of the Tuck books, to be sure; but it does give you titles, publishers, and dates of publication, as well as indicating if the book happened to belong to certain series--Ballantine Adult Fantasy, for instance, or DAW's numbered series (in which case the number is given).

Wells points out in a foreword that he has not attempted to include horror fiction in his bibliography; in fact, there is a list of several exclusions on page IX that serves as a handy guide for the potential purchaser in deciding if the book is worthwhile for him. If you're a juvenile sf collector, for instance, you'd get nothing out of this book, since juveniles are left uncovered. But if you do collect sf and heroic fantasy, you'll find the book a tremendous help in finding much-needed titles, editions, etc.; I've gotten my money's worth out of it many times over already.

THE GREAT FETISH. L. Sprague de Camp. Doubleday - \$7.95. 1978. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

L. Sprague de Camp is a most dependable author; he rarely turns out a clunker on his own. THE GREAT FETISH is de Camp's latest venture into the field of light-hearted sf/fantasy humor, and it stands as a most satisfactory book.

Marko Prokopiu is a teacher who is convicted of teaching anti-evolution; from this point, his life becomes a series of escapades and misadventures that give de Camp a chance to satirize and poke fun at our society. Following the Swiftian tradition of GULLIVER'S TRAVELS, de Camp has Marko embark on a series of voyages that take him to different societies,

whereupon he manages to get into deadly danger.

This book won't be an award-winner, and certainly isn't in the same category as de Camp's solid, heavy sf--he isn't trying to write that sort of book here. What he is out to do is to entertain, a task he succeeds in quite admirably. If you prefer your sf/fantasy mixed in with a bit of thud-and-blunder adventure, you should enjoy THE GREAT FETISH immensely.

WAITERS ON THE DANCE. Julian Jay Savarin. St. Martin's Press - \$8.95. 1978. Reviewed by Nicki Lynch.

WAITERS ON THE DANCE is published by St. Martin's, a company that has racked up a good reputation as a prime publisher of quality sf. This book proves that even St. Martin's Press can goof now and then.

The story is a mixture of heavy-handed stealing from the Old Testament a la von Daniken and "space legend" on a galactic scale. The grand league of worlds migrates a group of people, a mixture of all races from the known worlds which has never been done before, to a new found planet which is a paradise -- Terra of Sol. This bold experiment is headed by Jael Adaamm and his wife, Evahna. While they hold little interest for the author or reader, they name the island they land on Atlantis and begin the line of events by producing offspring.

The organization of planets which made this possible is called Galactic Organization and Dominions (G.O.D.) and the common language is Lingua Galactin (commonly known as La'tin). When the colonists arrive, they pick an Angelli Suprema (guardian angel) who will be the administrator and spiritual representative of the colony; naturally, Adaamm is chosen. The focal point of the G.O.D. and the Or-



ganizational Battle Fleet is a place called Haven. (Mothers scare their children into obedience with, "If you are bad, you won't go to Haven.") The Organizational Battle Fleet is commanded by a group of men known as Sheperds, and it is used to prevent war by wiping out the opposition first.

So we have people settling Terra and in several generations they still have their super science, but the idea that their ancestors came from outer space is fast becoming a myth, with the exception of the Sheperds who maintain contact (i.e., faith) with the G.O.D. The people are also losing the longevity they originally had, except for those on Atlantis. Naturally, this is a bone of contention which leads to world wide destruction.

Meanwhile, seeds sewn centuries ago in Adaamm's illegitimate son are growing into evil plans. The line has been split, however, into male and female, with the male, Kizeesh, working openly at amassing wealth and power to take over a section of the galaxy, while the female works secretly at the same plan. She is the typical brilliant woman who fools everyone into thinking she is a fool, but she is too smart for them.

The author skips from generation to generation with few, if any, worries about the ones he skips. The reader is also dragged from planet to planet, following characters who seem to have little to do with the story, with no explanation of where or when the reader is. Worse, the obvious bad people all have the same name in a line so you don't know if you are reading about Kizeesh the first or the twelfth. This is even more confusing as each generation is a powerful Adept and has an ancestral memory so that each generation is, in effect, the same person. The female, Alda, follows this same pattern until she decides to have herself frozen for 40 centuries.

So we have trouble brewing in the known universe and trouble brewing in the new world. For some reason, Terra has been left alone while all

the other planets are full partners in the organization. Somewhere along the line, there will be trouble so vast that Terra will be cut off from GOD permanently. This hasn't happened by the conclusion of WAITERS ON THE DANCE, but "Extracts from the Galactic Chronicles" appear sporadically in the book, telegraphing the punch of the author. These 'extracts' do nothing to augment the text, as they should.

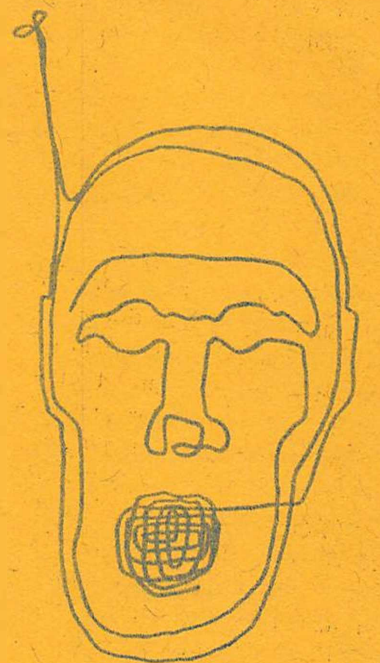
The characterization is dull and cardboard. The men are strong and committed to their goals while the women are little more than property unless they have wealth. At one point, a man is extolling the value of wounding a woman's ego to keep her in her place. Ugh. The only real interest the author seems to have is in the evil characters; too bad we have to put up with the paper-mache' good ones.

Being a trilogy, one would expect the suspense to bridge the gap between books, but that each book would be an independent novel. Savarin doesn't see it this way, though, and he chooses to confuse the reader with a jumbled mish-mash of dead-end characters, misdirection, and telegraphed punches. SF fans should avoid this book.

THE BEST SHORT STORIES OF J.G. BALLARD. Holt, Rinehart, Winston - \$7.95. Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

The "Best of" book has become a popular one in the past few years, with every publisher offering one or two "best" anthologies; unfortunately, this sort of "best stories of" book usually covers only the real giants in the field, those whose names are so well-known that yet another book re-collecting their older stories would sell to libraries, to collectors, and to casual readers as well. I never would have believed a writer with as surrealistic, as avant-garde a feel as J.G. Ballard would be the subject of such an anthology--but here is just such a book, in a well-packaged trade paperback from Holt Rinehart & Winston.

The publishers aren't marketing this



as science fiction; nowhere on the cover or the blurb will you find those words. Anthony Burgess, in his introduction, quickly tells us that Burgess is not a fine sf writer, but is a fine fiction writer. And with Burgess, as with Ellison (another author who has loudly reminded us he is not an sf writer), it seems right--Ballard is outside the mainstream of sf, in a bizarre world that is his alone.

Ballard's fiction often offers us a view of a man helpless in a society he doesn't interact with; "The Concentration City," "Chronopolis," "The Cloud-Sculptors of Coral D" all show us men who are alienated from their culture--and almost invariably, the protagonist loses. It's a major theme in the works of Ballard, not only in his short fiction but in longer pieces like CRASH and CONCRETE ISLAND.

Ballard was once classified as a member of sf's "New Wave," back when the term meant something--he's definitely not just an author of science fiction, as pieces like "The Atrocity Exhibition" and "Why I Want to Fuck Ronald Reagan" demonstrate. The fiction eludes classification, except as "fiction."



If the book is arranged chronologically, presenting Ballard's earliest fiction first, then it becomes obvious that the author has become more sure of himself and his fiction as his career developed; in stories like "Manhole 69", a tale of men who suddenly lose the need to sleep (surgery has accomplished this), Ballard works to tell us a story, to let the plot do everything; in the final efforts presented in the book, the plot is marginal and the words themselves are the *raison d'être* for the piece. Yes, I'll admit that to me, a lot of the later work of Ballard is self-indulgent and ineffective--but even so, I must admit he has a powerful command of the language.

"BEST SHORT STORIES OF J.G. BALLARD is worth having for the really powerful sf that makes up the bulk of the book; few people could fail to appreciate "Chronopolis" or "The Drowned Giant" after reading them. Some will call Ballard a "literary" writer, and a tone of contempt will be evident in their voices as they sneer the word "literary"; but it's true, and it's not detrimental or insulting. Ballard is a literary writer, and one I think you can appreciate.

KARMA. Arsen Darnay. St. Martins Press - \$8.95. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

KARMA is a book whose scope is perhaps too big, and as a result it falls far short of its goal while still being admirable for what it does. In other words, even though KARMA tells its stories very well, it remains dissatisfying as a single novel, due largely to Darnay's desire to tie several different story lines into one grand tale.

Jack Clark, a Washington bureaucrat, is essentially the hero of this piece; Ted Aspic is a man driven by revenge into taking on the role of the villain. Aspic has developed a method of capturing freed souls in a sort of stasis, preventing their moving into a new life; Clark is the man who approves the project, little realizing that Aspic wants vengeance against him for Clark's murder of Aspic in a

previous life. This first segment of the book moves in leaps and jerks, flowing at an exciting speed for a while, then bogging down to an almost-total stop.

The later segment of the novel takes place in a future world, a world that has lost much of its civilization after a nuclear holocaust; it's a world peopled by mutations--many of whom are ruled by the souls of the principals in the first segment of the novel. It's more coincidence than Karma, it seems, and Darnay can never offer a compelling reason for the reader to believe that these characters can constantly run into one another, life after life.

As a writer, Darnay shows the ability to tell a fine story; he seems to feel that throwing in a little of everything will make for a better story, though, and that's exactly what he does in KARMA. The book doesn't need all its 365 pages to tell its story; nor does it need all the plot machinations the author uses to keep bringing the same principals onto the scene.

While I'm pleased with Darnay, I'm not pleased with KARMA; Darnay has tried too much with this one, and the product shows all its seams and stitches like a patchwork quilt.

SPAWN OF THE WINDS. Brian Lumley. Jove Books, \$1.75. 1978. Reviewed by Barry Hunter.

Brian Lumley has taken on the role of the inheritor of H.P. Lovecraft's cloak, although some criticize his Chthulhu Mythos stories as being too much science and not enough horror. SPAWN OF THE WINDS will probably please those who have enjoyed Lumley's prior Chthulhu Mythos stories, while offering the same points of criticism to those who don't like Lumley.

In SPAWN OF THE WINDS, Lumley tells of Hank Silberhutte and his adventures after being transported to the frost planet Borea by Ithaqua, the wind walker. Silberhutte is working for Wingate Peaslee of Miskatonic University, trying cut his psychic powers to track Ithaqua when his party

is captured and taken to Borea, the world where Ithaqua takes his captives. It is a world of snow, ice, and cold winds--and Armandra, Ithaqua's daughter.

There is a great deal of action as Hank and his party take on Ithaqua and his band of followers. Lumley writes with a fervor that many writers show infrequently. He is one of a small group that continually produces fine novels. There is a "real-world" feel that HPL didn't put in his Chthulhu Mythos fiction, but I don't find it intrusive or bothersome in the least. In short, SPAWN OF THE WINDS is a fine book by a fine writer.

SOME WILL NOT DIE! Algis Budrys. Starblaze Editions/Donning Publishers - \$4.95. Rewritten 1978. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

This is another after-the-disaster novel, and once again the disaster is a fatal disease that has swept the earth. But while Stephen King dealt with the disease on a personal level, seeing how it changed those who survived, Algis Budrys in SOME WILL NOT DIE tells us a story of survivors who band together, fight to organize, and try to re-establish a militaristic society out of the chaos.

Matthew Garvin and his children become the focal point of this tale; it is Garvin who is able to bring a new society together from the few who survive the plague. He is a well-developed character, and the major asset of the novel.

This isn't one of Budrys' best, but it is enjoyable and thought-provoking. The basic story that Budrys utilizes is derived from his own "False Night" in 1954, and the present text is basically the same as the earlier Regency edition of SOME WILL NOT DIE. But it's a book that well deserves to be back in print, and is particularly interesting when read in conjunction with King's THE STAND.



**THE WHITE DRAGON.** Anne McCaffrey. Ballantine Books (hb) - \$8.95. Reviewed by Janice Gelb.

Anne McCaffrey's long-awaited volume 3 of "the Dragonriders of Pern," **THE WHITE DRAGON**, is a worthy addition to the ranks of its well-written and well-crafted predecessors.

The novel begins chronologically where Volume 2, **DRAGONQUEST**, left off, but it also features some characters and refers to some events from the two juveniles published in between. Lord Jaxom, who impressed the variant-colored white dragon, Ruth, is now of an age where the concerns of the earlier book are real issues--his possible conflicting loyalty to Hold and Weyr, and the unknown future and qualities of his anomalous dragon. The Old-Timers, both those banished to the Southern Weyr and those who stayed in the remaining Weyrs, are still causing problem for Benden Weyr, as are some of the Lord Holders' sons, due to the lack of sufficient Hold lands for expansion. This latter problem leads to the exploration of formerly uncharted land in the Southern Continent. The fire-lizards, whose importance was hinted at in the earlier volume, prove to be a help in this exploration, as well as a vital link to clues regarding the origin of Pern and the use of some of the ancient devices and artifacts found in previous volumes.

McCaffrey has provided an interesting blend of juvenile and standard novel in **THE WHITE DRAGON**. While the vocabulary, plot and concerns are on an "adult" level, she also deals with the personal problems of the adolescent Lord Jaxom--his anxieties about love, sex, and growing up. This sub-plot is presented in juxtaposition with the more general storyline, and isn't as annoying as one would

suppose, due to skillful handling.

The major characters of the first two volumes have been allowed to realistically grow older; and McCaffrey has provided enough interplay between these adult leaders and the adolescents introduced in the two juveniles to allow for a smooth transition into as many sequels as she cares to write.

An added bonus at the back of the novel is a "Dragondex," by Wendy Glasser, which includes everything the reader ever wanted to know about Pern and its inhabitants, including the most commonly used expletives! In addition, this volume began the phasing in of Michael Whelan covers for the series.

All in all, **THE WHITE DRAGON** is an entertaining and worthwhile book. How can you beat the newest book in one of the more popular SF series containing young love triumphant, archeological discoveries AND a smart-ass dragon?

**A HISTORY OF THE HUGO, NEBULA, AND INTERNATIONAL FANTASY AWARDS.** Donald Franson and Howard DeVore. Misfit Press. \$3.50. (Available from Howard DeVore, 4705 Weddel, Dearborn, MICH 48125). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

For a mere \$3.50, this 120-page book is a fine investment; DeVore and Franson have set out to list all nominees for each year in all categories of the three awards named in the title.

The book is set up chronologically by category, giving not only titles and authors, but places of original publication as well. At the end of the book is a handy authors' index, making it easy to find out how many awards your favorite writer has been nominated for, when, if he won or not, etc.

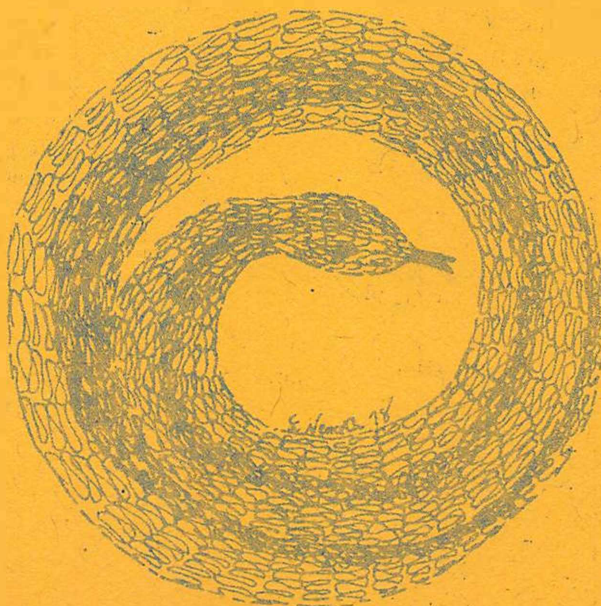
For statisticians and the curious, this book can prove most interesting; for those who want a handy reference list of award-winners, the book is cheap and invaluable. Be sure to order a copy right away; for all the work and information packed in this book, \$3.50 is an incredible bargain.

**THE VISUAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION.** Brian Ash. Pan Books, \$7.95. Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

SF reference books seem to have hit the big-time recently; this is one more for the browser than the serious scholar, though.

The book is arranged by category, prefaced by a chronological listing of important events and dates. The categories are along the lines of "Warfare and Weaponry," "Biologies and Environments," and so on, offering overviews of works dealing with these themes, numerous reprints of covers and black and white art, and essays by authors about the topics.

As I said, this is a browser's book; it's





not something you read from cover to cover in one sitting so much as you browse through, flipping the pages and skimming a piece here and a piece there. The text is enjoyable, and can prove quite useful as a reader's guide for particular themes, plots, and so on.

For the price, THE VISUAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION is well worth the effort. Be sure to pick it up and flip through it at your next trip to the bookstore--you'll be as pleased with it as I was.

I, ALIEN. J. Michael Reeves/Illustrated by Terry Austin. Ace 35495 - \$17.75. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

I, ALIEN is a product of Byron Freiss' Visual Publications; like the other books in his format, it offers a heavy mixture of action-oriented fiction and art. I, ALIEN is, more than any other novels in the series, nothing more than a text-and-art comic book; the protagonists, situations, conflicts, and plot-twists could have been lifted straight from any of a dozen Marvel Comics storylines. Which is to say, there's not a whole lot in the way of believable conflict and characterization.

Caliban is the alien, transported here to Earth through a warp known as the tesseract. He arrives in search of Jerilyn, the girl he loves who has also been transported away from Balthar, their home world--and upon his arrival he is befriended by Chelsea, a woman who blithely accepts him and involves him with her friends--and enemies--as they search for Kim, an artist whose paintings of her own "imaginary world" are in reality paintings of Balthar. As they try to find Kim, they face a religious motorcycle gang known as the Rainbow Riders and a representative of the government who is trying to capture Caliban.

And out of that mishmash of story-lines and farcical events, Michael Reeves manages to produce 185 pages of mediocre fiction that has lackluster characters moving in easily-predictable circles--and leaving the reader with

an intense feeling of ennui.

I, ALIEN is just the opposite of what I had hoped it would be. I had hoped it would bring admirable literary standards to comic-book conceits; instead, it reads like an overgrown Big Little Book, and lacks even the originality of most comic books. As it stands, the only asset the book has is the illustrations by Terry Austin--and even they suffer here and there from being over-enlarged.

Be sure to pass this one up in your search for enjoyable reading material; I, ALIEN manages to make reading a chore.

MIRKHEIM. Poul Anderson. Berkeley/Putnam's 1- \$8.95. Reviewed by Steve Lewis.

I haven't read Poul Anderson in some time, but you can bet it'll be a while before I do again. It takes a skillful writer to turn out an interesting book dealing with war or politics, and Anderson seems to lack that skill.

After a long, confusing prologue that only partially relates to the novel that follows, Anderson begins this book, the latest in the series of Nicholas van Rijn adventures. The book is bogged down by the by the pauses in the narrative to give us background information about Van Rijn and the Polesotechnic League. Some hard physics is used in postulating a world of supermetals orbiting a dead supernova sun, but the intent here is the majesty of decaying interstellar economics, as many governments and commercial conglomerates come to the brink of war over the ownership of the planet.

Van Rijn, as a character and a story basis, is getting old, and that results in MIRKHEIM being a very dull, seemingly interminable book.

DANCERS IN THE AFTERGLOW. Jack Chalker. Ballantine 27564 - \$1.75. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

DANCERS IN THE AFTERGLOW is perhaps one of the few memorable novels of 1978, and is easily the best book that Chalker has written thus far in his career. Plot, characters, and setting all seem to mesh perfectly, and the book flows smoothly from its opening pages to its conclusion.

The book deals with the takeover of the planet Ondine by the Machists, an alien culture that wants to transform humans into simple-minded, docile creatures more machine-like than human. The Machist forces invade the resort planet of Ondine, capture the tourists who are there, and begin their transformation process, a long physical and psychological change that destroys the individuality and personality of the humans on the planet. Only a few manage to escape the Machists, and these few, led by Sten Rolvag, quickly become isolated and involved in their own power struggles.

Daniel is sent by Naval Command to try to free Ondine; Daniel is not human, either, but is a human brain with an almost infinite number of bodies (reminiscent of Noman, for those of you who ever read old THUNDER Agents comics). If one body is destroyed, Daniel merely mentally inhabits another and takes over from there.

DANCERS IN THE AFTERGLOW details the adventures of Daniel and Amara as they fight to free Ondine--and defeat the Machists. It's a well-crafted novel, and Chalker is to be commended for taking the time to develop the planet Ondine, and the tourists who are there when the planet is invaded, into more than a plot device. Furthermore, Chalker develops the romance between Amara and Daniel and Ondine slowly and methodically, creating a great deal of reader empathy for both characters.

Whether you're a Chalker fan or not, be sure to read DANCERS IN THE AFTERGLOW; you won't be disappointed.



**WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS.** F. Paul Wilson. Doubleday- \$7.95. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

My first exposure to F. Paul Wilson was through his impressive and popular *HEALER*. Now, with *WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS*, Wilson returns us to the fictional LaNague Federation universe he created in that earlier novel.

*WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS* is two stories, not one; first, it's a story of Joe Finch, Jr., and the alien Vaneks, and Junior's successful attempts to have the humans on the planet Jebinose to respect and recognize the Vaneks as intelligent, sensitive creatures who, despite their bizarre philosophies and religion, deserved the same rights as humans.

The second part of the book is the story of Old Pete and Josephine Finch, daughter of Junior, and their search for a conspiracy on Jebinose--a conspiracy that seems intricately tied in with the murder of Jo's father on Jebinose years earlier.

As in *HEALER*, Wilson tells a fast-paced, well-written story that holds reader interest from the first chapter. As a writer, Wilson is straightforward and direct, emphasizing plot over style. He makes it work because his plots are strong enough to hold reader interest, and his lean style accents, rather than detracts.

Since *WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS* is blurbed as "A Novel of the LaNague Federation", I imagine Wilson is planning to make a regular series out of this. If he can keep up the quality he reached in the first two novels, it will be quite an impressive series indeed.

**THE LAST TRANSACTION.** Barry N. Malzberg. Pinnacle 40-174 - \$1.75. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

*THE LAST TRANSACTION* is one of Pinnacle's "Futurian Science

Fiction" novels, marking Pinnacle's serious entry into the science fiction field. Their publication of Barry Malzberg this early in the series shows that they're aiming for variety and experimentation rather than traditional sf-adventure in their series.

*THE LAST TRANSACTION* details the Presidential career of William Eric Springer, U.S. President from 1980 until 1984. It's a novel of personal crises, nuclear blackmail, and tension set in the near future, and as in all Barry Malzberg novels, the emphasis is heavily psychological as Malzberg draws us into the mind of Springer from time to time to see how he reacts under pressure.

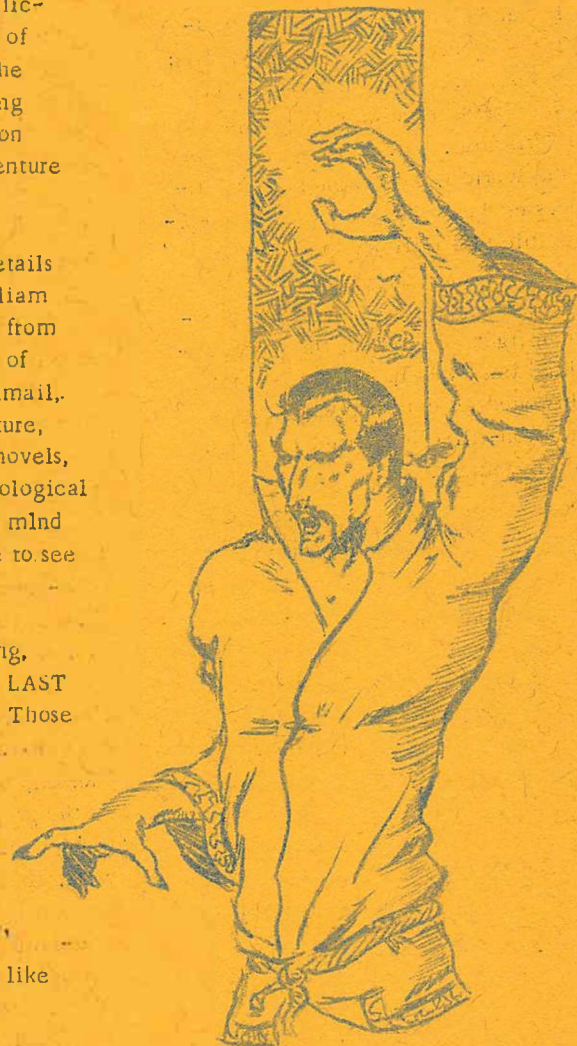
I'm a fan of Malzberg's writing, and as a result I enjoyed *THE LAST TRANSACTION* immensely. Those who have disliked Malzberg novels in the past will find the approach of *THE LAST TRANSACTION* to be much the same as in Malzberg's more successful novels like *BEYOND APOLLO* and *HERO-VIT'S WORLD*.

Rumor has it that Pinnacle's Futurian science fiction line is in limbo right now; that's a shame, for if *THE LAST TRANSACTION* was indicative of the quality they were hoping to publish, I'll miss the series very much.

**THE ZAP GUN.** Philip K. Dick. Dell 19907 - \$1.75. Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

In today's world of SALT talks and disarmament treaties, *THE ZAP GUN* seems almost wryly prophetic; it's appropriate that Dell brought the book back into print now.

In the future world of *THE ZAP GUN*, weapons, both frightening and absurd, are constantly invent-



only to be "plowshared" back into the consumer market as a display of disarmament. Lars Powderdry and Lilo Topchev are weapons experts on opposite sides of this weapons-war. Unfortunately, when the aliens arrive, they discover that none of their weapons are really good for anything at all.

*THE ZAP GUN* remains one of my favorite Philip Dick novels; its humorous, not-quite-cynical look at technology and human mistrust gets its point across without hammering it home or preaching to the reader. It's good to see this book back in print after several years, and I hope that Dell has plans to follow it up with several other OP Philip Dick titles.



**THE NIGHTMARE FACTOR.** Thomas N. Scortia and Frank M. Robinson. Bantam 42381 - \$2.50. Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

As a team, Scortia and Robinson have built a reputation for delivering taut, suspenseful novels--THE NIGHTMARE FACTOR is a credit to that reputation, because it's the best novel the collaborators have produced thus far.

In San Francisco, 75 people mysteriously die of an unknown disease; it resembles viral pneumonia, but acts much more quickly and proves 100% fatal. Dr. Calvin Doohan of the World Health Organization witnesses the problem turn from an epidemic to a military secret--then realizes that people are dying to keep it a secret. The race as Doohan fights to discover the secret behind this "Veterans' Disease" before his enemies catch up with him is a tension-filled one without a single dull moment.

While less so than its predecessors, this novel is definitely Scortia and Robinson's latest entry into the disaster-novel field; undoubtedly, we will see a film made from it in a couple of years; after all, these are the men who produced THE GLASS INFERNO and THE PROMETHEUS CRISIS. I suspect it'll be a good film, too; the novel is prepared in a cinematic manner, so the transfer should be quite easy. And while the authors telegraph their "surprise" ending just enough that I figured it out beforehand, it'll still be enough of a surprise that most readers will be caught napping when they hit it.

If you're looking for a powerful suspense novel, THE NIGHTMARE FACTOR is the book you should read.

**THE IRON DREAM.** Norman Spinrad. Jove Y4741 - \$1.95. Reprint. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

The alternate-world novel is a type of book I particularly enjoy; thus, I was very pleased when this new, well-packaged edition of THE IRON DREAM came out to replace my old, worn, well-read copy.

I'm not sure what it is about this book that fascinates me; THE IRON DREAM, purportedly the final novel by the great sf writer Adolf Hitler, isn't a well-written, well-crafted book. In fact, Spinrad definitely wrote it to not be well-written or well-crafted; in the alternate world of this book, Hitler was a successful pulp writer who learned English as an adult and wrote rather awkwardly in places because of his unfamiliarity with the language (relative unfamiliarity when compared with his command of his native language, that is). Spinrad doesn't produce a bad book, just a highly symbolic one that's intentionally rough around the edges.

THE IRON DREAM is the story of a heroic Trueman, Feric Jaggar, and his quest to return Truemen to sup-

remacy over themutants. Naturally, the novel is filled with allusions to Hitler's real-world philosophy, but his feelings are expressed in his fiction so well that, had this been a real book by a real sf writer in a world where the Nazi rise to power did not take place, it would have probably gained a large number of fans. It's a powerful, propagandistic book, and its power batters its way through into the reader's mind all through the book.

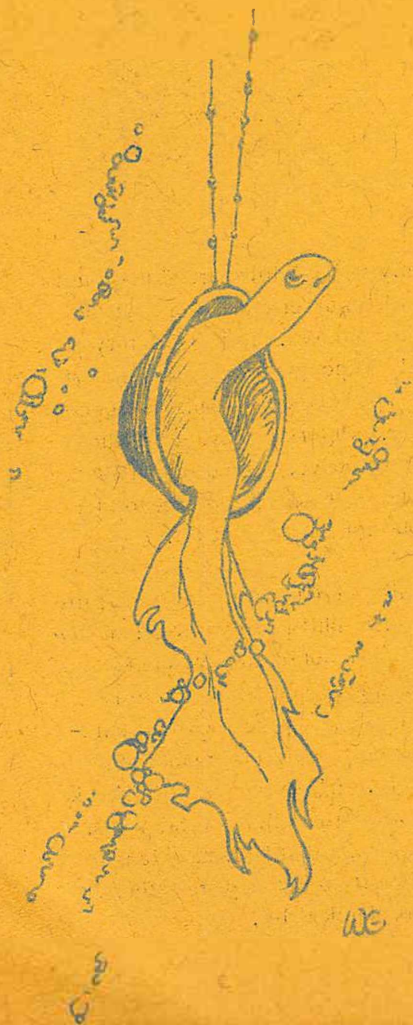
The prefatory and analytical material included in the book is successful in adding a touch of reality to the novel--Spinrad's reality, of course, not the reality of our world. The wry humor in the final analytical segment, where it is concluded that no one could actually be impressed by the well-uniformed, precision-marching, phallic-symbol-Nazi-saluting soldiers in the book, even when presented with the fancy oratory of Jaggar, is a well-played trump card to the story.

THE IRON DREAM may not be a classic in the field, but it is a most entertaining and provocative novel of alternate worlds, and one that will be of particular interest to fans of this sort of story.

**MARGARET AND I.** Kate Wilhelm. Pocket Books 81449-4 - \$1.75. Reviewed by Sally Cook.

This is the kind of book that keeps me haunting the SF section in bookstores. For every dozen vapid space operas and macho heroic adventures digested like so many necessary carbohydrates, my literary diet is sustained by this strain of pure protein. Over the boundaries of science, Wilhelm leaps into what I consider the true final frontier: the mind and its etheric foundations.

The narrator is Margaret's unconscious self, or rather her supraconsciousness as we learn as the plot develops. And this book has everything to perfection: a complex, en-





enthraling plot of unresolved mysteries and incomprehensible intrigues, delicate and masterful characterizations, a well-delineated theme and much more truth than I find in the average novel.

MARGARET AND I is stimulating on all levels: intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and sexual. I have not been so aroused by a portrayal of a woman's physical needs since I read D.H. Lawrence when I was twelve years old.

If you've been wading through a wasteland of dim visions, take my invitation to enter the bright world of MARGARET AND I.

STRANGE WINE. Harlan Ellison. Harper & Row - \$9.95. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

The publication of any Harlan Ellison collection is a special event for me; I've been an avid fan of Ellison's writing for many years now, and have come to regret the increasingly long time between publication of such collections. Therefore, the Harper and Row release of STRANGE WINE was a festive occasion for me; even though half of the stories were familiar to me, the chance to read them again, along with the half I had not seen before, was too much to pass up.

There is loneliness in the stories in this book, and love, and sorrow--it's not a light book. In fact, STRANGE WINE is probably the most moody of any of Ellison's collections published to date. The introduction, an essay of Ellison's detailing his fears of television and its ability to warp our perspectives and tastes, is probably one of his better essays.

The book runs the gamut from sf to mystery to general fiction, and Ellison manages to prove successful in all fields. In fact, with the exception of "Croatoan," a flawed tale I haven't liked since its original publication in F&SF, there isn't a bad

story in the book--which is a batting average few authors manage to hit regularly.

The introductions to each story are briefer than is usual for Ellison--it's not too disappointing in light of the fiction (it's hard to be disappointed when faced with a volume of good material), but it would have been nice to see more introductory material; after all, Ellison has established himself as the master of the "clinchier" introduction.

Even if you generally don't buy hardcovers, it's worth it to make a point to buy STRANGE WINE; you'll be pleased with the investment.

THE SYNDIC. C.M. Kornbluth. Avon 39404 - \$1.50. Reprint. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

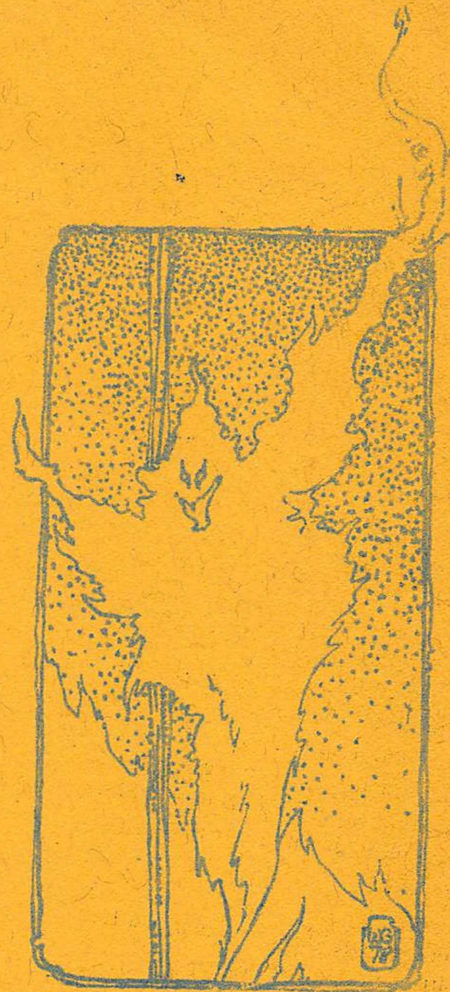
Some books work hard to earn their reputations; others, such as SYNDIC, seem to have a reputation for quality that far exceeds the book itself.

SYNDIC is a story of a future United States, where the Mob has taken control of the West and the Syndic is in charge of the East. In this world, Charles Orsino is sent by the Syndic into Mob territory, to find out why the Mob's hold is falling apart. The novel details Orsino's adventures and discoveries in this world of the future.

Somehow, though, SYNDIC fails to impress. Kornbluth was a writer of great talent, but this novel lacks the spark, the dynamic storytelling that made Kornbluth's reputation. The novel becomes a chore before the reader reaches the end--something I never thought would occur in a Kornbluth novel.

If you're looking for great Kornbluth, try his short fiction--but leave SYNDIC on the shelf.

CHARNEL HOUSE. Pinnacle - \$1.95. FLAGUE. Ace - \$1.95. Graham Masterton. Reviewed by Barry Hunter.



Graham Masterton is a mercurial author; after a good first novel, THE MANITOU, he gave us THE SPHINX, an utter failure. He seems to be on the upswing again with these two recent releases.

In PLAGUE, Masterton tells the story of Dr. Leonard Petrie in his first meeting with a sick ten year old boy who eventually dies of a super-plague; the plague starts in Miami and spreads even as the government bureaucracy tries to decide how to deal with the problem.

The story moves well, and isn't over-written at all, unlike THE SPHINX. The only problem Masterton has here is a tendency to throw in extraneous sex scenes, almost as an afterthought; it detracts from his story. There's no supernatural element in this book--a departure for Masterton. All in all, it's enjoyable reading.



On the other hand, CHARNEL HOUSE returns Masterton to the horror field and another Indian demon. CHARNEL HOUSE could almost be summarized as "The Manitou moves into Hell House," yet it may be Masterton's best book so far.

Seymour Willis has a problem--his house breathes and he hears a heart-beat within the walls. He doesn't know what to do, so he calls on John Hyatt of the Department of Sanitation. Hyatt and Dan Machin call on Willis at his home and the unexpected begin to happen. Dan is attacked by something that puts him in the hospital. The strange thing is that the breathing is gone and it has moved into Dan Machin, a breathing distinctly different from his own.

More strange things happen and Hyatt call in George Thousand Names to find the answer. The action that follows is swift and similar in plotting to the successful MANITOU. The novel reads more smoothly than any of Masterton's others.

Masterton is being praised as a superlative writer of horror fiction; and while PLAGUE is a digression for him, CHARNEL HOUSE keeps that reputation alive. Masterton is joining Brian Lumley and Ramsey Campbell as one of the best new horror writers being published.

SHADOWS. Charles L. Grant, ed. Doubleday - \$7.95. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

SHADOWS is a new, original horror anthology from Doubleday; there has been a great increase in horror fiction recently, and this is one of the positive results of that increase. SHADOWS joins Jerry Page's YEAR'S BEST HORROR STORIES and Stuart Schiff's WHISPERS as a top quality horror anthology series.

The book contains thirteen short stories (an appropriate number) by

writers who have proven themselves in the horror field as well as by writers who are relatively new to horror.

Stephen King, probably the most successful horror author today, has a compelling, moody story of love and murder, "Nona," that's probably the best thing in the book. King's control of words is something that critics have noted before, but it has to be mentioned again--he uses the language to capture just the right feel, just the right mood.

"Mory" by Michael Bishop is another addition to Bishop's psychological horror tales; it's a horrifying story of a man whose life is falling apart, and whose misfortune is directed by someone he doesn't know. The final sequence, at the "Colicott Gardens" amusement park (modeled at least in part on Callaway Gardens, located near Bishop's home) is particularly impressive.

The book has some not-so-good stories--that seems to be inevitable in an anthology, since the story that pleases one reader may not please another. I was disappointed by R. A. Lafferty's "Splinters", a story that doesn't quite create the mood it aims for, and Avram Davidson's "Naples," a very minor piece that doesn't seem to accomplish anything at all. These are the only real disappointments in the book, however; every other story is at least good, and often better than that.

Horror fans will have already picked up SHADOWS, I hope; those of you who don't read horror regularly should give it a try, also. You're bound to be pleased.

DREAMSNAKE. Vonda N. McIntyre. Houghton Mifflin Co. - \$7.95. Reviewed by Rich Howell.

This may be the first time that I have ever tried to review a work that left me totally speechless. The vibrance, emotion, and imagination of

emotion, and imagination of DREAMSNAKE are breathtaking; the texture and scope of the range of human values displayed here are monumental.

DREAMSNAKE can best be summarized as an "after the holocaust" novel. But McIntyre makes you forget that point on about the third page, reminding you only briefly at odd moments of the tale. A better description of the novel is "an exploration." McIntyre entwines a minimal amount of science fictional trappings into a cataclysmic story of a young healer traveling about the post holocaust world during her internship, a proving year faced by all healers. The story is a recounting of the rocky road she trod, replete with a rich examination of the lifestyles of the four groups of civilization left after the hostilities, and the world in which they grind out a rather harsh, abstemious existence.

Readers should be informed here that DREAMSNAKE is the novelization of McIntyre's Nebula-winning story "Of Mist, and Grass, and Sand."

I am awed by the improvement in McIntyre's writing. Her prose, once dry and dusty, has become rich and disarmingly effusive, forcing tears from me at the description of the loss of Grass, the healer's dreamsnake.

Snake, the healer, faces a long road of trials and tribulations, winning few successes and facing many defeats. She is human and humane--distressingly so.

DREAMSNAKE is going to be pointed at and called feminist literature, and this is unfortunate. Certainly, the strongest characters are female, but the male characters are equally well-developed. McIntyre is writing about what she knows best, not trying to delve into the innermost feelings of a man, but to show us the emotions of a mature young woman.



THE SECOND BOOK OF VIRGIL FINLAY. Virgil Finlay. BEAUTY AND THE BEASTS. Hannes Bok. Gerry de la Ree - \$15.50 @. Available from F& SF Book Co. PO Box 415, Staten Island NY 10302. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

Gerry de la Ree's art volumes have become quite popular, and justifiably so; de la Ree produces well-bound, good-sized collections of artwork by outstanding artists in the field, and the limited editions are numbered individually, making them desirable among collectors. It's a shame they are published in such a limited edition in a way; these volumes are the kind of books you wish you could recommend to everyone and know your friends could order them. They deserve to stay in print much longer than they do.

THE SECOND BOOK OF VIRGIL FINLAY is a sequel volume to the earlier Finlay collection which was brought out in trade pb by Avon. It offers 120 pages of Virgil Finlay artwork, spanning his entire career, plus a page or two of prefatory material. The work is all black and white, well reproduced to show off the fine cross-hatching and stipple that is Finlay's trademark. The art is quite good, as is most Finlay, and aptly demonstrates how well-deserved his reputation is. In addition to the pen-and-ink work, there are some pencil drawings by Finlay and a pair of drawings partially done by Finlay and completed by other artists--George Barr and Joe Wehrle.

The Hannes Bok volume., BEAUTY AND THE BEASTS, also offers 120 pages of Bok's black-and-white art for viewing in fine-quality reproduction. Bok's work is more surrealistic and evocative than Finlay's, although both are superlative artists. And since the better Finlay work had already appeared in THE BOOK OF VIRGIL FINLAY, the contents of the 2nd book are a little less impressive than the contents of this lovely Bok

collection. Bok, also, made use of stipple and crosshatching to add ultrafine detail to his work; unlike Finlay, he toys with perspectives and angles a great deal.

Both books are well worth the relatively small sum Gerry de la Ree has priced them at; for a fan of fantasy art, the two volumes are essential. This is the type of book you can't wait until later to buy, though; both volumes are nearing sellout even now, and it would be worth your while to order before you have to pay premium prices.

STAR KING, THE KILLING MACHINE, WYST; ALASTOR 1716. DAW Books, \$1.75 1/2 for the first two, \$1.95 for the latter. Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

DAW Books is in the midst of a major Jack Vance publishing spree, and it's long overdue; few authors have

produced the volume or the quality that Jack Vance has over the years, and a great many of his titles had lapsed out of print until DAW made them available again.

STAR KINGS and THE KILLING MACHINES are the first two Demon Prince novels. Keith Gersen is seeking vengeance against the five Demon Princes who destroyed his home world and his parents for no reason. Each novel details his struggle against a particular Demon Prince; in STAR KING, he faces the first of the Demon Princes, Attel Malagate. In THE KILLING MACHINE, Gersen uses his cunning to track down Kokor Hekkus.

The worlds of Jack Vance's fiction are lush and exotic, well-defined and unique. Vance is an expert "world-builder" in sf, and he utilizes his abilities to create remark-





able environments for Gersen's adventures.

Certainly both books are traditional heroic science fiction, perhaps even space opera--but it's so well done that you can't help but enjoy it.

WYST: ALASTOR 1716 is a new Vance novel from DAW, a continuation of the series of novels about the Alastor Cluster. WYST is planet 1716 of the Alastor Cluster; it is a society with a Utopia, a utopia known as Arrabus, the capital city of WYST. It's a communal city, with all sharing in the work and all guaranteed the profits. Antiff Ravenstroke goes to WYST to find out what makes this world so perfect that those who go there never leave, and what he finds there is the basis of WYST: ALASTOR 1716.

Vance's writing has changed remarkably little over the years. The style that makes the Demon Princes novels so distinctive is virtually the same style that, almost fifteen years later, makes the Alastor novel such entertaining reading. He's not a literary writer; his primary emphasis is action-filled entertainment, accompanied by intriguing glimpses into baroque alien cultures. If you have never read Vance, treat yourself to one of these volumes from DAW--it's solid, lean adventure.

DESTINIES #1. James Baen, ed. Ace 14281-8 -- \$1.95. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

DESTINIES is the new "paperback magazine" we've all heard so much about in the past; in effect, it's the old Jim Baen GALAXY shifted into paperback format, complete with Spider Robinson, Jerry Pournelle, and Steve Fabian. But there's a difference; with GALAXY, he was unable to draw many authors because of the wretched record the company had of paying its authors. Now that Ace is handling DESTINIES, Baen can make the payments and get the

authors--and the first issue is packed with names like Roger Zelazny, Larry Niven, Poul Anderson (who contributes a non-fiction piece on SF and science), Clifford Simak, Dean Ing, and Greg Benford. Certainly most of those writers appeared in GALAXY when Baen edited it, but rarely did you find that sort of line-up in the same issue.

Zelazny's "Stand Fast, Ruby Stone" is quite enjoyable, as is Simak's "Party Line." The Niven story is good lightweight Niven--minor stuff, though--and Greg Benford's "Old Woman By the Road" is a finely-honed story of sadness and imminent death in a near-future Earth, where colonies battle governments for independence and people suffer.

Spider Robinson's column is--well, it's book reviews by Spider Robinson. I don't like Robinson's reviewing style, his digressions and name-dropping, so I can't really say anything favorable about it. If you like coy, cute reviews, you'll enjoy it. If not...

The non-fiction pieces by Pournelle and Anderson are both stimulating;

YOU WANT TO BE A  
SCIENCE FICTION WRITER?  
OH, I HAVE A SPECIAL  
CONTRACT FOR THAT...

BLOOD TWO,  
PLEASE?



Pournelle looks at energy sources and the advantages of "beginning all over again," and makes some interesting points. Anderson's analytical piece on science in science fiction serves at least partly as a statement of editorial position, Baen indicates in his foreword, and is worth reading for that reason alone.

I'm really not disappointed with DESTINIES at all; the package is attractive (although more artists and more art might help increase that attractiveness), the fiction is competent, and the format is durable enough to last longer than the average magazine. I'm not sure as to the success of DESTINIES--a lot of that will be determined by editorial costs as opposed to returns, I imagine--but I'd say it has a good chance of surviving in the field for at least a while. I hope so--the quality, while not superlative, is at least equal to that of any other SF magazine on the stands.

CORIOANUS, THE CHARIOT.  
Alan Yates. Ace - \$1.75. Reviewed by Rich Howell.

It's really disillusioning to see the prostitution performed by blurb writers. That line is a lament, because I realize that blurb writers would not be used, usually, if they told the truth about the work they were exclaiming.

I really should learn to read a few pages of a book at the stands before I buy it, rather than relying on those blurbs; had I adopted this policy, though, I wouldn't be able to warn anyone away from the waste of a buck and three quarters.

CORIOANUS is a travesty. I sincerely hope this is Yates' first work. I regret, though, that it was published, because it will give the writer a blot that will be awfully difficult to live down.

The book is poorly overwritten, the plot is unorganized and vague, and the characters are flat and lackluster.



There are few books that offer nothing to redeem themselves, but this one is one such novel.

CORIOANUS, THE CHARIOT is a perfect example of my corollary to Sturgeon's Law: 10% of the 90% which is bad is unimaginably bad.

THE BOOK OF ELLISON. Andrew Porter, editor. Algor Press - \$5.95. Available from F&SF Books, Box 415, Staten Island, NY 10302. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

THE BOOK OF ELLISON is a hefty collection of non-fiction by and about Harlan Ellison; it offers us 65 pages of other people's impressions of the man, and then follows it with almost 115 pages of Ellison writing about himself, the field in which he works, and publications in that field. The material comes from fanzines, program books, and anthologies, with the exception of two original prose pieces and an original non-fiction checklist.

If you're not a Harlan Ellison fan, you probably won't find this book interesting in the least. It's written and produced for those who want to know more about Ellison, who want further glimpses into the man, but who might not have seen the random pieces presented herein before.

The checklist, compiled by Leslie Kay Swigart, is a valuable item to anyone who plans on collecting Ellisoniana.

The book is a trade paperback--there was a limited edition hardcover produced, but it's probably unavailable by now--and the \$5.95 price is amazingly reasonable for a product of this size. If you collect Ellison's work, don't miss THE BOOK OF ELLISON.

SPACE WAR BLUES. Richard A. Lupoff. Dell 16292 - \$1.95. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

There has rarely in the history of science fiction been a book so long

in production and preparation as SPACE WAR BLUES. It takes Lupoff and Ellison 25 pages to explain the delays and holdups and reschedulings that kept this book out of everyone's hands for almost eight years after its first scheduled (or rumored) release, so I'm not going to begin to summarize here.

I'm not really sure it was worth the wait, either.

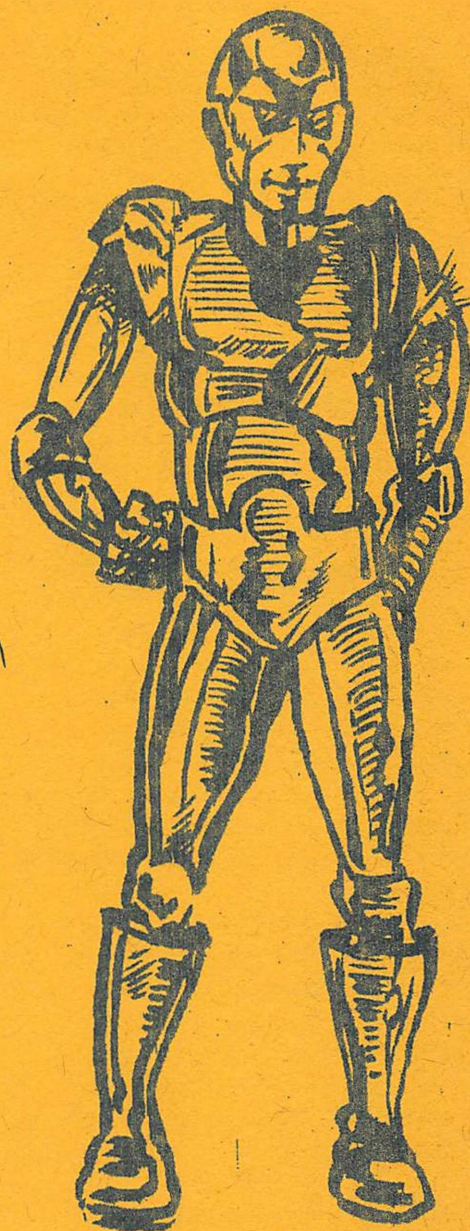
SPACE WAR BLUES isn't really a bad book, it's just very, very lackluster. Lupoff's tricks with the language might have been avant-garde at the time, but they're less impressive and more strained now. His views of racial strife in a future society seem out-of-date, and the long passages of dialect are tedious.

It's not really Lupoff's fault, either; had the book appeared when written, it might have had more of an impact. As Lupoff points out, it's not where he is as a writer any longer; it's not where the sf audience is any longer, either, I fear.

SPACE WAR BLUES is almost like a time capsule--it gives us an insight into a time ten years ago through its views of a future far from now. Unfortunately, the work doesn't stand the test of time well at all.

ENEMIES OF THE SYSTEM. Brian Aldiss. Harper & Row - \$7.95. Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

ENEMIES OF THE SYSTEM is the first novel of Brian Aldiss' "Tales of Homo Uniformis." It takes place far in the future, when man has spread throughout the stars and has settled numerous worlds. On one of these worlds, Lysenka II, a group of people are thrown out of their sheltered, protective environment when a ruined road and a bus wreck strand them in the midst of strange mole-like, semi-human creatures. Furthermore, they are faced with uncertainty and dissension among themselves--something that does not exist in their own cul-



Caldwell  
Williams

ture. This is the conflict of this short novel, and Aldiss manages to keep the level of tension and excitement high throughout the book.

ENEMIES OF THE SYSTEM is an enjoyable novel, a solid piece of sf from a craftsman. I hope Aldiss writes more "Tales of Homo Uniformis" in the near future, if this book is indicative of the series. After the tedious MALACIA TAP-ESTRY, it's good to see Aldiss producing a work like this.



THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION OF THE YEAR #6. Terry Carr, ed. Holt, Rinehart, & Winston -- \$9.95. Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

With this volume, Holt Rinehart & Winston has begun what I hope will be a regular habit of issuing the Terry Carr-edited annual "BEST SF" series in hardcover. The volume was reviewed in pb in FR #13, but the appearance of the book in a durable clothbound edition was deserving of notice.

Between this volume of Carr's annual series and the SF Book Club editions of Don Wollheim's YEAR'S BEST, it's quite easy to accumulate a good set of hardcover editions of the two best annual "best of" collections in the field.

MICHAELMAS. Algis Budrys. Berkley. 03812 -- \$1.95. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

Algis Budrys writes far too little sf nowadays; this becomes painfully obvious after reading MICHAELMAS, a fine novel that offers the reader a well-plotted, well-paced novel of intrigue and mystery in a science fiction setting.

Michaelmas is a television news announcer. Domino is his computer that helps him keep up with the news--in fact, it gives him sufficient insight into world events to enable him to predict news events before they happen, to manipulate events to suit his own whims, and to ultimately "make" the news he announces. Into this organized, systematic world comes Colonel Norwood, an astronaut who supposedly died in a shuttle crash. Norwood is suddenly quite alive, however, thanks to Professor Nils Hannes Limberg and his clinic. As Michaelmas and Domino seek to gain more insight into this "resurrection," they find subterfuge and secrecy.

The highlight of MICHAELMAS is the characterization and the inter-

relationship among the two primary characters, Michaelmas and Domino. Many authors have tried to bring off an analogous relationship, but few have succeeded with the scope of Budrys' Michaelmas/Domino relationship.

As a plotter, Budrys is a craftsman, developing his story slowly and methodically. Unlike many who feel it's necessary to pack each chapter with action, Budrys recognizes the strength in slow and deliberate development of a story-line--and the reader is constantly drawn on until the very conclusion of the novel.

I had missed MICHAELMAS when the hardcover came out; this Berkley edition makes the novel readily available, though, and thankfully so. The book is definitely quality material.

VULCAN. Kathleen Sky. TREK TO M ADWORLD. Stephen Goldin. THE STARLESS WORLD. Gordon Eklund. Bantam Books -- \$1.95@. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

Bantam, full well realizing the appeal of the U.S.S. Enterprise and its crew, is releasing a series of original Star Trek novels by science fiction authors; the effort is laudable, if only partially successful.

Star Trek fans are going to be disappointed by the minor alterations in personality and character in the novels, alterations the authors felt were necessary to make the books more readable. Naturally, none of the characters are changed in any major way, but there's a little more depth and humanity here and there.

Most sf fans are going to be disappointed that the authors--in this case, Sky, Goldin, and Eklund--didn't do more to legitimize the series as science fiction. I know that I had hoped for a little more insight into characters, motivations, and a little more reality aboard the Enterprise. As it is right now, the books are scarcely

different from the James Blish adaptations done in years past, except that the plots are original, rather than adapted from the series.

It is Eklund's novel that is the most successful; of the three, his has a bit more of a general sf feel to it, a bit less rampant Trek-ism in its pages. None of the authors have done a particularly bad job, considering the limitations they were forced to work with, but Eklund's novel is the only one that really impressed me.

For Trek fans, I'm sure these new novels are a welcome sight; for me, they're interesting if only in the opportunity they give me to see several quality writers work with the series. I can't recommend them as quality science fiction, but they certainly beat Perry Rhodan.

SWORDS AGAINST DARKNESS. Andrew J. Offutt, editor. Zebra -- \$1.95. Reviewed by Sue Phillips.

When you think of heroic fantasy, once called sword and sorcery, you automatically think of Leiber or de Camp or Howard. Offutt is not usually a name that springs off the tongue. But he obviously enjoys his work and the genre, and he does a good job of editing this third edition of Zebra's heroic fantasy anthologies.

The book offers several new writers; Wayne Hooks "Servitude" proves that he should not have stayed amateur. It's a truly different heroic fantasy story about a hunchbacked protagonist who has just killed his brother... but with good reason. It's not that he's a terribly evil man, it's just this armlet... and possession takes many varied forms.

On the other hand, "Swordslinger" by M. A. Washil is, as the title implies, a transplanted Western and a poor first-sale story. It is even more unfortunately the last story in this book, ending the anthology on a sour note.



"The Sword of Spartacus" by Richard L. Tierney is set in ancient Roman times. It deals with Simon of Gitta who has appeared in all three of the SAD anthologies, and it tells how he became a wandering swordsman/sorcerer. A good, not often-seen setting and a solid mood make this a highlight of the collection.

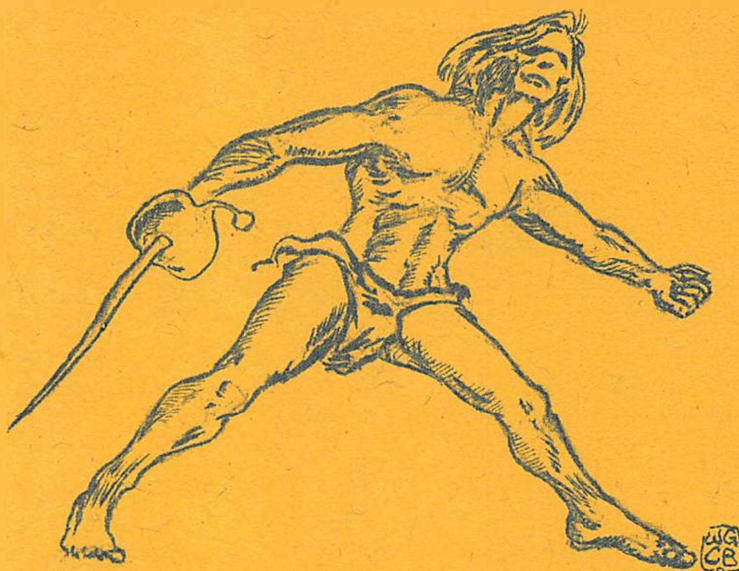
Tanith Lee, a writer whom I have admired since she first came on the sf scene, gives us "In the Balance." Lee can get more in a short-short than most writers can get in a novel. It deals with a decision between good and evil by two candidates for membership in the Magician's Guild, and is a well-done story.

"Revenant" is a poem about vampires. I like to read about the undead, but in my opinion, the fact that it is a poem makes it out of place and among the poorest selections in the book.

Jon DeCles is Marion Zimmer Bradley's brother. Although his "The Rite of Kings" is a bit message-bound, it's probably my favorite story herein. It's a tale about a kind who finds he's only too human.

There are other stories, most quite good; and the book ends with a non-fiction piece by the redoubtable Poul Anderson. I urge anyone who is attempting a tale of heroic fantasy to read this first since it gives innumerable pointers to those who want to avoid the pitfalls and misconceptions of heroic fantasy.

For the most part, *SWRODS AGAINST DARKNESS III* is a well-put-together book, with only a few sour grapes in the bunch. I would recommend it to devotees of heroic fantasy and I'm eagerly looking forward to the publication of future volumes in this anthology series.



**BORN TO EXILE.** Phyllis Eisenstein. Arkham House - \$8.95. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

*BORN TO EXILE* is a departure for Arkham House; while the company seems to be known predominantly for its horror fiction publication, *BORN TO EXILE* is heroic fantasy--superlative heroic fantasy, at that. I'm not certain what motivated Arkham House to make the change, but I praise them for the courage to publish something slightly out of their traditional scope--and for making *BORN TO EXILE* available to heroic fantasy readers.

*BORN TO EXILE* presents us with Alaric, a wandering minstrel with the power to transport himself away from the scene of danger--and even more, to transport anything he holds or touches. Rather than use his power to steal, as he had considered as a child, he now uses his power only when necessary, trying to survive in his medieval society as a minstrel.

The "novel" is actually a collection of interrelated short stories with recurring characters. They tell us of Alaric's first romance with a princess, of his tribulations at an inn where the guests rarely leave alive, of his quest to find his parents, and of his family and his attempts to fit in with them.

to find his father, and of his family and his attempts to fit in with them. The stories originally appeared in *F&SF*, but are collected into one volume for the first time in this edition.

As has become more and more common with Arkham House recently, the book is decorated with a Steve Fabian dustwrapper and interior pieces--and Fabian's style is perfectly suited to this book.

Eisenstein's fantasy of Alaric and his wanderings, his loves and his losses, is unbelievably delicate and emotional. Few authors have conveyed the gentle soul as well as Eisenstein does; her Alaric accurately portrays the wonder of youth and the joy of love, as well as the pain of loss and loneliness. It's a rare aspect of heroic fantasy, but she handles it remarkably proficiently.

*BORN TO EXILE* is a work of fantasy that cannot fail to impress its reader; it's fresh and rich in character, two traits that seem particularly difficult to achieve in heroic fantasy. It's also exceptionally well-written, and I hope Phyllis Eisenstein continues the stories of Alaric in future volumes. More than that, though, I hope she continues to write--her talent is rare and refreshing.



**BRAVE NEW BABY.** David Rorvik. Pocket Books 82229 - \$2.50. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

David Rorvik is notorious for his book **IN HIS IMAGE**, the story of what he claims is the actual first cloning of a man. In the wake of the publicity on that, Pocket Books has released this earlier book of Rorvik's on the impact of medical and biochemical studies relating to birth and the newborn.

As a writer, Rorvik is quite good; he draws his reader into the book cleverly and presents a variety of facts designed to impress and astonish, along with several scenarios to demonstrate how medical developments of today can affect life in the future.

**BRAVE NEW BABY** is an intriguing book, packed with ideas, and it makes enjoyable lightweight reading. I doubt if anyone will take Rorvik's word on anything without documentation after the furor over **IN HIS IMAGE**, but that shouldn't detract from your enjoyment of **BRAVE NEW BABY**.

**THE ILLUSTRATED ROGER ZELAZNY.** Baronet - \$8.95. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

**THE ILLUSTRATED ROGER ZELAZNY** has started a trend towards illustrated volumes of successful sf authors' works. I'm not surprised, nor do I object; if the future volumes match the quality of **THE ILLUSTRATED ROGER ZELAZNY**, I'll be eager to see them.

**THE ILLUSTRATED ROGER ZELAZNY** contains comic book adaptations, heavier on art than story; it contains "An Amber Tapestry," a series of drawings relating to the Amber novels; a pair of Zelazny short stories, accompanied by a great deal of art; and "A Zelazny Tapestry," similar to the Amber art except the subject matter is various Zelazny sf novels.

The art is almost entirely Gray Morrow, with the exception of preliminary pencil work by Michael Golden on the illustrated story "The Furies." This was an unexpected pleasure for me, for while I had heard of Morrow's extensive contributions to the book, I had not known of Golden's contribution--and Golden's comic book work has impressed me immensely recently.

The art itself varies; when Morrow seems intrigued with his subject, as in the Shadowjack story, he turns out superlative artwork. But in some places, such as his Amber drawings, his work is lackluster and flat, done with precision but without fervor.

Even considering this occasional lapse in art quality, **THE ILLUSTRATED ROGER ZELAZNY** is an impressive project. As a Zelazny fan, I was glad to see visual adaptations of some of my favorite characters and stories--and I'm eagerly awaiting Baronet's **ILLUSTRATED HARLAN ELLISON** done in the same format. I have a feeling this project will be a successful one--if they can continue to produce a slick, attractive package as they have done with this book, it'll help achieve that success.

**THE YEAR'S BEST FANTASY STORIES: 4.** Lin Carter, ed. DAW UE1425 - \$1.75. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

I have not been pleased with this Lin Carter series in the past. Carter's arrogance at constantly including his own fiction and recommending his own novels grates against my nerves, I imagine. But this fourth volume in the series does present a good selection of short fantasy fiction, ranging from heroic fantasy by Howard and Offutt to the delicate, light fantasy of Clark Ashton Smith and newcomer Grail Undwin. There is, predictably, a Lin Carter story present--in fact, it's

an original, apparently, done for this volume. It's a Howard "pastiche" (how a writer can commit so many literary atrocities under the catchphrase "pastiche" is beyond me), and while it certainly doesn't belong in this volume, it seems to be a price we have to pay to get the other stories in the collection.

Phyllis Eisenstein is here, with another of her superb Alaric stories. Poul Anderson has a short Norse fantasy here--much in the mood of **HROLF KRAKI'S SAGA**, but paced a bit more quickly, it's an above-par fantasy from an above-par author. Tanith Lee has a fantasy adventure here, a strong story of thievery and pride. There are newcomers as well--with the exception of Grail Undwin, none of them are particularly impressive. Undwin, in her "A Farmer on the Clyde," paints a delicate, ethereal word-picture that makes me want to see more of her fiction.

**THE YEAR'S BEST FANTASY: 4** also has Lin Carter's choice of "The Year's Best Fantasy Books." While he refrains from choosing one of his own novels, he does choose the mediocre **CONAN OF AQUILONIA**, which he co-wrote, and **FLASHING SWORDS #4**, which he edited--which is just good enough that it might deserve the recommendation.

If you can overlook the editor's egotism, you'll find **THE YEAR'S BEST FANTASY: 4** a fairly good anthology. Once Terry Carr's **YEAR'S FINEST FANTASY** gets established, I'm anxious to see how the two series compare, though; it'll be interesting to watch...

**CIRQUE.** Terry Carr. Fawcett - \$1.75. Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

This is Terry Carr's first novel since some early efforts in the 60s--in the interim, he has become a major ed-





THIS IS IT, MEN.  
WE'RE GOING TO  
TAKE DOWN THEM  
HEADQUARTERS.  
IT'LL BE A ROUGH  
ONE, BUT WE  
GOTTA TAKE IT.  
NISONTECH IS  
COUNTING ON YOU!

itor in the sf field, an established short story writer, and a member of science fiction's literary "elite." That makes the publication of CIRQUE an event, whether it's a good book or not.

Thankfully, it is a good book; it's a bit more traditional in its approach than I would have suspected, but quite enjoyable.

Cirque is a city on the planet Earth; it's a drawing point for all who come to Earth, a sort of tourist attraction on a planet otherwise almost forgotten. In Cirque is an Abyss, an Abyss where wastes are dumped, a deep pit that is a part of the religious beliefs of the people of Cirque. From this abyss comes a beast, a creature that no one was aware of before it began its ascent from the pit. An alien millipede has come to witness the great event--his temporal vision has made him aware that something important is about to happen. Nikki, Annalie, and the other humans in Cirque remain blithely unaware of how the presence of the alien and the beast will affect their lives...

Carr makes good use of characterization in this novel; the alien millipede, Nikki and her different personalities, Gloriana--Carr manages to breathe life into his characters, to add a sense of reality to the novel that increases its strength. This is the strong point of CIRQUE, more than anything else.

CIRQUE isn't a great book in the sense that it will make a lasting impression on its readers; but it is a well-executed science fiction novel that will entertain you from beginning to end.

#### CONAN AND THE SORCERER.

Andrew J. Offutt. THE TOWER OF THE ELEPHANT. Robert E. Howard. (Sunridge Press - \$5.95 for the former; Grossett and Dunlap, \$6.95 for the latter). Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

Conan is Big Money nowadays, as anyone who's perused the stands is well aware--Howard's barbarian hero decorates the covers of a great many books, comics, and magazines. Since Howard completed so few tales of the Cimmerian, we're now being presented with other authors' versions of the adventures of Conan. Some, like Carter, De Camp, and Nyberg's CONAN THE SWORDSMAN, are utter disappointments, more like Thongor with a name change. Others, like Offutt's Conan novel for Sunridge, are genuinely impressive works, fitting in well with the Conan canon.

Offutt's book deals with Conan as a young man, just beginning his days as a wanderer and a thief. The object of his thievery is a prize known as the Eye of Erlik; to get it, he must face the soul-stealing sorcerer Hisarrzul.

Offutt tells a lean, adventurous story, very much in the REH vein. The book is complemented by art from Esteban Maroto, whose visual interpretation of Conan, while a bit bulkier than I would have liked, is impressive and accents the text well.

Grossett and Dunlap, a publishing relative of Sunridge and Ace, has accompanied this with a release in trade paperback of the Don Grant edition of TOWER OF THE ELEPHANT. The G&D edition has the 9 color plates by Richard Robertson, it duplicates the typography of the Grant edition--in short, it is virtually identical to the more expensive Don Grant edition, except for the fact that the paper is different, G&D edition has a rather gaddy cover instead of the subdued dustwrapper of the Grant hardcover, and the G&D edition is scarcely limited. It's a well-produced trade paperback, and if you missed TOWER OF THE ELEPHANT in its \$15 hardcover edition, this book is a perfect way to console yourself over the loss.

THE BEST OF LESTER DEL REY. Ballantine 27336 - \$1.95. THE BEST OF ERIC FRANK RUSSELL. Ballantine 27700 - \$1.95. Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

In the past couple of years, Ballantine/Del Rey has issued quite a few of these "best of" series. It's a laudable project, for it keeps noteworthy short fiction in print that might otherwise be forgotten, overlooked in the flood of novels that seem to get more attention.

THE BEST OF LESTER DEL REY is a treasure for me; I remember reading some of these stories in books and magazines years ago, but the memories were vague. The book offers 16 excellent short stories, well worth the price.

THE BEST OF ERIC FRANK RUSSELL is another enjoyable book; while I don't particularly enjoy Russell's



rather flat style, I find his strong plots sufficient to make up for the less impressive writing. "Allamagoosa" and "Hobbyist" are stories that will stand out in my mind for quite some time to come.

I certainly hope Del Rey continues this series beyond the big name authors and into those great authors who get less attention; the "Best of..." series is one of the best publishing ventures in sf right now, and I'm looking forward to future volumes.

**SORCERERS.** Ariel/Ballantine. \$7.95  
Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

SORCERERS is another art-oriented publication from Ariel/Ballantine; edited by Bruce Jones and Armand Eison, the book presents stunning works of art from eleven talented artists, both sf/fantasy and comics artists.

The

The printing on SORCERERS is superb, enhancing the work rather than detracting from it. Not all the art is impressive--Alex Nino's color work shows the man should have stayed with black and white art, and Kirby's work is, with the exception of one very Mike Hinge-looking spaceship, very lackluster. But Tim Conrad, Michael Whelan, Michael Hague, George Barr, and Bruce Jones present some outstanding works. Jim Steranko, an artist whose work ranges from mediocre to excellent, presents only a few very unimpressive pieces in the book, which is a total disappointment to me.

The price tag may seem high on a book of this size, but it's really not that bad--this is, after all, a well-printed book on heavy stock paper. If you're not a fan of fantasy art, you'll have absolutely no interest in SORCERERS; but if you are, you will probably be as impressed with the book as I am.

**DINOSAUR PLANET.** Anee McCaffrey. Del Rey. \$1.75. Reviewed by Barry Hunter.

Ireta, the dinosaur planet of the title, is the setting for McCaffrey's newest series. It is a planet of various creatures that seem out of place--golden furred birds, a "fang faced" predator, giant swamp creatures, and other strange, yet familiar flora and fauna.

The Federated Planets have sent a crew of technicians to catalogue the planet and to find what mineralogical deposits there may be there to help alleviate the energy shortage on the home worlds.

The crew is made up of humans and heavyworlders; the crew is also in contact with the Theks--a sort of living rock--who are in charge of the expedition, and the Ryxi--an intelligent species of bird--who are surveying another planet.

Things are going well until Kai and Varian, the co-leaders, start finding irregularities in energy levels, missing equipment, and a strange behavior pattern developing in the heavyworlders.

The story reads well, although it seems less imaginative and dynamic than McCaffrey's other books, particularly the Dragonrider series. It is enjoyable enough as sf adventure, and I'm anxious to see other books in the series.

**THE ANNOTATED JULES VERNE: FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON.** Walter James Miller, ed. \$16.95. Thomas Crowell, pub. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

The editor of this book, the second in a series of annotated Verne editions, maintains that Jules Verne has never received the attention he deserved in the U.S. due to the poor English translations of his work. To

correct this, Miller has retranslated the books, adding notations, photos, line drawings, and references to give a much more full perspective of the works in question--and, Miller, hopes, to bring a fuller appreciation of the author.

The translation, while a bit dry and lacking in dramatic flow, reads well enough. The annotations are, at times, of only marginal interest to the book, but on the whole, Miller's background information adds to the text.

Is it worth the price to a collector of science fiction? Probably not. Libraries should consider acquiring the volume, though, and Verne aficionados will definitely want a copy.

**HALF IN SHADOW.** Mary Elizabeth Counselman. Arkham House. \$8.95. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

Mary Elizabeth Counselman lives in Gadsden, Alabama, still writing--I hope. After reading HALF IN SHADOW, I certainly hope that Ms. Counselman is still working at her craft--for this Arkham House anthology has proven to me just how talented she is.

HALF IN SHADOW is a book of the macabre. Not just ghost stories, or monster tales--instead, it's a book of short stories of disquiet and dread. Oh, there are ghosts, and creatures--but there are people, and there is pain, and dirty, grimy reality.

Some of the stories are set in the Deep South, the area Counselman has come to know quite well. Her "Night Court," set on an Alabama road, is powerful not only in the mood of fear it creates, but in the message it conveys and in the accurate glimpse it gives us into the Alabama of the not-too-distant past. Her story of a sculptor who is not a sculptor at all is an intriguing look at the Medusa-



concept of men turning into stone, combined with the Midas-touch curse. Her "Three Marked Pennies" is no horror story at all, but an eerie story of a man who, without motive, gives money and travel to two people --and death to a third.

I'm quite impressed by Counselman, her plots, and her style. She is not out to impress with a literary style--no, she is from the old school that believes in telling the story as well as you can and without undue complexity; her style is a simple eloquence that captures the local color of the world she writes about.

HALF IN SHADOW was a tremendous surprise to me, since I was hitherto unfamiliar with Counselman's writing. I'm grateful for the opportunity to read her work here, and I sincerely hope that she

BINARY STAR #1... (DESTINY TIMES THREE by Fritz Leiber and RIDING THE TORCH by Norman Spinrad. Dell 10564 - \$1.75. Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

BINARY STAR seems to be the 1970s answer to the extinct Ace Double--take two novellas, put them in one volume and hope you'll pull in a varied audience to buy one half of the book and feel like they're getting the other half as an extra.

And while that may sound like it's tinged with cynicism, I like it. I have fond memories of the authors whose works I discovered while reading the flip sides of Ace Doubles I had bought for someone else entirely. I am glad Dell has rediscovered the format, and I'm looking forward to future BINARY STARS.

Like Ace Doubles, which had two covers, this book doesn't have any--unless you consider fancy graphics spelling out the author's name to be a cover. I hope that Dell reverts to actual cover art in the future, rather than this format.

This first BINARY STAR presents two novellas I was familiar with; a Fritz Leiber piece of alternate worlds and intrigue, "Destiny Times Three" is good, although minor, Leiber. Norman Spinrad's "Riding the Torch" is a powerful story of space travel on a massive scale, and impressed me immensely when I read it a couple of years ago. Unfortunately, neither piece impresses me as much in this format as new pieces from Leiber and Spinrad would have. There's little fault to find with what Dell has given us, except to remind them that it's been done before, in other anthologies, and we're ready for new novellas in this series.

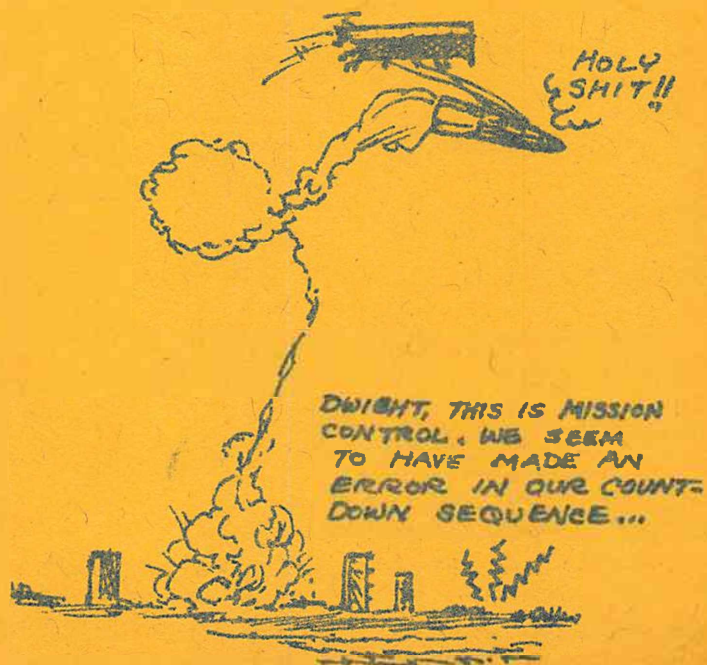
But that's reviewing on the basis of what a book isn't, not what it is. If you haven't read either half of BINARY STAR #1, the book is well worth picking up. If half of it is familiar to it, I'd haunt the used bookstores, looking for a copy at half the price--\$1.75 for a novella is expensive if you already have the other half...

EXILES and ALIENS. Ben Bova, ed. St. Martin's Press - \$7.95 each. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

These books seem to be aimed for libraries more than for the science fiction collector; each book presents three familiar novellas, grouped together because of subject matter. In ALIENS, we have "First Contact" by Murray Leinster, "The Big Front Yard" by Clifford D. Simak, and "A Meeting with Medusa" by Arthur C. Clarke. In EXILES, we have a few less familiar stories: "Gypsy" by Poul Anderson, "And Then There Were None" by Eric Frank Russell, and "Profession" by Isaac Asimov.

Are the stories good? Of course they are--that's why the majority of them have been included in numerous anthologies in the past decade or so. It's hard to wax enthusiastic over stories you've seen again and again. That's the problem with science fiction--works tend to stay in print in one form or another for quite a while, if they're good, and the reader who's been in the field for a while finds himself faced with books and stories he's read before.

At the asking price, I can't recommend these books unless you're new to science fiction and wealthy enough to afford the price tag. Otherwise, pass them by.





THE SILVER SURFER. Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. Simon & Schuster - \$4.95. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

The Silver Surfer lasted for 18 issues in his own comic book---they were 18 of the best comics Marvel has published to date, incidentally. So I was quite pleased when I heard that Stan Lee had come out of his writing-retirement at Marvel comics and had teamed with Jack Kirby to produce a new Silver Surfer adventure. A one hundred page Silver Surfer comic, published in trade paperback size, seemed like a dream come true.

Somewhere along the line, the dream lost a little of its magnificence. While THE SILVER SURFER is indeed a 100--page story of the Marvel hero as he opposes Galactus and seeks his own freedom, it's very second-rate in quality, and it's hard to believe this is the same Silver Surfer who held my attention and enthusiasm eight years ago.

One thing that might make a difference is the fact that I'm not a Jack Kirby fan; as a matter of fact, I don't care for Kirby's art on the Silver Surfer very much at all. My fond memories are of the Silver Surfer as drawn by John and Sal Buscema, or John Buscema and Tom Palmer; Kirby's hero is just another blocky, over-muscled Kirby character, without the nobility and the grandeur Buscema gave him.

Furthermore, Stan Lee saw fit to tamper with the origin of the character as given us in flashback; the intention seems to have been to eliminate every possible reference to the Fantastic Four, thus pulling the character out of the Marvel Comics universe in, perhaps, an effort to "legitimize" him.

So what we have here is 100 pages of Silver Surfer that's only a shadow of what it should have been. Stan Lee writes a good story, better than

most any other Marvel staffer could have done, but it's just a little subdued, as if both writer and artist had agreed to hold back.

THE SILVER SURFER is an enjoyable overgrown comic; while it's certainly worth the price tag, pardon me if I hold back my enthusiasm just a bit in memory of what the character used to be.

ANALOG YEARBOOK. Ben Bova, ed. Baronet - \$5.95. Reviewed by Cliff Biggers.

This is the second time ANALOG has experimented with a special "thirteenth issue" in non-magazine format; the first occurrence was in standard paperback format almost two years ago, and now Baronet has come out with this trade paperback following the same format: offer an original anthology that is, in effect, a deluxe issue of ANALOG, in hopes of capturing a part of the paperback buying audience.

The fiction is quite good; Kate Wilhelm's opener, "Julian," is probably the highlight of the issue. It's a story of a man obsessed by an image from his childhood---and how he finally deals with his obsession. Wilhelm's storytelling is vivid and her characters are rich and believable.

Stephen Robinett's "Guzman's Gardener" is also impressive and deserves recommendation; the story deals with a rich man's son who wants to be an actor, and a hologram production team who discover a far greater star than he while setting up a screen test. Robinett brings life to the story in a way many other authors would not have been able to do, and the story flows quickly to a satisfying conclusion.

The remainder of the fiction, while adequate, was no more than that, and isn't particularly deserving of

recommendation. The features are typical for ANALOG---a science article, a pair of critical articles, an overview of sf in the cinema in 1977, and a couple of editorials.

As I said before, THE ANALOG YEARBOOK is nothing more than a deluxe thirteenth issue of ANALOG. Unfortunately, it's of no higher quality than any other issue of the magazine, which is a shame, since the primary purpose (other than selling books) of this anthology is to draw new readers to the magazine. Compared to a lot of original anthologies in the field today, though, I feel no qualms in recommending ANALOG YEARBOOK as a competent, if not inspired, anthology.

APOSTLE. Roger Lovin. Starblaze/Donning - \$4.95. Reviewed by Susan Biggers.

STARBLAZE is a well-written novel about Terran invasion by a powerful alien culture, the Lorsi Jon Paterson, a doctor, has visions that hint of the aliens' coming; little does he know that he and Rebecca Martin will soon be facing those aliens for the salvation of humanity.

Lovin utilizes religion to a good degree in this book; Ibrihim Zlotny attempts to use religion as a tool to further his own goals as the invasion and takeover becomes imminent; the protagonists utilize aspects of religion against him.

Lovin has written an interesting novel in APOSTLE; it's quite impressive as a first-sf-novel, and I'm anxious to see more of his fiction. Characterization is Lovin's particular forte, and his depiction of the aliens is particularly impressive and vaguely reminiscent of Michael Bishop's alien cultures. All in all, APOSTLE makes above average, entertaining reading, and the Freas illustrations enhance the text well.



# FUTURE RETROSPECTIVE

1005

George Laskowski, Jr.

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I disagree with you that  
SPLINTER OF THE MIND'S  
EYE would make a lack-  
luster film. There is a lot

of visual stuff in Foster's writing that would come off well on film. Example: when Leia gets out of her craft after crashlanding, she suddenly finds herself sinking in quicksand--good visuals there. There are several other instances where the action would be exciting on film, but not very much so on paper. Foster wrote this one for visual effects, I think, rather than a good solid novel like MIDWORLD or ICERIGGER.

((I scarcely think Leia sinking in quicksand would be good visuals--it's humdrum, lacking in inspiration or excitement. STAR WARS set an awfully tough pattern to follow--to be visually exciting, any future SW films will have to be rich in background, exotic flora and fauna, believable sf detail, and unique situations. Foster's novel lacked all of that, and I'd think it was a wise decision not to utilize it for a future film--although I doubt if Lucas and Co. ever had any plans to consider it, since the novelizations of the SW properties are licensed to Ballantine/Del Rey, who is handling it totally separate from the film.))

I agree with part two of Mike Weber's TRILOGY, that the Dorsai have been misunderstood by fandom at large. True, there are a few who do crave "power", but they are in a definite minority. I know many of the Dorsai myself, and they are a hell of a nice crowd. When they get to cons, whether they work them or not, they get together into a group because they enjoy each other's company. In many cases their parties are closed ones, just for this reason. I've seen a lot of cliques like these at cons, and I go to lots of them every year. These cliques at times seem to be worse than any of the Dorsai closed parties. The Dorsai, as Mike said, were originally organized to help out concons with security, rather than having to hire-rent-a-cops. Then came misinterpretation, a couple of bad incidents, then open dislike for the Dorsai. The theft of the camera at MAC was unfortunate, but no one knows who did it. The Dorsai were decent about it; they took up a collection among themselves and gave the person more than enough to pay for it. I had heard a rumor that some anti-Dorsai fans were going to stage something like this in order to

credit the Dorsai for once and for all! It is a rumor!! I can't stress that enough. But knowing how some people feel about them, I can't help but feel that the rumor is true.

((Such a rumor implies the existence of an anti-Dorsai conspiracy, scheming to pull off a theft under the Dorsai's noses in order to discredit them. I heartily doubt it. I would imagine the motivation for such a theft, no matter who did it, was a simple desire to have that camera--few thieves seem so philosophical and analytical in their crimes.))

((The dislike for the Dorsai that I've seen has never been in an organized fashion, with Anti-Dorsai Clubs meeting in secrecy; it's just been a case of a great many fans expressing a personal distaste for the group. As with many people working security, some Dorsai have let their illusory positions of authority go to their heads, and that's been the major cause of the trouble.))

BRIAN EARL FROWN  
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Lin Carter's success as Ballantine's fantasy editor was not so much due to his own good taste as to the vast and

near total body of unreprinted fantasy. Anyone who had a generally detailed knowledge of fantasy fiction could have selected just as well. When one looks at Carter's YEAR'S BEST FANTASY series for DAW, his weaknesses as an editor become more obvious.

In response to Stella Nemeth's comment that "most of those 'wonder women' would fall apart if held responsible for some other person" (I assume she meant children), I would have to say that so would most men. Why else have men traditionally foisted child-rearing onto the mother, declining to even change diapers?

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I was quite impressed with this issue. The reviews were current, which is something I don't see in fanzines

too often. I didn't think THROUGH THE EYE OF THE NEEDLE was as good as Mike Weber did, though; I found it to be only moderately interesting, with stilted dialogue and far lower quality than in NEEDLE. Really agreed on LUCIFER'S HAMMER--I read it just this week, and couldn't put it down for four days straight.



I really have to agree with Mike Glycer's column, though I suspect I'll be one of the very few who do. I'm a bit concerned about the atmosphere feminism is creating in fandom, too. On the whole, it's a Good Thing, but the attitudes represented by A Woman's Apa are totally outrageous. I'm sure there would've been a LOT of bitching if an apa had chosen to expel all female members, so why is it all right to reject members just because they are male? The prevailing attitude here seems to be something like "Do Unto Others As They Have Done Unto You, Only More." It seems that the sole motivations for things like this is revenge. The only way to counter female inequality is with male inequality. It makes no sense at all to me, and I'm sad to see this kind of thing happening in fandom. Sure, fandom is a microcosm of society at large with most of the same faults and shortcomings, but if we fan, with out double brains and Higher Calling and better levels of understanding can't get along with each other, how the hell can we expect society at large to? Besides, what about the status of blacks and native American Indians? I'm sure they'd kill to have the status of American woman, "repressed" or not, but no one seems to show concern about them in fandom. Something like A Woman's Apa shows the same amount of narrow-mindedness and sexism as the all-male clubs so many men attend. Let's try to get our priorities straight, shall we?

((I gather that, rather than totally expelling all male members, A Woman's Apa formed, in effect, two apas, one for men and women, and one for women only. It's a minor distinction, and my understanding may be wrong on this, but... I've heard your sentiments from several people concerning A Woman's Apa, A Room of Our Own, etc. Having had little experience in dealing with the situation, I'd be interested in hearing from those who are involved with these feminist projects--a coherent explanation of how these projects benefit the cause of non-sexism would be interesting, informative, and perhaps necessary to change the minds of those who feel the projects are detrimental to the idea of sexual equality in fandom.))

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I was especially interested in Glycer's comments about bloc voting by feminists and essentially I agree with him fully.

I think it's a damn shame when political interests make a mockery of an award system that means a lot to many fans. The counter-argument I've read from feminists is that special interest groups are naturally going to be most impressed by material that caters to their interests and will consider it the "best" around. Okay, I buy that and it's a fact of fannish awards ever since their inception. That argument justifies JANUS being on the ballot and could be used to explain the appearance of feminist writers in Best Fiction categories. But I suggest that to a very large

extent there is no such thing as feminist artwork. A feminist may choose to avoid certain sexist topics but the artwork itself has little actual feminist content. It is perhaps one award area where artistic rather than political criteria can be applied to determine the "best." And on purely subjective artistic standards there is simply no way Jeanne Gommoll is one of the top five artists in fandom. In the last two years she's improved enormously and is currently a damn good artist but as long as there are C nfields and Shulls and McCleods and Car- ters and Bells around she isn't yet in the top five. It's this sort of mindless favorite son (whoops, person) voting I find most unfortunate. And it isn't restricted to feminists by any means; that just happens to be the most obvious example.



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FR looks pretty good. Thank Sally Cook for me for the illo on page 3, which gave me some nice nostalgia--reminds me so much of

posters for the Jefferson Airplane, Jimi Hendrix, the Doors, Crystal Mesh, and so on, when they played at the local rock theatre (I wonder what ever happened to the people who did those posters, anyway...)

Never mind Piers Anthony's "the man desires the woman, while the woman desires the desire of the man." I don't think the reader really desires the writer--unless that writer (a) expresses a unique personal view which a very unique reader happens to identify with, and (b) the picture on the jacket of the book reveals said writer to be quite attractive to the reader's eye. As a reader, I usually desire the information or the story, not the writer. The only time I desire writers is when I already desire the person, and the person happens to be a writer--but then, I desire the person, not the writer. I can't imagine anything more dull than trying to be in conversation



(or bed) with someone and having them spend the time writing.

But then, is "the man desires the woman, while the woman desires the desire of the man" appropriate? I doubt it. As generalizations go, it's a pretty lousy one. Maybe "the woman desires the man, the man desires sex" would be an appropriate generalization, if we're talking about high school social groups or singles bars. How about "the man is trying to score, the woman is trying to find a meaningful relationship"? Or better still, "there are a lot of people out there desperately trying to act out fantasies and illusions". Actually, I consider the whole business to be too silly for any serious discussion, but if you're interested in a silly discussion, this could go on for quite a while.

((While I realize you're being lighthearted in tone, I still won't to express at least a minor disagreement that "the man is looking to score, the woman is looking for a meaningful relationship" is any more appropriate than "the man desires the woman, the woman desires the desire of the man." Both are sweeping generalizations, I realize, but just as the original generalization precludes the possibility of men-desiring women, the second precludes the possibility of men looking for a meaningful relationship. 'Tain't so.))

Frank Belknap Long      Every new issue of FUTURE  
New York City, NY      RETROSPECTIVE has given  
                                 me more reading pleasure  
than the one preceding it, and I'm quite certain that  
I'm not alone in feeling that there has been a steady  
progression in the domain of the excellent from #1 to  
#14.

Being human, I turned immediately to page 20, of course, ignoring everything else in the issue until I had read twice, slowly and carefully, your gracious review of IN MAYAN SPLENDOR. I was 90% sure in advance that you hadn't ripped the volume to shreds, but one never knows. Some writers--poets not included, perhaps--can take a caustic, even an utterly devastating review in stride, but I've never been able to achieve that kind of detachment. I'm abnormally sensitive in that area, and a highly unfavorable review can darken the sunlight for me. I'm just as abnormally sensitive in a dozen other areas, and it is a very unhappy thing, and not to my credit--but we are what we are, as Andre Gide said, and there's absolutely nothing one can do about it. ProFOUND character changes never take place; they may appear to at times, but the change is a deceptive, illusory "will o' the wisp" stemminf from a wish-fulfilment fantasy.

A curious thing--every reviewer has singled out four or five poems as the best in the volume, and, with not

more than two exceptions, every list has been completely different. Just what this implies, I don't really know, but my own preferences may be of some interest. I feel that the strongest poems are: "A Knight of La Mancha," "In Mayan Splendor", "On Reading Arthur Machen", "An Old Tale Retold", "Ballad of Mary Magdalene", "Night Trees", "In Antique Mood", "In Hospital", "West Indies", "Two Stanzas for Master Francois Villon", and "The Goblin Tower" (basically light verse, semi-humorous, but I feel it is one of the three or four strongest).

No reviewer has stressed a most important fact--all of these poems were written years ago and are in a poetic tradition that has passed away. Up to about 1930 in America it was still a vital tradition, however, and did not actually go back to the 1880-1890 period in England. The new poetry of Pound, Eliot, Sandburg, etc., was demolishing this tradition, but it was still germinal and important for not a few poets on this side of the Atlantic at that time. All of my recent poems are in free verse--or occasionally blank verse. If I used rhymes at all I would not hesitate to take liberties with all the traditional forms; that would be in accord with a new freedom which has been accepted by virtually every literary critic of stature for close to a century now.

I greatly liked the several changes in format in FR; the artwork was delightfully unusual and variegated, and that hideous ghoul-like entity (or is it a writer?) trapped in a mail bag on page 17 was hilarious--my compliments to Wade Gilbreath.

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Well, the fanzine class I  
taught is over and here is  
the letter I said I would  
write about the experience.

I learned a lot about teaching, people, and college bureaucracy. The class was run very loosely (I had no other way in a no-credit course) and I had students from age 13 on to (I guess) 30. I started the class with the general terms and found out where each student was in terms of fanzines. One had contributed to a fanzine before and two had seen a fanzine before, so they were all pretty fresh. I handed out a list of terms and we discussed a bit about what the class fanzine would contain.

By the next class I had a handout ready that outlined what sort of projects could be done for the class fanzine and how long, how they were to be written, etc. I also discussed various types of fanzines, printing, styles, and I had examples.

The third class was to look over what people had and to make suggestions. It was then that I decided that we would need an extra week to get everything done. The people in the class agreed, so we extended the class time



by one week. I was very pleased with most of the projects turned in, but the 13 year old was having problems completing the required work; he usually did anything for the class the day it was due.

During the fourth class, I had some of the better old fanzines and the class went through and we discussed layout, use of illos, letter columns, etc.

The fifth class was devoted to laying out the zine and took a while. Most of the people arrived late and the 13 year old, who was the only one doing illos, had to draw them on the spot. The only thing he had done was a poorly-written story. We got it laid out finally and I went back Monday to have the college duplicate it. I asked for 10 copies (four students and myself) on both sides of the paper, and got neither--but everything finally worked out.

The last class was devoted to collating and looking the zine over. Everyone was pleased and we exchanged phone numbers with the promise that we would get together realsoonnow and do another zine... we'll see...

The major objective of the course was for people to get their feet wet in fan publishing. I think the course did that, at least to the extent that they all wanted to do more.

Given the chance to do it all over again, I think I would have made the same mistakes. I don't think the college made much money on the course, so I doubt that I will be doing it again. It would be nice, though.

((I still can't adjust to the idea that this lunacy I've been doing for fun since I was twelve, this late-night writing and stencilling and the smell of corflu in the air, is now a part of academia. I assume all the people involved were at least familiar with sf as a genre...?))

♪ I...  
LOVE A TIRADE...  
HEE HEE... ♪



Harry Warner, Jr.  
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There seems to have been a slight dropoff in fanzines arriving here since the latest increases in postal rates became effective. But it's hard to be sure how much of this should be blamed on the summer slump that sometimes turns up in fanzine publishing and how much may be blamed on fanzine editors having to cut their mailing lists for failure to respond to every issue--the latter would, I suspect, be a postal-rate-motivated reason. I agree that it's strange to expect one federal agency, the post office, to pay its way. Locally we have a parallel: the county-financed local bus system is constantly under fire from public and political areas because it operates at a considerable loss. I can think of one way for fanzine editors to cope with increased publishing and mailing expenses, but it requires lots of time and patience before it begins to take effect. It requires the neofan to get lots of stuff by famous pros for every fanzine he publishes during his first few years in fandom. He must also remember to store away in a safe place several dozen copies of each issue. After four or five years, he should be able to finance his future fanzines with the proceeds from the sale of those back issues. Dealers are beginning to ask incredible prices for fanzines, some of which aren't very old and not very famous, if only there's material by or about famous pros in their pages.

The reviews were a pleasure to read for their fairness and clarity. A few of the reviews have special meaning to me, like Susan's reaction to the second volume of the Tuck Encyclopedia. That's the book that inadvertently started off the long series of delays and complications for my WEALTH OF FABLE manuscript, because Advent wanted to finish the Tuck volumes before producing any more fan history. At the time, of course, nobody expected so many problems to arise with the Tuck manuscript, making it so late in finally appearing in full. I'm alarmed with what Cliff thought about the new Rotsler book. I hope ZANDRA isn't evidence that Bill is allowing his very considerable writing prowess to go to waste on potboilers, after he abandoned the pursuit of the career of a serious, important photographer in favor of work on porn films. Or naked lady films, or whatever they're officially known as.

One of the many limiting things about life in Hagerstown is deprivation of a chance to see the best in tee shirts. The only amusing ones I've seen lately are probably produced for national distribution. They're the ones that pregnant women are favoring in Hagerstown nowadays, with messages like BABY with an arrow pointing downwards and "Under Construction." Incidentally, I have a conviction which nobody else in fandom seems to share, that tee-shirts with particularly fine labels will eventually become some of the most expensive and



sought-after items at flea markets, after the fad for them has run its course in a dozen years or so. They will be something like old bottles which nobody saved or collected until comparatively recent years, and as a result exist today in the most limited quantities.

I doubt if the Dorsai are really to blame for the low repute they possess in fandom. The general fannish reaction to that institution seems to be rather an inevitable part of the whole national anti-authority craze which is in full cry just now. This is the era when everyone jumps on anyone who tries to maintain law and order, with occasional intermissions when someone gets ripped off and goes squealing for those very same policemen to demand that justice be done to the thief. Fans are no better than mundanes in this respect: they think it's perfectly alright to cheat a hotel out of its revenue by doubling up with someone else, but they carried on something dreadful several years ago when one fan wrote a lot of bad checks for things he bought from other fans.

((This is, I feel, a part of the camaraderia and in-groupishness in fandom; it's alright to rip off hotels, which aren't fannish institutions, but rarely do people in fandom try to rip off small con committees, other fans, or fans who are selling doubles from their collection. When it's a large con committee, a fan who has turned dealer, or the like, then they're not really a fan any more---at least that's the logic I've heard expressed from people who attempted to avoid paying membership fees at the last DeepSouthCon, a large con by DSC standards.))

The art looks good, and my compliments go out to Sally Cook and Wade Gilbreath for their work herein. The only typographical improvement that I could imagine would be in the boxes around the first paragraphs of the book reviews. Some of them look a bit shaky and spoil the appearance of some pages. Otherwise, your format makes for easy, enjoyable reading.

((Good criticism, and one that was echoed by Wade Gilbreath, Sally Cook, and Mike Glyer--the boxes were a bit shaky, and it did detract. Hopefully, they're better this time.))

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If you're upset that the postage rate went up from 30¢ to 36¢, you should really be thrilled

that a month after you wrote that it leapt to 48¢. The traditional sticky quarter, then, is good for less than half the distribution costs (if envelopes cost the same 3¢ each they cost here), and cost of reproduction isn't even touched. Of course the sticky quarter has by and large fallen by the way as inclusive of "The Usual" but even the currently popular \$1.50 price tag on many fanzines, and the actual \$1 by subscription rate, wouldn't

break-even the smallest fanzine or literary magazine nowadays. Postage will kill amateur publishing except among the die-hards and well-employed unless, like Canada, the government intervenes with easy access to grants for amateur publishing. The National Endowment has more money this year than ever before, but still access is pretty difficult, the amount still too small for it to remain anything but highly, highly competitive.

Fanzines are a tiny percentage of the whole amateur press phenomenon. The feminist small press equals or surpasses fandom in output (and physically higher quality output, generally); the poets' small press surpasses both; and while literaries have fallen mainly into the grant budgets of University English Departments, there are still a number of individuals publishing them without university funding. There's also leftist and workers' small presses, and highly specialized arts, collectors magazines. Together a genuinely united small press front should be able to demand uncomplicated access to lowered rates (lower than 2nd class) in order to survive, but I don't see that happening; I can't imagine, in fact, coin collector magazine publishers joining with leftist or feminist publishers, or sf fans, for anything but bickering and spitting on each other if forced into proximity. It seems unlikely that anyone will save the small press, in the name of Art, Freedom, Fun, or anything else.

It is inevitable that book rate will eventually go to \$1, and sooner than anyone might believe. When I first published a fanzine in 73, I could mail a hundred of them for \$16. Now the same fanzine could be mailed for \$48, five years later. This far exceeds paper and repro increased costs and will be the single factor in many small press publishers finally throwing in the towel.

Technological advances in non-written material delivery promises the further decline of small and even large press publishing. Very soon, Americans will find themselves commonly the proud owners of six foot television screens, with a couple hundred channels to choose from, and cassette options, with much of the cost hidden in higher prices for advertised food and products, creating the illusion that to get a book or a magazine costs a fortune and to get a television program costs little. Already, bookworms or eggheads are what non-TV addicts are considered by "normal" people (ever notice that the only non-TV addicts in elementary schools are 7th Day Adventists or other obscure, strange, bizarre, unacceptable fringies? This will increase as 90% of all entertainment comes from the tube). Distribution of books will not likely become as technologically sophisticated as distribution of visual programming. To get a satellite picture on tv in Seattle has no obvious cost; to get a book from a New York publisher does.



I doubt illiteracy is the end result of all of this, but studies have already shown that the majority of people given the choice of a bad TV program and a good book will choose the program in the majority of the cases. (Also, if you give a monkey the choice between a balanced diet and a pile of candy, it'll eventually let itself die on the sugar diet.) I haven't owned a television in 8 years, and have felt very "out of it" in certain circles, as odd as a 7th day adventist in the first grade trying to relate to kids obsessed with Scooby-Doo and Spiderman Saturday morning fare. A growing percentage of my friends lack televisions, and without realizing it we've built our own little caste, a minority, of fringe weirdos with no power to protect our rights or privileges to easy access to non-commercial reading material. I see that this can and will only get worse.

((Wade Gilbreath and I were discussing much the same problem, and one possibility of solving it in the next decade or so: the QUIF system of printing messages over phone lines via short, condensed bursts of information relayed between computers. Right now, utilizing this sort of system, the cost of transferring most the textual information in this FR would be equivalent to the cost of a ten minute phone call (the machines aren't particularly fast--yet). That eliminates postage, printing, stencilling, and envelope costs. As the technology progresses, and the speed of telephonic transmission increases, it's quite possible that you can make do with a 1 or 2 minute phone call--and at late-night hours, you'd be talking about 20¢ or so at the most to send messages to any point in the continental U.S.))

((I realize that not everyone has a system like this--but I think it will become more popular as costs come down, and it may not only replace the small press, but it might replace the first-class letter, since there'd be no possibility of lost mail, delivery delays, or damaged items that you have with an inefficient and second-rate post office.))

((Until we reach this stage, though, I agree with you that the fanzine will soon become a local phenomenon, at least the larger fanzines from small-press publishers. I can afford to send a ten or twelve pager, even an eighteen pager, via third-class, but the cost of a 48 page fanzine is getting prohibitive, postage-wise. We may see a growth of smaller personalzines and fanzines--I've noticed it already, in the past six months--or a massive increase in subscription rates. Even so, how many fanzine publishers make any money off a fanzine? Very, very few, and as postal rates climb, that figure approaches the lower limit of zero. As you say, fanzine publishing might eventually become a communications medium of the affluent fans, with the smaller fans able to function only through apas, where communal mailings lower per-item costs tremendously.))

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I first glanced through the mag at the artwork, particularly that very striking cover, and so it came as no surprise when I read that Sally Cook likes the Chapbook, etc. Some of her headings are very art nouveau, I note. It's been interesting, over the last two or three years, to see how many Mucha drawings, for example, have begun to be widely produced, and indeed, to see how widely such work has been imitated. Sincerest form of flattery and all, y'know.

I was a little disappointed in the new SW book; it rollicks along alright, but somehow, something is missing that was in the original book. And I missed the two 'droids' interaction. Hardly a word here. Of course as I read it, I was waiting all along for a reappearance of Darth and/or Obi Wan, but still found the closing fight interesting enough.

I must say I'm getting a bit weary of this ERA biz in fnz. I've written at length about this in reply to the lastish of SELDON'S PLAN, so won't repeat myself here except to say (a) we in England are ahead of you, since it has been illegal for some years now to discriminate in housing, mortgage, jobs, etc., on the grounds of sex, and (b) that Illinois is one state which to my disgust has not passed the amendment. I support it for the reason that the choice should be there. Of course there will still be discrimination, but the machinery to insure that it is possible for the person doing the discrimination to be shown the error of his/her ways should be in existence. This is particularly galling to me, because I as an alien have no vote.

Point taken re: my comment on jealousy. But I was talking about fan-couples where both are active in fandom, to a greater or lesser extent. Of course, any marriage where one partner is completely caught up in something which, for one reason or another, excludes the other, is going to have trouble. It happens to other folk than fan, of course.

Interesting to see that Jane Gaskell's books are to be reissued. I read 'em (or at least two of them, and now I see there are to be five--which is good, as I often wondered what happened next) years back, must be at least ten years now. I seem to recall reading somewhere that the author wrote CITY at the age of 12, or am I confusing that with someone else... maybe Deb can clarify it for me...

THE GOODIES have been running for years and years now; we don't get it here, but I saw a lot of it before I left England. They are often compared to the MONTY PYTHON team; I think in fact they are among the same crop of Cambridge undergraduates...



In MYRIAD someone recently berated the members, and sf readers generally:

The science fiction world/community/genre/ghetto is supposedly responsive to the fans and the readers-- a readership passionately devoted, intellectually adventurous, and strongly independent. Instead of demanding better from writers and publishers, we bobbie our heads and say thankyou for cobbled-up tinkertoy empires; for hamfisted pseudomoralistic soap operas; for strident axe-granding; for cheap, lukewarm philosophical tracts.

Although his idealism dies hard, the author is catching on--he's having trouble believing the sf readership is anything special from the evidence he sees. But all the same it's remarkable that such claims of superiority for the sf genre and of its readers' uniqueness continue to surface--like smashed driftwood on the crest of a wave.

Less than fifteen years ago this belief was generally held by leading sf writers whose views on sf were collected in THE DOUBLE-BILL SYMPOSIUM (last edition 1969). Said Philip K. Dick:

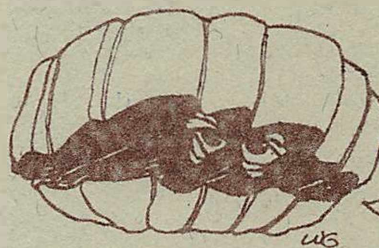
/Science fiction's/ audience is not hamstrung by middle-class prejudices and will listen to genuinely new ideas. There is less of an emphasis on mere style and more on content--as should be. It is a man's field, and hence a happy ending is not required--as in all fiction fields dominated by women... Being one of the oldest modes of fiction known to the Western World it embodies some of the most subtle, ancient, and far-reaching dreams, ideas, and aspirations of which thinking man is capable. In essence it's the broadest field of fiction, permitting the most far-ranging and advanced concepts of every possible type...

Not only was there an insistent belief that the genre had no limitations, some claimed that sf readers were en masse much brighter than other genre's fans. Not only were they free of middle class prejudices and willing to listen to new ideas, but Ben Bova in his NOTES TO A SCIENCE FICTION WRITER claimed "the audience demands freshness and originality in the stories."

Personally I believed the audience was much the same as everywhere else, or perhaps even more conservative, considering Campbell's command of the field through ANALOG. Like all commercial entities, sf revolved around the tolerance-level of its audience--which was certainly lower than the mystery readers'. Consider the sexual allusions in Hammett and Chandler--milder references than those appeared in ANALOG, thirty years

later, and were still attacked as pornographic. To me such a self-satisfied attitude has represented complacency amid mediocrity. I tend to believe that time has born out H. Beam Piper's prediction: "...The type of inquisitive and speculative mind needed for enjoyment of what we know as science fiction must be developed rather early, and our present school system seems to be doing little to help... What I'm afraid of is that the publishers who decide which stories will be bought... will buy stuff suited to the mentality of a mass readership, a readership that will accept as science fiction anything that casually mentions a spaceship or a World Government..."

Who is the sf reader in 1978? The mythical figure specially endowed with logical and perceptive abilities (so acute that they could be stimulated by bad prose)? Or the proverbial teenager rewatching a Star Trek episode for the 132nd time; looking to get a Cylon helmet for Christmas; later graduating to buy Dumarest of Terra and badmouth the Silverberg novels he's insufficiently literate to read?



I WISH I  
WERE JUST  
A CRAZY  
KIND OF GUY

# When all else fails

o o o o o o o o o o MIKE GLYER



In grey reality both readers exist, and many more. A survey of the sf section in any well-stocked paperback store can lead to no other conclusion. Few fans are such omnivores that they read all the 40s reprints, the media promotions, classical hard sf, as well as the books by literateurs.

If one goes so far as to survey those who follow sf on tv or film, the demographics converge on a point where they match the general population. The term sf reader does beg the question--to be a devoted reader, period, makes one remarkable in the present day (though sales and the library theft rate are higher than ever). Once you tally people who follow sf through STAR WARS and BATTLESTAR GALACTICA you are covering up to one-fifth of the American people. Certainly if one in five Americans lived up to Dick's description, the country would be much different, never mind the genre.

Let us then confine discussion to the sf reader. Does he/she conform to a type, or are sf fans as diverse as baseball fans?

I may as well admit that I'm not going to answer that question in this column, but I will look over data that may one day supply such an answer.

Although the LOCUS Poll asks a lot of questions, none of them pinpoints any sociopolitical division among readers. However, it is the only large-scale statistical survey of fandom available free to yours-cheap-truly. Dr. William Bainbridge has produced a book from his questionnaires at sf cons, but I have never seen a copy, nor did the questionnaires I saw at Iggy, from his newest survey, indicate that he has studied fan demographics.

The statistical breakdown for the 1978 LOCUS Poll has yet to be published. (The fiction winners have been released, not the questionnaire results.) Therefore I have turned to the figures from 1977.

In that poll, the average respondent's age was 27 years. (68% of LOCUS readers fall into the 18-30 age bracket) Nearly one third of the readers were students, a majority of them college students. Among the non-students answering the poll, 93% had attended college, 71% had a degree.

The average LOCUS reader spent \$235 a year on used sf, or paperback sf. 39% said they bought half a dozen or more paperbacks a month. 79% regularly read at least one prozine. (Three prozines listed were regularly read by more than half the readers polled.)

Taking into account that you're probably not poor to begin with if you can afford to subscribe to LOCUS, an average LOCUS reader appears as follows. He was

well-educated and spent heavily on sf. He had probably never attended a worldcon. He read fewer than five other fanzines. (In fact he: Brown said around 35% of his readers were women, but only 17% of the readers polled were women.)

The average LOCUS reader had read sf 11 years or longer, and began reading sf before he was 13 years old. More than half of them were the only members of their family to read sf. To draw even larger, a majority of LOCUS readers (and perhaps a majority of sf readers) were solitary readers of sf since childhood, who grew into well-educated adults that spent lavishly on sf (or bought it to the exclusion of other things).

The survey cannot be generalized to all sf readers. As I mentioned, the expense of subscribing to LOCUS tends to pre-select a certain kind of reader. Only 29% of the readers responded to the poll, despite a free copy of LOCUS (added to their subs) to induce them. Those who did respond were not representative of the total readership in one area, the male-female ratio, opening the possibility that they were not representative in other areas.

In spite of that, one cannot fail to be impressed by the high degree of similarity in responses--questions where fifty, sixty, up to eighty-five percent answered identically. That there exists such a large bloc of sf readers who answer to this description explains much about the genre. They certainly do not seem like a demanding, consumerist lot. They can't be too unhappy with the genre as it is to spend so much for its products. Nor would people with so much invested in entertainment literature seem likely to become activists.

The LOCUS Poll's list of most popular sf writers poses a question, in my mind, that adds to the image of sf as a conservative genre. Twenty-four writers are listed. It's very easy to run down the list and pick out writers who are active political conservatives--Heinlein, Niven, Anderson, Vance, Dickson. It's difficult to select more than a couple of political liberals who are equally active: Ellison, of course, HG Wells, and possibly Frederik Pohl. Years back, a few more names on the list signed petitions for or against the Vietnam war, but it's the first and last time I ever saw them personally engage in a political act. One could try and sort them out according to the views expressed in their fiction, but artists, even very commercial artists, turn to quicksilver under political analysis. As a result the political conservatives are very easy to find, and will air their views at the drop of a beer can. The others, excepting Ellison and a few not quite as vocal, take it easy, if they have strong opinions at all. Within fandom, there is always a crowd to adore speakers in favor of space, nuclear technology, and libertarian principles like less government,

(contd. on page 41)

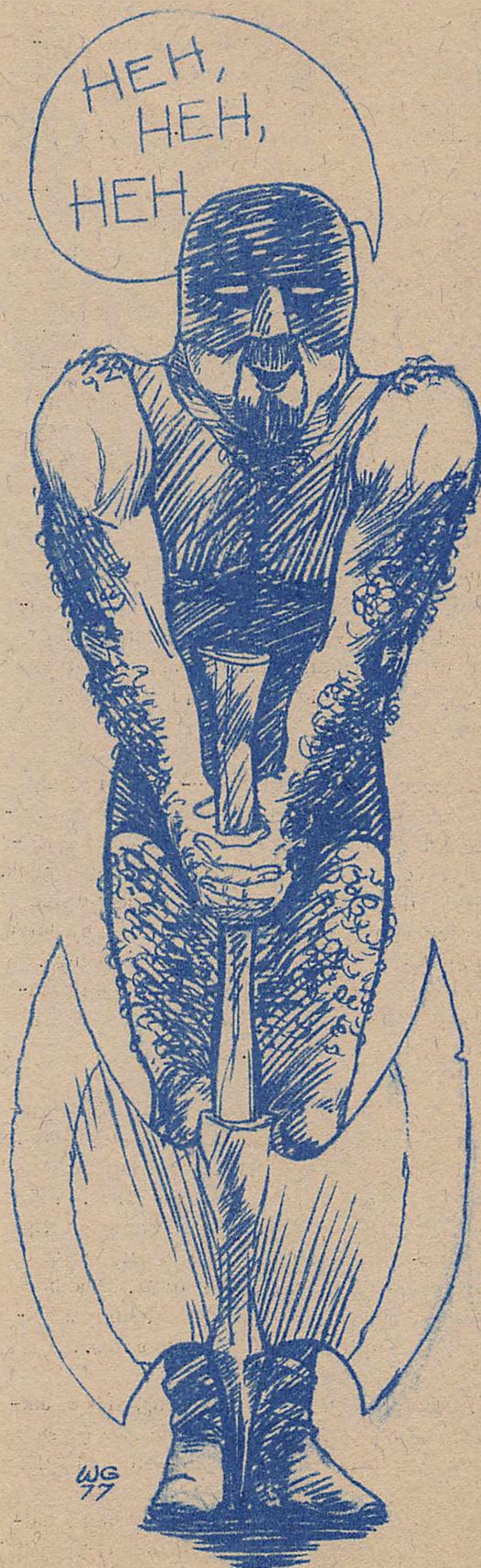


I've been a buying member of science fiction fandom for years and years, and I feel like I've earned a right to complain when I'm not pleased with the trends that I see. I'm doing a lot of complaining now, both in person and by mail. I'm a book buyer, just like most fans--in fact, I spend a great deal of my income on books, fanzines, etc., both new and used. If you don't, you won't be very concerned about my tirade to come--if you spend money as often and in the quantities I do, though, you already know about the inflated market.

I'm not too sure why prices have risen so drastically in the used bookstores, particularly used paperbacks. In this area, there are very few bookstores that don't have a special "Vintage Sci-Fi" section where prices seem to rise in proportion to the age of the book (no matter who it's by), the number of barbarians on the cover, or the appearance of any distinctive sign, symbol, or series indicator.

One particular flaw in my character is a tendency to collect, in packrat fashion, Doc Savage novels; while I realize that there's no real literary value (or indeed, redeeming social value) in such things, I consume them with a ravenous appetite, always ready for more. My appetite for Hershey's Kisses is similar to my appetite for Doc Savage novels: while I realize that neither is particularly good for me, I continue to consume them greedily so long as the supply holds up. And just as you know that every Hershey's Kiss will taste the same, every Doc Savage book will read almost identically to the others--it's a mass-produced product, and I see a redeeming value in that security.

I had once accumulated a fairly large number of Doc Savage paperbacks from Bantam--the first 49, I think it was--and I got rid of them for the reasonable price of 25¢ each. A couple of years later, I decided to read the new ones, and found myself moved to recoup my collection of the early books (my analogy falls apart here; for while you can eat a Hershey's Kiss only once with



# THE FINISHING STROKE

cliff biggers



any enjoyment, you can read the same Doc Savage book over and over again, never putting forth any more mental strain than it takes to watch THE GONG SHOW). Off I trudge, my tattered and near-empty wallet in my back pocket (actually, my wallet is never near-empty; I carry the wantlists of scores of fans, most of whom I've either lost account of or can't match with the proper wantlist-- anyway, it makes for a bulging wallet and a healthy accumulation of books that I know someone in the Southeast United States wants).

You can predict what I found. Doc Savage books aren't 25¢ each, used, any more. Now, the battered and assaulted copies are \$1 each (which, incidentally, is more than their cover price); the mint copies have prices with curvy numbers after the dollar sign, though I could never bring my stunned gaze to focus on them and read exactly what the price was.

To my credit, I never bought one of the damned things at those prices, and I've managed to accumulate a complete set--a tribute to my perseverance and unflagging enthusiasm to dig through eighteen thousand paperbacks in a junk shop to find one old copy of THE QUEST OF QUI. And th

So I decide to accumulate junk fiction--and what could be junkier than Ace Doubles, one side of which was invariably good and the other side of which could only be given away--attached, as it was, to the back of a good book. Needless to say, the market had grown: all the old Ace Doubles in Atlanta have prices that are preceded by dollar signs, and followed by the sound of my choking cough. Every now and then, I run across one I need, and I actually get it for a reasonable sum--but those occasions are getting fewer and farther between.

Barbarian books sell best, though; in Atlanta, it's not unusual to find a barbarian thud-and-blunder book selling for \$3 in a used bookstore, when a new copy of the same book can be had at the store across the street for \$1.75. I think the epitome of this subculture was found in a recent trip to an Atlanta ~~hip-hip/hip-hop~~ used bookstore, where a Frazetta cover, sans book, was selling for \$1. The book was a Lin Carter, though, so the reader is getting a better deal that way than if the book was complete...

I see no reason to mention the magical properties of unicorn heads, the initials HPL, or numbered series (even crud becomes valuable if it's numbered--CRUD STORIES might sell for 50¢, but CRUD STORIES #1 is worth \$2 in a "vintage sci-fi" section). Suffice to say that a Ballantine Adult Fantasy HPL title with the name CTHULHU'S CREEPY CLASSICS #1 would probably sell for a sum far beyond the U.S. Trade Deficit...

Now, however, the trend is spreading; those stores that had vintage sci-fi sections (and vintage sci-fi seems to be chosen by a blind dwarf with vertigo throwing darts at books--of course, any shop that calls it "vintage sci-fi" is already demonstrating a lack of knowledge of the field and is apt to include paperback reprints of comic books under that title, which is an automatic sign of high prices) are now realizing that the price gap between vintage sci-fi (if I use the term often enough, maybe I'll quit gagging when I see it in the stores) sections and the regular used-sf section is too large. I admire their power of observation. Unfortunately, their logic differs from mine: to solve the price-gap problem, they're raising the price of used sf, which is akin to trying to make a \$5 cup of coffee acceptable, price-wise, by asking \$3.50 for the doughnut to dunk in it. Now, I see signs popping up that scream at me that the minimum price on used sf is 50¢ or 75¢, that there is a trading charge of 50¢ when you trade in sf on a 2-of-yours-for-one-of-theirs basis, or the most hated of all signs, "Owner reserves right to reclassify any books on used sf shelves as vintage sci-fi." That means, in effect, that a paranoid like me can fully expect to have every book he buys become vintage sci-fi because a suspicious shop owner says to himself "if he wants it, it must be valuable."

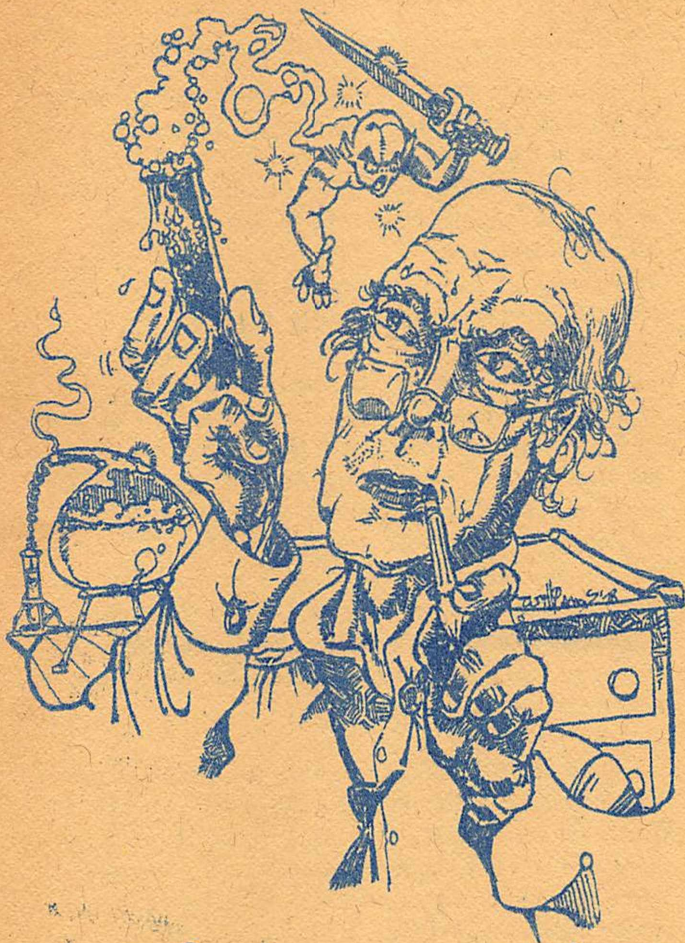
I could carry on a long tirade at this point against various price guides for "fantastic(ally expensive) literature", but I refuse to do so. I have to admit that the prices were climbing long before Resnick and followers came along with a guide to sanction highway robbery. If you really want the tirade, send me a stamped self-addressed envelope--but put plenty of postage on it, by all means.

But as one friend of mine pointed out--he happens to be a book dealer, by the way--it's reasonable for him to charge \$1 for a used book in first edition when the new edition is going to cost you \$1.50 anyway. The only flaw in that logic is that I wouldn't have bought the new edition for \$1.50 because I would have assumed I could have found the used copy for 50¢. \*sigh\* I'd like to see him use the same logic to raise the price of insipid Harlequins--which he swears are the only things that make him enough money to stay open--to \$1.50-\$3.

But the point is real: if new books are going to increase in price several hundred percent in a decade, then used books have a right to compete with the new book market by offering earlier editions at higher prices. But when half of a 40¢ Ace Double is reissued as a \$1.50 paperback, I can't agree that that's reason to raise the dealer's price of the Ace Double to \$2.75.

Used book stores (many of whom now prefer to call themselves Out-of-Print Book Specialists, a name that





# An Electronic Joker

commentary by mike weber

What happened to the heroic scientist, the shining-armored man of learning who, confronted by death and destruction for the entire (pick one) city, state, country, or world, not to mention great personal danger, would retreat to his lab, and amid spitting sparks, jacobsladders, and dramatic music, invent the doohicky that was precisely what was needed to save the day?

I don't know, but he certainly isn't working in movies today. Today, the scientist in movies is probably the villain, either because he's too weak or dumb to realize what he's doing, or, more probably, because being a scientist makes you inherently evil.

I suppose what happened is that technology has gotten past the understanding of the average man in the street, and, as usual, what is not understood is to be feared. Different is dead.

The first film that I remember in this current trend is *THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN*, Michael Crichton's screenplay from his own book. I'm sure we all remember that one. In these days, it was still permissible for films of that type to have a heroic scientist or two, who was to attempt to overcome the machinations of the evil ones. Remember, if you will, that the implications of *ANDROMEDA STRAIN* are that the horrible disease that we must find a cure for was brought to earth intentionally, as part of a U.S. military attempt to find "better" (more deadly) bacteriological warfare agents in space.

Remember, also, that the eventual defeat of the disease that has gotten loose is not through the efforts of the crew of brilliant (we're told) researchers, but rather through the workings of one of the most strained coincidences and rabbit-out-of-the-hat plot gimmicks ever seen in Hollywood.

And so we see the beginnings of the "science as villain" and a new form of the old "things man was not meant to know" plots forming.

Then comes *WESTWORLD*, also written by Crichton, and directed by him as well. *FRANKENSTEIN* in a clever plastic disguise...literally. Disguised as Yul Brynner, as a matter of fact.

In this case, the technicians are as much the victims of the horror of technology "gone wild", as *Something* (one of those never properly defined Somethings so popular among the lazy characters who write these things) goes wrong, and the robots of the adult playground start killing people. There are more holes in this film's plot than in six full wheels of swiss cheese, but who cares? Certainly not the Great American Public that watches the film, then nods sagely and says to its wife "See, Mabel, that's why all this science stuff is dangerous."

Of course, the fact that the damned thing is a classic "idiot plot" as defined by William Atheling, Jr. (James Blish)--one which will not work unless everyone in it is an idiot, and that the entire thing could have been prevented, and probably would have been, by the application of the slightest amount of intelligent foresight, never registers.

Moving still further along, still Crichton, we come to *THE TERMINAL MAN*. Another idiot plot...reading the book, I realized the basic flaw in the setup quite a



while before it appeared, in fact. (I must admit that I never saw the film, though I understand it was virtually a scene-for-scene transcription of the book.) Not only that, but the paperback has a prefatory statement that the author had been informed, after the hardcover publication but before the paperback, that the form of epilepsy he uses as a motivating force simply doesn't work the way he says it does. Crichton, I might remind you at this point, is an M.D.

It is always unwise to generalize about an author from his works, but I think that Crichton, himself, is afraid of technology.

At least, up to now, the technological terrors have been perpetrated by more-or-less good and sincere scientists who simply make perfectly good and sincere mistakes... and, in general, the technology run amok is contained or aborted before it can do too much damage.

Then along comes THE CASSANDRA CROSSING. "Sir Lew Grade Presents an ITC Release..." and away we go. Not only science, but the scientists as well (as represented by Burt Lancaster, U.S. Army Medical Corps) are the villains.

Just think--scientists are conducting Bio War experiments that are too dangerous to conduct at home in a neutral country, actually under cover of a world do-good organization. And when there seems to be a chance that the world will find out, that word will get out as to just how evil the scientists and their country have been, they set out to cold-bloodedly murder a whole trainload of people. Never mind that the murder plot would never fool a real person for ten seconds, never mind that the traincrash involved in the murder will release the plague, never mind consistency of intelligence... just watch those Evil Scientists do their Evil Thing.

CASSANDRA CROSSING has to be the dumbest of these films under consideration--but I happen to have talked to a few (non-fan) people who found it plausible.

Finally, in the first half of 1978, the release of the film that triggered this whole tirade, CAPRICORN ONE. Surveys show that only 72% of the public actually believe that we went to the moon back there in 1969; the other 28% think it was all an elaborate fake.

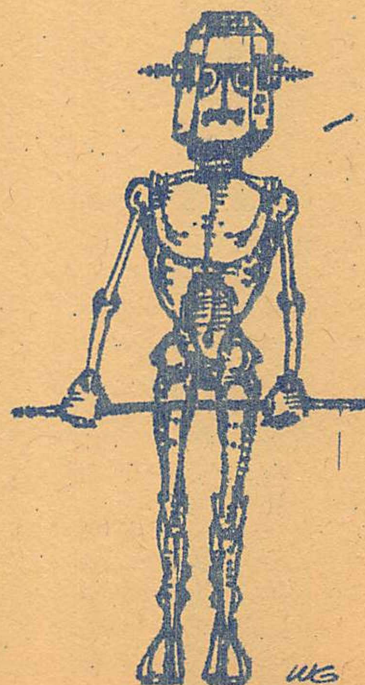
If 28% of the public believe the moon landings were fake, there must be a market for a film that tells of a similar story. And lo, CAPRICORN ONE, the story of just such a faked Mars mission, was born. From Sir Lew Grade's ITC Entertainment, of course. "From those wonderful people who gave you SPACE: 1999..."

Interestingly enough, this time, we don't get the image of the scientist-as-villain... exactly. This time, what we get in the person of Hal Holbrook as the director of NASA is the scientist as weakling/zealot, a man willing to sacrifice virtually everything in order to advance his pet project, and, at the same time, coerced into cooperating with that same mysterious They who have too much committed to the space program.

We are asked to believe that, upon discovering just a month or so before the launch date that the life-support system of the Mars vehicle will fail three weeks into the Mars mission, the Director of NASA and unspecified but powerful political interests decide to fake the mission instead of risking the destruction of the space program by the political backlash of a spectacular failure. We are asked to believe that the Director of NASA cooperates in a scheme to blackmail the Capricorn One astronauts into going along by means of threats to the welfare of their families.

We are asked to believe that, once the scheme is going well, a junior technician spots something wrong (in a manner that's 100% bullshit) and gets bumped off when he reports it to his superiors. We're asked to believe that a crusading reporter played by Elliot Gould spots something that makes him suspicious, and survives several attempts on his life and freedom to crack the story.

And those are only some of the more outstanding idiocies of this film. If it were only an idiot "Sci Fi" film



MAYBE THEY'LL  
LIKE ME IF  
I GIVE THEM  
THE OLD RUBBER  
SHOE ROUTINE.

WGS



such as Hollywood has been grinding out for years, I wouldn't mind; I can enjoy an idiot plot suspense film pretty well, so long as it ain't stepping on my corns. But all of these films do just that.

More and more, the public is turning into an anti-technology group. Now there's nothing inherently right or wrong about an anti-technology or pro-technology position, so long as you know something about what you're doing when you oppose or support technology. The problem here is that the Great Amurrican Public really has no idea just what Science and Technology are all about. And, as I said earlier, the Great Amurrican Public fears and mistrusts--not to say hates--what it cannot understand. This is what enabled Richard Nixon to be a success.

Take a look at the "Clamshell Alliance." This is the New Hampshire anti-nuclear power group. Want to take bets about how many of them have the slightest idea what the reality behind the scare-slogans like "thermal pollution" or "radioactive waste" is? Wonder how many of them realize that it was "thermal pollution" that got the shellfish and similar sealife through the record cold winter of '76-'77?

John Campbell said it best: the American Public has gotten accustomed to its "magic." Turn on the switch and the light comes on--it's magic. Why should I have to pay the power company for magic? And I want more magic. I want to run my lights, my air conditioner, my electric stove, my teevee, and my stereo twenty four hours per day--and without increasing my bills, and without any of those polluting fossil fuel plants or those deadly dangerous nuclear power plants.

The American Public--the whole world, for that matter--wants the fruits of technology without any of its dangers or unpleasantness. They want to drive their cars forever, without having to worry about the depletion of world oil reserves. 28% of the public believe the moonwalks were faked? Hell, more than that know that the energy crisis is a fake. I mean, there's always been enough oil, there's always going to be enough oil. Stands to reason. Common Sense. Everybody knows that. It's all a plot by the trilateral commission, or the Bilderbergers, or the Ayrahs, or Big Business, or the Communists, or the Illuminati, or...

And Sir Lew Grade (referred to sometimes as Sir Low Grade by some of his competitors...) is quite happy to pander to this general mistrust of and paranoia about --and actual fear of--Science. And, if Sir Lew didn't, someone else would. There's always a Man With An

Angle... a profiteer, a con man, trading on the public's stupidities and paranoia. And unfortunately, reinforcing it.

It's a circle, you know. One of these films is made, playing to the public belief that Science is Bad. And it helps to form the public's view of Science, reinforcing it. Feedback, if not broken up, can destroy any system. And these (to coin a term) A-SF (for "Anti-Science Fiction") films, these joyless Frankensteins with unsympathetic monsters and no heroes among the ranks of science, just more villainous villains and less evil ones, may be just the sort of feedback we don't need.

FINISHING STROKE, Cont'd from P. 36  
(THE FINISHING STROKE, cont'd) costs you about 25%), aren't the only rip-off in the field, though. Limited edition publishers have developed an interesting game, known as "give them less, charge them more, and convince them they can't live without it."

It's an interesting game, and it means fantastic profits for the entrepreneur who can pull it off. The sole requirement is that the dealer must convince you of the merits of paying \$3 for something you could buy in a regular edition for \$1.50. Robert E. Howard is a particularly good subject for this sort of thing: stick one of his stories or a dozen of his sub-par poems in one volume, spend twenty minutes numbering the print run consecutively with your bic pen, and charge \$5 for it. Add illustrations, get the artist to sign it, charge \$10. Put a bone sliver in it and a letter from the Cross Plains coroner identifying it as part of REH himself, and you can name your own price.

The ultimate paranoia comes when you begin to expand your collection to other genres, though. Mysteries are an open field; but just last week, when we stocked up on some much needed Avon Classic Crime Collection volumes, the dealer looked at me, looked at the books, then said "these aren't sci-fi, why you gettin' 'em?"

"Just to read," I said, always filled with witty retorts when bookdealers ask moronic questions.

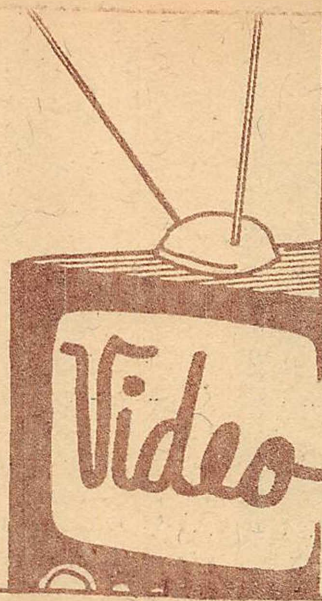
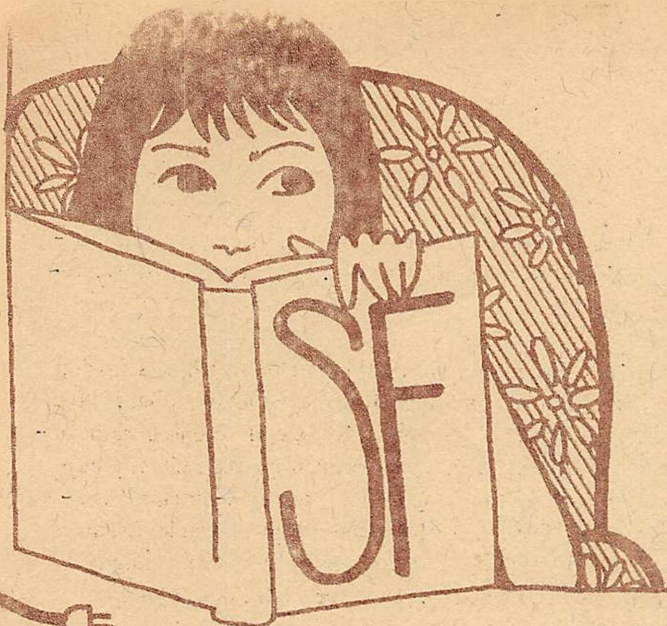
"These are valuable, huh?" No fooling--if they were, did he expect me to say yes and watch him raise prices?

"Not really." Sounded like a dodge, and I knew it.

"Nice covers--who did 'em?" Since he can't recognize any artists beyond Frazetta and Jones, and then only if they sign their names, I don't know why he asked. Finally, he put my books in a sack. I know what he was thinking, though...

Right now he's painting the sign: "Vintage Whodunits"...





by  
Deb  
Hammer-  
Johnson

I SUPPOSE that until my dying day, I will still be analyzing, categorizing, and dissecting everything that goes on around me. I lead a nice, normal life in a great many respects, but I'm really a closet intellectual who hasn't yet figured she's out of college and should settle down to babies, my new electric mixer, and the hotspots of the soap opera circuit. If that was not enough, I'm also that rare and complex creature known as a FAN ("faan," "Phaan," or "fen" depending on one's dialect). This means that I am lost to the cause of sanity and more-than-superficial normalcy. My mailman suspects, since he delivers all those strange letters and zines, but only my apa knows for sure.

I have concocted this strange explanation setting me and my fannish nature into a contemporary framework. As I see it, there are three subdivisions in the genre family known as science fiction: "fandom" (a round of applause), "sf readers" (who outnumber us 100 to 1, but whom we couldn't live without), and "sci-fi folk." All three exist in a strange and complex interrelationship and I'm going to explain just how this is done while analyzing to my heart's content.

Most fans started out as sf readers. In my case, it was stumbling across Ben Bova's *STAR CONQUERORS* in the third grade and getting a terminal case of fantasy hunger that led me through Edgar Rice Burroughs, Heinlein, Silverberg, and all the other authors who made the unreal my reality. In those days, sf readers were a weird minority who skulked around newsstands and endured the ridicule of mundania without the later consolation (and headaches) of like-minded fans. To this day I still have a missionary zeal to bring the message to all of

those younger folk out there who are forced to endure life without the creative outlets that fandom provides. Not all sf readers become fans, however. I'm sure that for every hundred copies of a new sf book that are sold, only one is purchased by a fan. They are the true financial backbone of literary sf, which is something many of us forget in our ego posturings.

If sf readers are fine human beings with incredibly good taste and embryonic familial fans, then the sci-fi folk are outright "bastards" from our perspective. We tend to cringe at Trekkies, Star Warriors, and all these brighteyed bushytailed types who are woefully ignorant of our basic maxims. What they follow is, by definition, legitimate science fiction, but it's as if they were all members of the Farkle family from the old LAUGH-IN days who were all fathered by the neighbor next door. Sci-fi represents the superbucks, the "lowbrow," the public, and--curiously enough--the visual element of science fiction media. Definitionally, sci-fi is that branch of science fiction, known to the public at large, that emerges from the trends in the entertainment media--video in particular. It's big, bulky, frustrating, and quite independent of us for the most part. It shares our sense of wonderment, our speculations, and our taste for glamour and gloss but has few of our neuroses for scientific accuracy and literary chastity. For all our basic effete attitude, most of us brush through *STARLOG*, *OMNI*, and *FUTURE* at the newsstand, set our incredibly expensive videotape machines to catch *GODZILLA* at 3 a.m. (even though we've seen it a hundred times), and cajole each other with "Cattlestar Impractica" trivia. At heart, we are twice as guilty as the rest of the public because we'd like to think we know better.



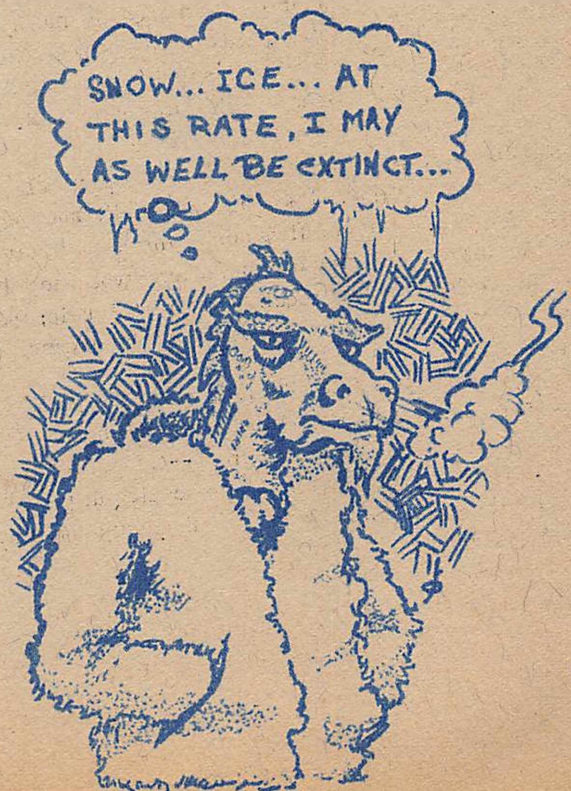
Sci-fi appalls us for several reasons. First is the violation of our sense of exclusivity. I don't know how many times I've heard people groan when a normal sort will chirp, "Oh, I read sci-fi, too!" and try to politely leave the room and the speaker quietly. It's a bit like being the only gay at a redneck bar. We know there is no room for argument or discussion and a smiling retreat is the best course. Second, sci-fi is "impure." It borrows from all the other genres without blinking an eye. In this way, it is just another mass trend like Westerns, spy thrillers, war movies, and disco, which has its heyday and fades. A third reason it appalls us is its sense of unfairness. Quality, we feel, is where it should count, not quantity. Why couldn't all the STAR WARS budgeting and expertise be applied to Larry Niven's RINGWORLD? Instead of Battlestar, why not a serialization of Heinlein's Future History? Why do the glossy graphic sci-fi magazines flourish when the literary ones never seem to get far out of the red? Basically, why do none of the sci-fi ventures live up to our fannish tastes and standards?

If I've exaggerated my categories and their perspectives, it's been done for the purposes of illustration and to fit in with my usual hyperbolic style. Actually, I'm holistic by nature and only categorize to explain a concept. I'm filled with the glow of optimism for the future of science fiction in all its forms. I believe it's undergoing what the grate sf theorist M. Dale Glycer terms a period of "normalization," where the three categories are blending together. For better or worse, I think we're in the first real Golden Age of Visual Science Fiction which just can't help but extend into print. Since the days of the Space Program, we've achieved a growing respect from the public since much of what sf predicted has come to pass. A new Heinlein, Clarke, or Herbert book is mass marketed like other best sellers, and all this ancient hooplah over true sf vs. the mainstream is fading into its proper place--oblivion. Movie and television adaptations of THE LATHE OF HEAVEN, THE DEMOLISHED MAN, and STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND (for the umpteenth time) are reputed to be in the works. Even the Disney studios are on the baddwagon with a project about "The Black Holes," which seems legitimate. The current generation of kids is growing up with spacetoys that we would have mugged Santa for, and will undoubtedly grow up to expect a much higher quality of sf entertainment than we have endured in the past. Science Fiction is their bread-and-butter, their lunchbox decorations, and hopefully the stuff of dreams. Fans, authors, illustrators and bookbuyers will come from these ranks and will be different from us. Currently, sf seems a healthy and

prosperous field with increasing chances for publishing, writing, and creating along sf lines. Sf is already out of the ghetto of the old days. At its worst, the current trend won't harm the cause of quality science fiction. B By its sheer size, some good is bound to come out of it. A fan or sf reader can now pursue their enthusiasm without being branded a weirdo, and if they play their cards right, win friends and influence people through their discrimination and impeccable taste. Conan? Tolkein? Those "Dune" books? Why, madam, I've been doing the stuff all my life!

lower taxes, more freedom to exploit one's resources. Lately there is also a crowd to support speakers favoring ERA, feminism, and gay rights. Yet the two no longer seem at such opposite extremes, however antagonistic they may feel. They each want freedom to do whatever they feel like; they want less governmental control over the things they feel like doing; they want greater governmental control over the things they don't feel like doing.

Yet the majority attend neither of these "forums"--at cons everybody's in the huckster room, the film room, or still passed out from last night's party. It becomes easier to understand the antagonism not just towards Ellison's activities preceding Iguanacon, but towards Heinlein's political statements in his GoH speech at MAC. And it is certainly no wonder that a status-quo oriented readership fails to rise up and smite mediocre publishers.





# Cinematic Eye

sue phillips

Two long-awaited films were released for Christmas this year--long awaited by the sf community, each is different, but each tries to capture a certain mood while paying homage to an earlier era.

**SUPERMAN: THE MOVIE** has its faults. The effects of Superboy outracing a train or the crystalline version of Krypton, for example, were awkward and/or unimpressive. In fact, I suppose you could say that, on the whole, the special effects were one of the faults. Though there were none that were absolutely awful, save the exceptions mentioned above, the imagination was lacking. The effects people tended to play it safe and, it seems, this was a grave mistake. Things that should have made me "ooh" and "ah" made me say "pretty good," and forget about it immediately. But, as far as I was concerned, this did not mar my enjoyment of the film.

**SUPERMAN** is intensely enjoyable. It isn't high camp, as **BATMAN** was, yet it doesn't take itself too seriously.

The casting is superb. Christopher Reeve is the biggest surprise I've had in movie-going all year. Not only is he a better actor than I would have thought, but he does indeed look like Superman. The build, the face, they combine with his acting ability to make this man something to watch in the future. His transition from Clark Kent to Superman and back is particularly good and he handles the comedic aspects of the film quite well.

Margot Kidder, while she doesn't look the part of Lois Lane, does a good job. It is 1978, after all, and she is a 1978 woman. The one flaw comes in the fact that the script requires her to play a female stereotype once she gets into a situation that requires Superman's help; the transition from reporter to stereotype is a bit jarring.

Perry White, the irascible editor, is played by Jackie Cooper. I shook my head in dismay when I heard of this piece of casting, but I was wrong--Cooper is Perry White. Not in face or form, but you could put the lines from any **SUPERMAN** comic in his mouth and they'd come out sounding right.

What I did find a poor piece of casting is Gene Hackman as Lex Luthor. I could have lived with this, though, if they hadn't decided to play the Luthor sequences as if it were the Batman tv show all over again. This handicaps the credibility of the movie but, like the effects, doesn't cripple it entirely.

The Krypton sequences are undoubtedly beautiful, but they don't jibe with my idea of Krypton. The film goes with a totally white, crystalline planet and gives the reason for its explosion that the sun caused an inner turmoil and forced the crystals inside to push their way out. Brando and Susannah York add a touch of strength to the Krypton sequences, however.

**SUPERMAN: THE MOVIE** is good. What makes it so is a combination of assets and flaws--the assets, though, outweigh the flaws sufficiently to make the movie pure entertainment. The Salkinds should be congratulated; it took them a long time and, all in all, the product is a credit to their ability. I'm eagerly awaiting the sequel, already in production in part.

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I haven't been so scared by a film since I was a kid.

**INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS** is both a remake and a sequel to the 1956 classic. Transplanted to the city of San Francisco, each scene in the new film has a direct corollary to one in the original. But the addition of the scene with Kevin McCarthy, star of the first, adds credit to the idea that it's a sequel, not a remake.

Matthew Bennell's assistant, Elizabeth, finds a new type of flower and brings it home for study. Thus, the pods have a way to work their existence into the lives of our heroes.

Bennell is deputy health inspector for the city. When Elizabeth first voices her suspicions about her live-in boyfriend, he insists on having her see a friend of his, a psychiatrist, David Kibner.



On their way to see Kibner, an unkempt, haggard man leaps out in front of their car, screaming "They're here! They're here!" This is Kevin McCarthy; a short time later, he is killed.

Kibner says he's been getting a lot of these cases lately, but they seem to cure themselves in time and all he can do is treat the symptoms. This really doesn't placate Elizabeth, but she accepts it for the moment and goes home.

Two of Bennell's friends, Jack and his wife Nancy, own a mud bath. There they find a body, covered with hairy filaments and seemingly unformed. They call Matthew who examines it and tells them to call Kibner. While they wait, Jack naps for a while and it is here that one of the most harrowing, best cut and directed segments of the film takes place.

Gradually, they begin to realize what is going on and the chase is on.

The acting here is phenomenal when you consider that the story is really absurd if stripped to its pure essentials. Donald Sutherland gives what I consider to be his best

performance since MASH as Bennell, both hard-headed and compassionate enough to understand and do something about the treat. Brooke Adams is his assistant; I am not familiar with her career before this, but she is very good, particularly in the transition from person to pod-thing.

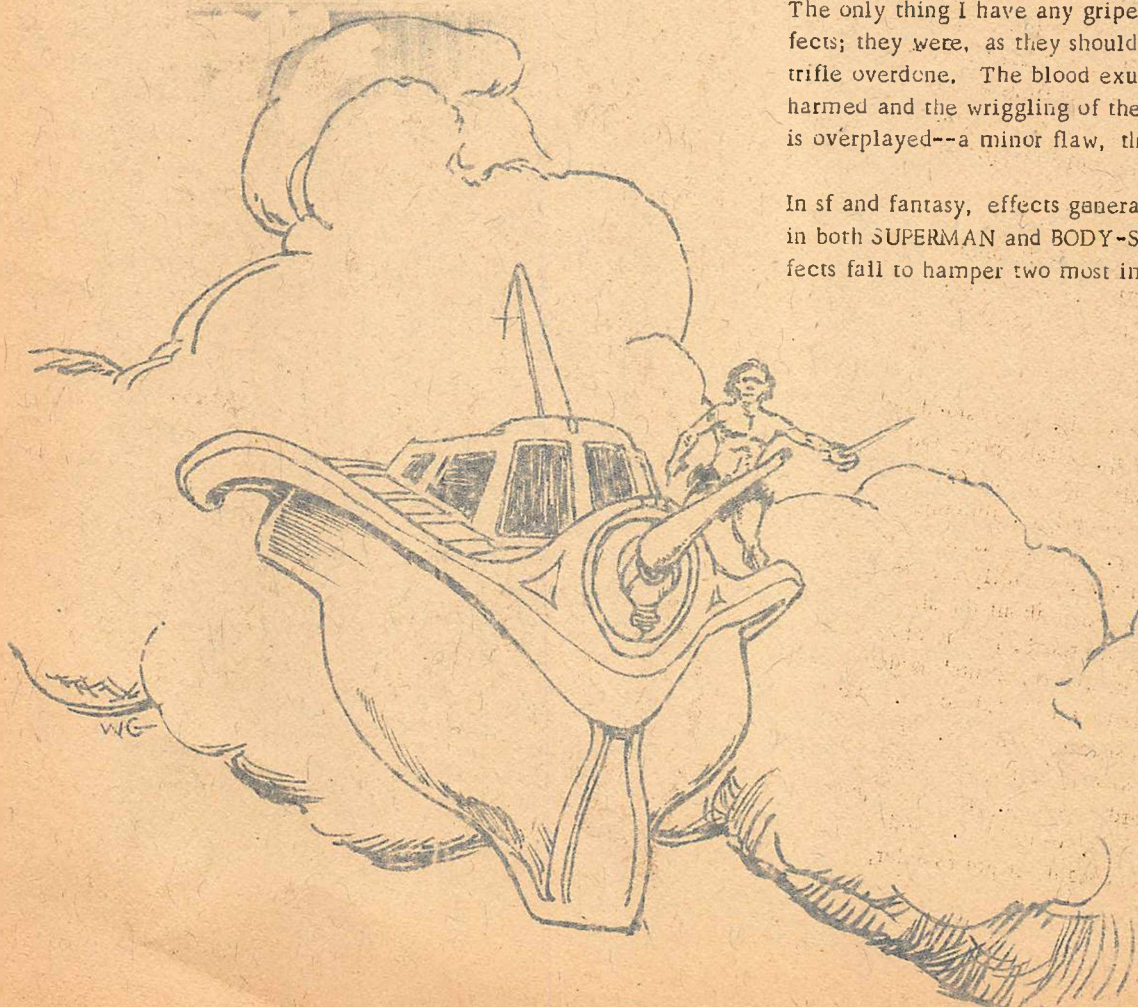
Jeff Goldblum and Veronica Cartwright are quite good as Jack and Nancy--Cartwright acts quite well as a character who learns the truth before anyone else, and Goldblum manages to develop from a flat character to a believable person as the movie progresses.

What really comes over as a tour de force of acting, though, is Leonard Nimoy's portrayal of Kibner. The cynical, trying-to-be-realistic psychiatrist is perfect for him and a great help in getting away from the character of Spock. The fact that Kibner has a secret almost from the film's beginning and that Nimoy plays this aspect of the character so well is revealing as to the ability the man has.

Phil Kaufman's directing is superb; it is really to him and the editor that most of the credit goes for such an effective mood piece. Each sequence is carefully cut and paced so that the whole creates a very frightening picture.

The only thing I have any gripe at all with is the effects; they were, as they should be, effective, but a trifle overdone. The blood exuded when the pods are harmed and the wriggling of the unformed pod-person is overplayed--a minor flaw, though.

In sf and fantasy, effects generally make or break a film; in both SUPERMAN and BODY-SNATCHERS, just-par effects fail to hamper two most impressive new films.





# A CLOSE ENCOUNTER.....mary long

The White House has been quoted (in the Springfield, Illinois STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER, 12/11/77, p. 24) as expecting a surge of reports of UFO sightings, following the release of CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND, and doubtless the whole subject will again be chewed over in the columns of fanzines. Here's my two-pennorth on the subject.

Let me first make my position clear. I'm open-minded about the whole thing. I do not know anyone who claims to have seen a UFO, though some years ago I did hear, indirectly, of a British fan (with whom I can claim a nodding acquaintance) who had reportedly seen one, but I know no details about it. If the subject of UFOs had crossed my mind at all, in idle musings, I had also wondered how I would react to seeing such a thing myself. Frightened? Disbelieving? And from what I had read, such sightings seem generally to be reported by a lone observer, seen far from any habitation, and more often than not (or so it appeared) late at night.

However, when it happened, it happened in broad daylight, in the middle of Park Close, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, and there were at least six other people who saw it too.

It was in the late 1960s. As I recall it, I was standing out in the garden, and glanced up. High above the roofs of the houses on the opposite side of the Close was a dark shape, almost oval in outline, moving slowly across the bright blue sky. There was no noise, no vapour trail, but it moved steadily toward us. At first sight it would have been about the size of say a fifty cent piece. People dotted round the close looked up, too. Chas Legg, in whose parents' garden I was standing, rushed indoors to get his telescope. We stood, craning our necks and shading our eyes, out in the sunshine. The shape floated nearer and nearer and nearer, and still we heard no sound. It broke upon me in a flash that it was coming in to land. And so it was. As it grew larger in our sight, it got rounder,

and eventually, some ten minutes after we first sighted it, we identified it as (alas!) a hot-air balloon. It did in fact land not too far from the Close, somewhat off-course, but for at least ten minutes I, at least, was convinced I was looking at a UFO, and, what's more, a UFO which was about to land.

So, during that time, what did I feel? Not frightened, nor apprehensive, nor disbelieving. What I felt was sheer exhilaration, mixed with excitement, and perhaps even a touch of joy. If there really is a landing in my lifetime, then I've had my dress rehearsal.

And now I'm off to practice my hand gestures.

