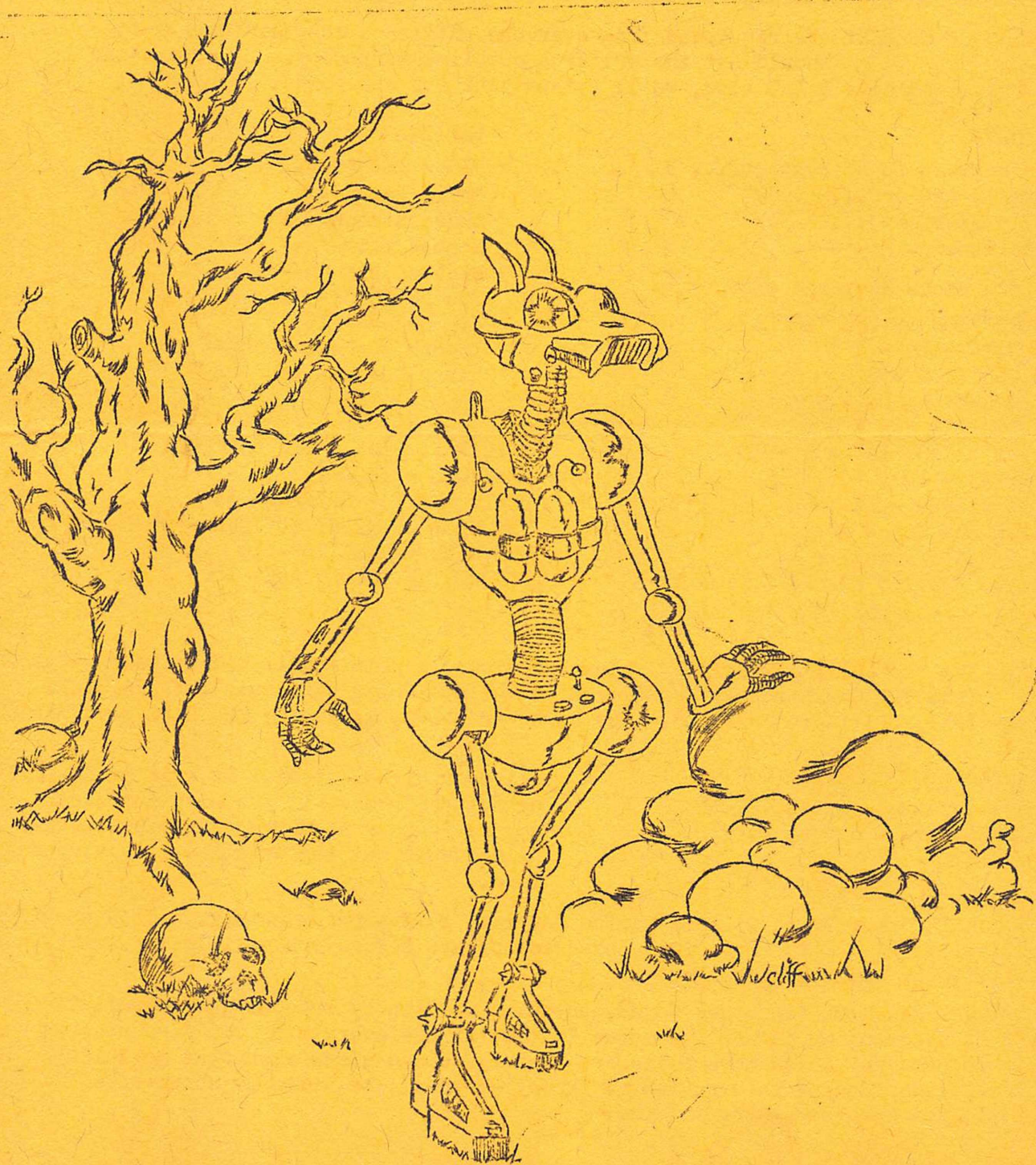


FUTURE

RETROSPECTIVE 2





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TRADES are always welcome--trades are generally done on a one-to-one basis, unless there are Special Circumstances. Chances are, any fanzine sent for trade will be reviewed in a future issue of FUTURE RETROSPECTIVES. Complimentary copies of each issue are available to anyone who has something reviewed in its pages.

LETTERS OF COMMENT are requested from everyone getting a copy of this--letters used should net the writer a complimentary copy. So write--and if you subscribe and have a LoC used, we'll extend your sub one issue.

#### CONTENTS

Perspectives in Retrospect.... 3  
Books 'n Letters... 4  
COMICS (Reviews)... 19  
Miscellaneous Reviews... 20

oOo Books Reviewed oOoO

DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE - 4  
THE NOT-WORLD - 4  
ICE AND IRON - 8  
THE HOLLOW LANDS - 9  
IMAGINATIVE SEX \* 9  
AT THE NARROW PASSAGE - 10  
ORBIT 13 - 10  
PROSTHO PLUS - 11  
THE FEMALE MAN - 12  
THE GEMINI PROBLEM - 12  
SCIENCE FICTION EMPHASIS #1 - 13

#### LETTERS

Piers Anthony-- 5  
Brian Perry-- 7  
Andre Norton-- 10  
Norman Masters-- 11  
Michael Bishop-- 14  
Sue Phillips-- 14  
Joe Green-- 15  
Thomas Burnett Swann-- 17  
Larry Mason-- 18

PHILIP K. DICK & THE UMBRELLA OF LIGHT \* 13  
OMNIVORE - 13  
DEATH AND THE SPIDER - 15  
THE BEST OF HENRY KUTTNER - 15  
THE MIND PARASITES - 16  
BEFORE THE GOLDEN AGE- 18

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NOTE: The two privately-printed volumes reviewed herein and listed as being available from T-K Graphics may be ordered at the following address: T-K GRAPHICS, PO Box 1951, Baltimore Md 21203. The Darkover volume is \$1.50; the Dick study is \$2.25

#### art credits

Wade Gilbreath - pp. 4, 7, 14  
Cliff Biggers - cover, p. 9

All uncredited material is written by Cliff or Susan Biggers--if you wish to reprint any reviews or segments of reviews, write us and work out the details--it's very easily done.

FUTURE RETROSPECTIVE #3 will be mailed May 1st, 1975--approximately. Allow us a few days for unexpected delays before you mail letter-bombs, used cat-litter or any vile threats.

OUTSIDE MATERIAL (in other words, anything written by someone who doesn't live here) is welcome; we cannot guarantee that we'll use everything you send us, but we would like to get a few more reviewers--mainly to add a new viewpoint to things. If you feel like sending in a review or three, go ahead; or write us about specific details if you have something in mind.



## PERSPECTIVES IN RETROSPECT

I'll not even use this space to inform you that the second issue of FUTURE RETROSPECTIVES is later than we'd originally said it would be; if you got the first issue you know that--and if you didn't, it doesn't matter to you really. I will, first off, let everyone know that there was purpose in the lateness; we needed to shift the schedule of FR somewhat, since it was coinciding with too many future activities on the old schedule (I'm horrible about failing to check my calendar when I commit myself to something). Anyway, the new schedule has been set now, and this issue of FR marks it; from here on out, there should be no problem.

Speaking of that first issue; response seems to be very nice, we're glad to say; whether you agreed or disagreed, you wrote. It helps a lot, it really does; and we have enough of our mail scattered throughout these pages to let you know what people had to say.

Another point comes to mind; we owe Dick Geis some inspirational thanks for the basic format of this issue of FR. Rather than lump all the letters in one section, we've intermingled them with the reviews to add variety. I doubt that the format is original with Dick, but that's where it impressed us the most, so we're acknowledging it now.

We're both getting more and more into the production of FR; whereas two years ago I would have begun an apazine if I felt like I should be typing on something, we both find ourselves nowadays stencilling a page or two of the next FR. It's a lot different, really, and we find little problems cropping up here that would have never existed with apazine publishing. The reason I mention it is that a number of LoJcers commented that our fanzine read almost exactly like our apazines. Not knowing how to take that, we'll assume it was complimentary. I really hope so, because it's the way I feel comfortable writing.

\*sigh\* The year of the 95¢ paperback is fading quickly. I just picked up a few Ballantine releases for February and March--\$1.50 each. Of course, the ones I bought were worth \$1.50 to me (naturally--otherwise I wouldn't have bought them), but it makes me wince, nonetheless. The new Ballantine line-up looks impressive, though, and it's awfully hard to resist some of the titles they're putting out. I did manage to resist STAR TREK: LOG FOUR by Alan Dean Foster--even at \$1.25 it was overpriced--so that helps somewhat, as does the fact that I have most of the reprinted titles. Still, we're shelling out an increasingly sizeable portion of our income on SF. Then again, I guess we'd do that no matter what the individual books cost. I do remember, though, that I bought a few Berkley titles a week or so ago not because I particularly liked the books, but because I couldn't pass up a 95¢ bargain. Ten years from now I'll probably be buying \$1.50 books for the same reason--and I'll still be griping about it, I guess.

Some idiot remarked last issue that upcoming FRs would be featuring fifty reviews per issue; since a lot of people couldn't figure out how we could read fifty novels every six weeks, let me expound on that. Those fifty reviews per issue were meant to include books, comics, magazines--everything. Even so, fifty may be a bit ambitious--also, it might be a bit tedious for you readers. With LoCs coming in, perhaps we should give a more conservative estimate on that (so as to save some space); but what would you rather see? It's also been suggested that we expand the contents of FR to include critical articles and a column or two as well as the Biggersstuff; once again, what do you prefer we do?

W This is beginning to look like a game of twenty questions; well, at least you have something to write about now. Before I digress again, though, let's get on to some reviews and such.



# BOOKS 'N LETTERS



THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE. Barry Malzberg  
(Pocket Books 77696--95¢)

Barry Malzberg was an acquired taste for me. I began reading his K.M. O'Donnell writings concerning cons and collectors; ever-so-gradually I began reading the shorter works. Finally, I plunged into his novels after some particularly dull Victorian prose had left me feeling drained. I liked what I read; I'll never know if it was the contrast that impressed me or merely the quality of the work, but I never pass up a Malzberg book now.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE impressed me much more than some of his other recent writings; I felt, for instance, that he had limited himself thematically with TACTICS OF CONQUEST and BEYOND APOLLO, working too much within an accepted format. The plot of DESTRUCTION is much more suited to the Malzberg style; it concerns a Director who hopes to re-enact the assassination of Kennedy by using the primitive citizens of a decaying city. The Director, who sets out to be the manipulator, is made the victim of various manipulations (both physical and mental), and Malzberg carries us through the levels of his mind as the entire Scheme begins to collapse. The interesting thing about what Malzberg does is that he never delves below the conscious level for more than a brief instant--yet by riding the crest of the subconscious, he sweeps the reader along just as he does the protagonist. The Malzbergian approach, unfortunately, lends itself to verbosity and a multitude of purposeless digressions; Barry falls into that trap from time to time, stretching trivial segments out unnecessarily. But the characterization supercedes the plot here, so Malzberg has free rein to let the verbosity run where it may (which is fine for increasing page-count as well).

I enjoyed DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE;; it showed a great deal of insight and and it handled the perverted-creation idea it developed quite admirably. I couldn't make a steady diet of it, though; so while I recommend this book quite highly, I have my qualms about recommending everything he writes. A good thing can be carried too far, and Malzberg seems to be heading in that direction with the similarity of his approaches in all of his novels.

THE NOT-WORLD. Thomas Burnett Swann. (DAW 071156--\$1.25)

For some reason, I'd never considered 18th-century England as a proper setting for a fantasy novel. It's an era too close to home, I guess, a time too enmeshed with the ending of the Enlightenment and the growth of Romanticism to offer anything worthwhile as a fantasy-time. Thomas Burnett Swann obviously didn't agree, because he set his NOT-WORLD in this era; the result is a fantasy novel that, against my sensibilities, I have to enjoy.

The book revolves around Dierdre, a writer of Gothic romances who's never known life, and Dylan, the sailor who falls in love with her--and Thomas Chatterton, who called them into the Not-World, where Dylan's past romance still lived--and had no intentions of giving him up. The book use magic and the supernatural quite



sparingly, waiting for the proper moment. The book possesses that air of eerie unreality that permeates all of Thomas Burnett Swann's writings, and the reader is drawn into the Not-World along with Dierdre and Dylan.

Swann's use of language is just as strong here as it has been in all his other works--his writing is restrained, allowing the force of the events to impress the reader. Unfortunately, the garish cover lacks Swann's restraint; George Barr seems to have a monster-and-lady hang-up in his covers for Swann books. At any rate, the misleading cover contains a very interesting novel; while I feel the limitations of the setting and the era make this a weaker novel than HOW ARE THE MIGHTY FALLEN, I still recommend this novel to the fantasy fan who can recognize very good writing; if Lin Carter hasn't killed his taste for good fiction forever.

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1/26/75  
FIERS ANTHONY WRITES: "It is my policy to LoC only those fanzines with which I established relations some years ago, edited by people like Bowers, Geis, Joanne Burger, Frank Lunney and a couple of others. This is because I am not a fan, and dislike many of the fannish affectations, and because there are a considerable number of fans who would like me to repeat that one more time in their fanzines. The thing is, I generally say it in such a way as to initiate another controversy, and that is good for fanzine circulation...

"However, you have several things of interest to me. I don't mean your favorable reviews of my books; in general (not always) someone who likes me or wants something from me will run a favorable review, and someone else will run an unfavorable review. This translates into Hugo votes too; I was warned long ago that I had better stop antagonizing fans if I wanted my books to get anywhere, since so many vote on personality rather than on the merits of the books. I have seen remarks in fanzines by fans who said they would not vote for my work, and would not even read it; MACROSCOPE was named in that connection. All of which does not incline me to change my ways; rather, it makes me value the Hugo less, and it is quite possible I would decline it were that award proffered. The Nebula is worse yet. When I see solid evidence that the quality of writing is the decisive factor, rather than an author's catering to fans or past reputation or office in SFWA or ability to pick up magazine serialization, etc, then I will value the awards more. And on that basis--quality alone--I have serious reservations about my own novel Rings of Ice.

"Let me tell you something about that novel. I did a prodigious amount of research for MACROSCOPE, back when I was writing it in 1968, so that the novel took me a year, when normally I turn out four novels a year. (Of course my little girl was born in late 1967, so that halved my working efficiency and slowed the novel too.) One thing I wanted to do was construct a three dimensional model of the near region of our galaxy, so that I could plot out exactly where our heroes were traveling. Most writers say 'The ship traveled to Antares...' and that's it; no word about how the ship functioned, or the geography of space. But I had trouble getting the information I needed to make my model. The average popular reference tells you about the red giant Betelgeuse ("beetlejuice") and Alpha Centuri (correctly, Toliman), but comes nowhere close to a definitive geography of space. I needed, for a start, a good star chart and a table of stellar distances. I happened to see a reference to a local astronomy instructor, so I wrote to him. He sent me some literature...and I sent off for some interesting books on the "Canopy" theory. Unfortunately, by that time MACROSCOPE



was finished; I had discovered that the information I wanted simply didn't exist, as apparently no one has bothered to catalogue all the local stars by distance. So it was a line of research that copped out. But I didn't like wasting it. The stellar information I have gradually added to, so that now I do have some notion of the geography of local space--enough to describe the stars within a hundred light years or so of Sol, anyway--and that will be used for CLUSTER, which is a whole nother story, if I can sell the project. It's bigger than MACROSCOPE, so don't hold your breath; publishers balk at size.

"Meanwhile, the canopy information turned out to be an old, not a new theory by a man named Vail. I wrote to the publisher to see whether it would be alright to adapt this to fiction, and he agreed... The idea of a modern-day canopy and a system of Saturn-like rings of ice about Earth intrigued me. But I had no plot, no cast of characters. So I invoked the most ready source; I simply had the rains start falling, and traced a typical family's ordeal... I drafted it up in chapter and summary format and sent it to my agent. He showed the presentation to AVON, whose editor turned out to be a former fan with whom I had quarreled in passing in a fanzine. He--no, now don't anticipate me!--he liked the notion. But he didn't like the cast of characters, which were entirely too ordinary. 'How about putting really unusual people in this unusual situation?' he suggested. So I dug into my stray files of notions and came up with an oddball bunch who had not found fictional homes of their own yet...Whether such an infusion of characters into my canopy notion would work I didn't know; it could turn out to be a messy hodgepodge. But the editor liked it, and he bought it, and the result was RINGS OF ICE.

"I hate to say that in this case I think the editor had better perspective than I did, and that the book he envisioned turned out better than the one I had presented the first time... So whether RINGS OF ICE is of Hugo caliber I can't say; I tend to think that no disaster novel rates the award. But if it is, it is because of the editing it received from Charles Platt..."

"So now you know the truth about RINGS OF ICE, make of it what you will. I doubt that others will like it as you have--I have already seen one review saying the characters turned off the reader. Time will tell.

"...I must wrap this up. It is not only that I am talking too much for your Biggers and Betters fanzine, it is that I have a novel, PTHOR to finish. So more briefly; you say you doubt that anyone cares who wrote the individual reviews. Yes, I care. When a male does a female-protagonist novel that touches on sex, it makes a big difference whether the reviewer is male or female..."

"As for the martial arts novels--an article on these collaborations will appear in due course in an issue of THE DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU... My collaborator is also collaborating with another person you mention, Steranko, and it is possible there will be a Jason Striker comics spinoff..."

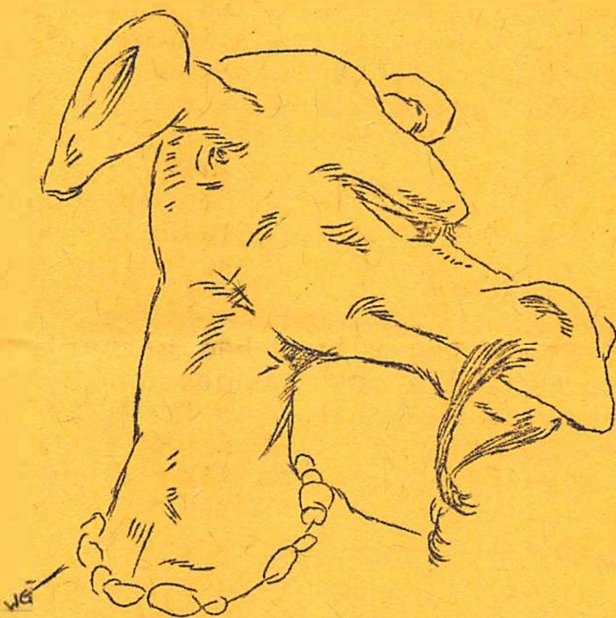
(2-8-75) "...Glad to hear it was Susan who reviewed RINGS OF ICE. I, like Cliff, had no objection to the portrayals (of females) in RITE OF PASSAGE and PODKAYNE OF MARS; in fact I thought they both deserved to be award contenders (Not winners, just contenders...) I am curious what my presentation had the others didn't--but if it is this matter of the "Heinlein female" I just have to say I have always admired that type. I guess my female is more true to life, but the other type would be much more fun to be with..."



(C&S Comment: You're not the first to remark that they had reservations about giving any disaster novel a Hugo nomination; I guess the fact that I enjoy that particular type of fiction, as does Susan, is the reason two of the nominees we mentioned were "disaster"-types. Our suggestion that the book should get a Hugo nomination was seriously made, though, and both of us still support that.

I, too, have noted a tendency among some fan to vote for or against the author without ever having read the book in question (in Hugo voting, that is--thought I'd better qualify my statement). One acquaintance was 100% sure which novel should get the 1974 Hugo, even though he had read only two of the nominees, because he disliked the other authors. Until that changes, I guess quite a few pros and fans aren't going to rely on the Hugos (or Nebulas) as an accurate register of good fiction!

And yes, it was Susan who reviewed RINGS OF ICE--I typed up the Hugo-choice page. Which brings up a sideline point; would anyone else rather we initial our reviews with "c" or "s", to tell you who reviewed what? We didn't think it would matter, but Piers has a valid point about the difference in the male and female viewpoint.)



Brian Perry (2/3/75) "You know, 34 Lake Ave. this is my first ever Binghamton, NY LoC. I always wondered what would get me to finally take the plunge. I always mean to write LoCs to the zines I get, but never seem to get around to it. But I can't turn down the request of a friend now can I? So you have the honor of LoC #1.

I'll start with the whole, and then get to the nit-picking. I was very pleased with the zine as a whole. Layout is a matter of personal taste, but the only things I didn't care for were the contents page and too few spot illos. I think I would have added 3-4 more illos. I don't know what I would have done with the contents page, tho, since there aren't too many ways to organize a review zine... Use your own art for the cover, occasionally (or usually,

even). It's certainly good enough.

"I can't see what you all see in offutt's ANALOG story. It's a decent enough story, but certainly not Hugo quality. I don't even remember the storyline anymore. It didn't exactly overwhelm the readers either, placing third I believe. It seems that there are a few people supporting a "make andy offutt a great writer" movement down there, which is too bad, because he is a damn good writer, but not a great one yet. Give him a chance.

"The biggest nit tho is your choice of novels for the Hugo. Let me quote you - "HOW ARE THE MIGHTY FALLEN is one of the best novels I've read, in any field." So howcum it's not one of your 4 choices for the Hugo? I certainly will nominate it, because I agree with you that it's a very fine book. You seem to be eliminating it because it "isn't the kind of book that wins award," i.e., Fantasy. Well, it deserves to win some awards and to do so people are going to have to nominate it even if they don't think it will win. Don't vote for those you think are the kind that will win, vote for the best. End of sermon.



"Incidentally, it's too bad WATERSHIP DOWN isn't eligible this year. I just finished it and it's fantastic. If you haven't read it yet, do so at once."

(Cliff Comments: The spot illo situation is being remedied, slowly but surely, with the welcome addition of Wade Gilbreath's art to FR. Between Wade & myself, maybe we can fill up enough space to eliminate the cluttered look. And, hopefully, someone else will send in some art soon--we're working on a few hopefuls.

It's odd you should accuse us of trying to give offutt an undue Hugo (hope I'm not taking you out of context there); we're most definitely not offutt-bibliophiles, although there are a few local fen who are. andy is good, I'll agree; but I happen to think "Gone With the Gods" is an excellent novelette, deserving of the award. In retrospect, I can see why you may accuse me of unfairly supporting andy, since I once reviewed THE CASTLE KEEPS very highly; truth be told, though, I'm not a general offutt-fan--his porno is useless to me, and I no longer bother to buy any of it--but his SF is good. I was impressed with GWTG. I hope others are, because it deserves recognition, I think.

And lastly, I am supporting Swann for a GANDALF award. That's the problem, tho; I think of the Hugo should recognize SF work, not fantasy, and as such I tend to choose SF works. I'd like to see a separate award for fantasy novels--I think it's very, very unfair to make the two genres compete. At any rate, A GANDALF FOR THOMAS BURNETT SWANN. Ahem.

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ICE AND IRON. Wilson Tucker. (Doubleday)\*

\*available from SFBC

Ah, yes, the latest by Wilson Tucker, the Master of the Unsatisfactory Ending. As he did in THE TIME MASTERS, so has he done again in ICE AND IRON--written a very intriguing book right up until the end--an end which leaves you hanging, feeling that there's just got to be more, but there isn't. This is a very irritating habit of Tucker's; and what's more irritating is that he's writing a whole new ending for the paperback version of ICE AND IRON--just as he did with THE TIME MASTERS. Which means that after paying the cost of the book plus shipping and handling, I'm still not going to have the same story that's coming out in paperback form a few months hence. A nice way to make money, but not a trait that endears an author to members of the SF Book Club.

ICE AND IRON, as I said, is an extremely interesting book; the premise involves a new ice age in which glaciers cover Canada and the northern United States. As one city after another is abandoned because of the encroaching ice, strange things begin to fall out of the sky: mud bricks, strange polygon-shaped weapons, and human bodies--eighteen to be exact, one of which is still alive. Our three main characters--Highsmith, a scientist; Harley, a medical doctor; and Jeanmarie, a polylibrarian--are stationed at one of the bases on the fringe of the glacier, awaiting the fall of the seventeenth body. Interesting relations are drawn between these three and not a few comical situations occur. Suspense is kept up well thanks to Tucker's technique of alternating between chapters of the real and present world of ice and the unknown future world from where the bodies and other objects are coming. It is postulated early in the novel by Harley and apparently silently accepted by the author that this future world is the site of a battle and falling bodies are casualties. We also have a little relevance to the times thrown in, in that the enemy and possessors of the polygon-shaped weapons are women and the victims are men.

And that, dear readers, is that. After reading the dust jacket introduction you will know almost as much as when you finish the book--assuming you're unfortunate enough to have already purchased the hardcover edition. The first 181 pages of ICE AND IRON have all the makings of a great novel--characterization, suspense, an interesting theme--but where, kind Tucker, is the rest of the book? Where is our resolution? In the paperback version, that's where. You'll enjoy ICE AND IRON, for it's a very good book--just make sure you buy the rewritten paperback version; and let me know how it ended, okay?



THE HOLLOW LANDS. Michael Moorcock. (Harper & Row)

\*available from SFBC

This is the second volume of Moorcock's "Dancers at the End of Time" trilogy, and perhaps the most descriptive thing that can be said about it is that it reads exactly like the first volume, AN ALIEN HEAT. Unfortunately, this tells the reader who missed the first volume absolutely nothing, so a bit more detail is needed.

Both volumes in this series are wry, sardonic pieces that reflect strongly the decadent society at the end of time that Moorcock has created. Jherek Carnelian is the protagonist--in this volume, he journeys back into the 1890s once again to reclaim his true love, Mrs. Underwood, who presumes Jherek dead and has settled into ordinary life with her husband once again. Moorcock's black humor is more pronounced in this volume than in the first book, and the naivete of Jherek in this strange, ancient land makes for a number of amusing instances. Particularly noteworthy is the conversation between Jherek and H.G. Wells--Jherek assumes that Wells' Time Machine is a very real device, and the ensuing conversation is easy to imagine.

If you like black humor, don't pass this series up; if, however, you prefer your SF straight, you'll be disappointed and irritated by both this volume and AN ALIEN HEAT. For serious SF, it's quite pointless; for light, amusing reading, it's an excellent way to pass a lazy afternoon.

IMAGINATIVE SEX. John Norman. (DAW UJ1146--\$1.95)

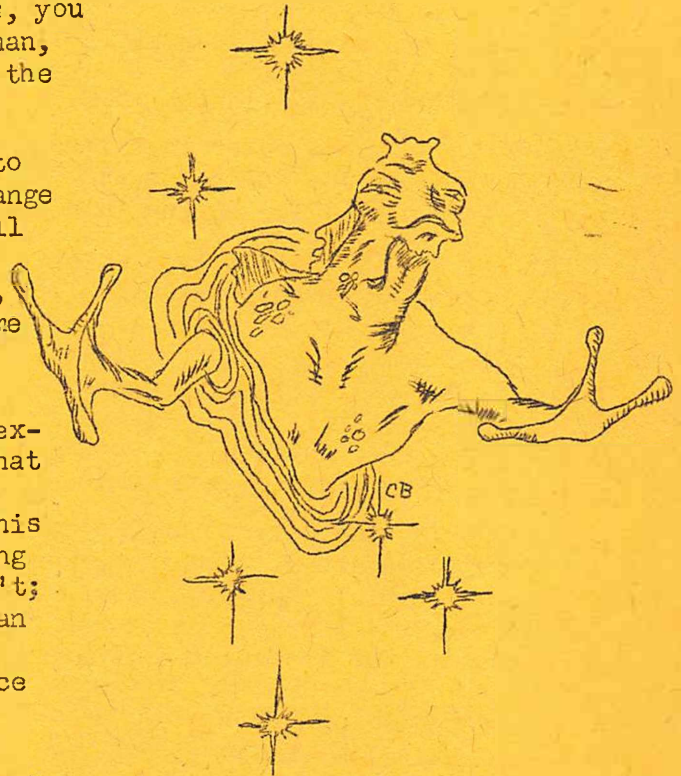
John Norman (or John Lange) has one claim to fame: the Gor series he began at Ballantine and has since carried to DAW. Anyone reading any one of the Gor books has a very good idea of the type of writing Norman does; very sexual, very much into bondage and female-slavery, and full of that "machismo" that you suspect writers create just to see how many people actually go along with it. In the Gor books, there's a Burroughsian-flavored science-fantasy element running through the books, making it approximately science fiction.

If you remove the strands of science-fantasy and present the remaining sex in brief scenarios, you have IMAGINATIVE SEX. The book is John Norman, presenting his sexual bullshit without even the benefit of crude fiction to mask it.

I still don't know whether I'm supposed to laugh at it or actually believe that John Lange means all this. He seems to assume that all women desire to be slaves; he presumes that virtually everyone enjoys bondage; in short, he tries to pass off this quasi-porno as some Definitive Truth.

I'm disgusted. Not by the book itself, mind you; I've no qualms with any sort of sexual writings, whether I agree with them. What disgusts me is that Don Wollheim would have the audacity to put his "DAW=sf" label on this book and thereby misrepresent it as something related to science fiction. Because it isn't; that's all there is to it. John Lange/Norman is merely a writer with a few sexual quirks that he's managing to turn into a nice source of cash--and unfortunately, he's not even a good writer.

For \$1.95, I think you'd enjoy a porno book much more than this one, if it's sex writing you want. Pass it up, by all means.





ANDRE NORTON: "I was very pleased to receive the copy of FUTURE RETRO-  
(2-2-75) SPECTIVE in which you so kindly reviewed the Time Agent  
series. These books have been, of course, in circula-  
tion for some time. But this is the first occasion, I believe, on which  
they were ever considered and commented upon as part of a single unit--  
so the review is especially noteworthy as far as I am concerned.

"Oddly enough I still get letters from readers asking me to reopen  
the series and 'tell what happened next.' However, there is one tempta-  
tion for any writer to avoid, and that is to prolong a series past a  
certain point. If one does that the results are often fatal as one be-  
gins to repeat oneself. So I have to explain that Travis Fox will re-  
main lost in space, and Murdock and Ashe in time. The Apaches and the  
the Tartars will eventually combine, and Ashe is going to marry one of  
the Foanna. Ross Murdock will go with the sea people and eventually  
rise to a commandership among them. But that series of future events  
I believe, will never be chronicled.

"Anyway, thank you very much for the chance to see your reviews and  
the rest of your fanzine--I found them all very interesting indeed."

(Susan Comments: One point that aroused my curiosity--was the similarity between the  
Foanna and the inhabitants of the Witch World intentional, or was  
it an unconscious resemblance?

From the sound of it, the Time Agents series has one more novel in it, to take  
care of the plot-lines you discuss. While the desire to avoid stretching a series  
too far is laudable, it seems that a fifth novel would complete the series, and  
probably make it seem more cohesive to the reader who comes to your series for the  
first time. Also, I'm sure there's the desire not to be tied down with the same premi-  
and the same cast for too long--that would certainly play a large part in your not  
picking up the series with a fifth novel.)

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AT THE NARROW PASSAGE. Richard C. Meredith. (Berkley N2730--95¢)

A Richard Powers cover that impressed me was the first reason I bought this book;  
a 95¢ price tag for 250 pages was the second. Somewhere in there, I overlooked the  
best reason of all for buying this one; it's a very, very good piece of fiction.

AT THE NARROW PASSAGE is a novel of alternate time-lines; Eric Mathers is a mer-  
cenary fighting in one of these alternate lines, working for the alien Kriths. Accord-  
ing to the Kriths, they are interfering in various time-lines to prevent a disaster  
that could radically alter civilization in all the time-lines. Mathers is a good  
soldier, a loyal mercenary; until he is captured by an enemy movement, that is. Then  
he begins to realize that, behind the illusion of Krith altruism, there is something  
else. From here on out, the book details Mathers' struggle to determine the truth--  
and what he must do to save human civilization no matter which side is correct.

As I said, the only thing I didn't consider when I bought this book was the good  
fiction it contained. Now then, you know better, and I'd recommend you buy it as  
soon as possible. Meredith writes clean, moving fiction and relies on a strong plot-  
line to carry the reader on to the climax. The ending is weak--but perhaps that was  
intentional, for it leaves a fine opening for a sequel.

ORBIT THIRTEEN. Damon Knight (Putnam's--\$5.95)

At one time--probably around the time of Orbit 7--Damon Knight's original anthology  
series was the best being published, surpassing even John Carnell's NEW WRITINGS IN  
SF. That time has passed, though; ORBIT 13 marks the great deterioration that the  
FUTURE RETROSPECTIVE #2



series has undergone in the past two or three years. Knight's editorial reins are getting looser and looser, and the fiction is very crudely done. Of the twenty stories in this volume, I'd only recommend two: Charles Arnold's "Spring Came to Blue Ridge Early This Year" and Gardner Dozois' "Flash Point." The remainder of the book needs a guiding hand--these stories could have been good, many of them, with rewriting and a firm sense of direction. Knight needs to use the rejection slip a bit more; maybe in five years, some of these writers will be genuinely good (Kate Wilhelm and RALafferty have no such excuse--Wilhelm's story is overwritten and under-plotted, and Lafferty's story is simply Lafferty, which I don't like).

I still recommend the early ORBITs wholeheartedly--but from ORBIT 11 on, there's little hope for the series.

PROSTHO PLUS. Piers Anthony (Berkley 425-02137-075 -- 75¢)

Having been so taken by Anthony's RINGS OF ICE, I decided to read another Anthony novel and see if he could do it every time. While not as gripping a story as RINGS, PROSTHO PLUS is every bit as good a novel in a different sort of way. The novel was originally a series of short stories appearing mainly in various SF magazines; not knowing how much of them has been rewritten to form a book, I can't really say how good they were to begin with. I can say that they hang together remarkably well, and I would never have known they were individual stories if I hadn't been told so. I might have said the book seemed a little choppy, and wondered why, but knowing what I know now...

PROSTHO PLUS is about the adventures of Dr. Dillingham, a rather mundane prostodontist who is kidnapped by aliens after they come to him to fix a toothache. Dr. Dillingham gets to travel across the universe repairing cavities on various alien mouths and usually getting into trouble in the process. PROSTHO PLUS is also a very humorous novel; parts of it made me chortle aloud, and a book has to be funny to have that effect on me. Piers Anthony put a lot of imagination into this novel; it's apparent in all the assorted types of dental problems he created for Dillingham to solve. For example, aliens who do not speak, but use their teeth to print complicated cuneiform-like messages on sticks; and aliens whose teeth act as radio receivers and transmitters, not to mention an alien the size of a whale whose cavity required a few tons of gold to fill. Also apparent is the amount of research that must have gone into PROSTHO PLUS (unless Piers Anthony is a frustrated dental student); the book impresses the reader that the author knew his subject as well as possible before sitting down at the typewriter.

If you're in the mood for some light entertainment, give PROSTHO PLUS a try. But be warned, there's food for thought in this book, also. And be sure to brush your teeth after each chapter.

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

(1-27-75) "FUTURE RETROSPECTIVE #1 was a pleasant surprise in the mailbox, arriving, as a matter of fact, the same day Geis finally got me TAC's #10 & 11...

"I do enjoy reading reviews, & sat down & read FUTURE RETROSPECTIVE the day it arrived--even before starting the TACs--gee!

"The relatively short reviews of a large number of books make for a potentially useful motivational guide towards sf buying. There isn't a heck of a lot response-wise, I can say, having read only two of the books you reviewed. Norton's KEY OUT OF TIME I read several years ago, and recall enjoying. And I read anything by Thomas Burnett Swann almost immediately after it comes out, Swann being in my opinion the best living fantasy author. I considered HOW ARE THE MIGHTY FALLEN to be good



Swann but not great Swann, like THE FOREST OF FOREVER and GREEN PHOENIX.

"Other than those, I picked up the Spider books only a couple days ago--debating whether I should blow my two bucks on this kind of junk or not...I am very put off by this "Spider nodded," "Spider was recognized..." subject useage bit. I am pretty certain the originals probably said "Wentworthnnodded," etc. When you mentioned 'updated/rewritten' I said to myself 'oh.' If I had known absolutely beforehand that they had been tampered with, I'd probably have left them on the stands. For me old pulp junk has to keep its period flavor to be bearable. Start tampering with it and you remove it's appeal.

"Looking over your review list, sure enough, those are the books I've been seeing on the stands for the past months. I decided to look at my reading list: mostly 50's pulps and digest, recent Howard releases, A Dunsany, a Burroughs, a Haggard, a Hubbard. Guess I'm getting old, for I'm going back to the stuff that mildly precedes my own personal Golden Age of sf (57 to 64). Get around to reviewing the Brackett Stark books and the BEST OF PLANET STORIES #1 next time, huh?

"I raised my eyebrows when I read your statement about Steranko's prime talent being story-telling rather than 'great art.' It's been a goodly while since I read 'em, but I remember thinking: impressive art & so-so scripts... "

(Cliff comments: Sorry, but we didn't even buy the Planet Stories volume; sounds like your idea of great SF doesn't quite mesh with ours.

About Steranko: I made a typographical omission. That should have read "visual storytelling;" what I meant was that Steranko's art relies on multiple panels to give that flowing feeling of motion. You're right, the scripts in SHIELD were very mediocre for the most part.)

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THE FEMALE MAN. Joanna Russ. (Bantam 08765 -- \$1.25)

Joanna Russ' latest novel is a driving look at women, both the women of our world and the aggressive, independent women of various alternate realities created within the 214 pages of the novel. Joanna Russ writes the book with strength, tearing through stereotypes and knocking over all those pedestals women have been put on for far too long.

There's very little that can be said about the book; the fiction is well-written, albeit a little confusing in some character-shifts. Joanna Russ pulls no punches; her language is as forceful and direct as her Feminist theme, and she brings the point home so well that I suspect this book will become the literary bludgeon that drives anti-feminists back into their hovels.

It's good; buy it and read it--then be sure to think about it.

THE GEMINI PROBLEM: A STUDY IN DARKOVER. Walter Breen. (T-K Graphics priv. prtg.)

Marion Zimmer Bradley's Darkover novels are one of the two most engrossing SF series currently written (yes, I'll tell you; E.C. Tubb's "Dumarest" is the other). Breen's privately-published booklet is a study of the Darkover books, tracing various themes and developments throughout the series. Breen is very incisive on the chronology of Darkover, some of the major themes, etc., but the booklet, overall, is very weak. The copious references to editions & page numbers that should have been there aren't; and 36 pages is far too small a size to devote the proper attention to the subject. Breen gets too heavily into symbolism too quickly, and fails to offer



objective summaries, descriptions and histories that would enhance the study. This is an interesting study, but very disappointing when one considers what it could have been; Breen should consider expanding it immensely and having it reissued.

SCIENCE FICTION EMPHASIS #1. Ed. David Gerrold (Ballantine 23962 -- \$1.25)

SF EMPHASIS is an anthology that devotes itself to publishing outstanding fiction by outstanding new authors in the field--not necessarily first-sale authors, but new authors. I prejudged the book when it came out and passed it up, figuring it would be a miasma of plotless vignettes (okay, so I underestimated Gerrold as an editor--everyone makes a few mistakes).

I bought the anthology for Michael Bishop's "On the Street of the Serpents," which Mike recommended highly. I agree; "Serpents" presents not only an intriguing SF story of brain-transference and political assassination, but it gives us a piercing look into the persona, Mike Bishop. The style is very, very firm and direct throughout the story; very rarely does Bishop slip into over-description, and the impressionistic use of color throughout the story is a false accent, putting the reader's emphasis on the visual. "Serpents" is a story of the mind, the change of a peaceful man into a killer for reasons he can't communicate totally; it lets us into Mike Bishop, as a character and a writer. I'd like to find out how Jamie, Mike's son, reacts to this story when he reads it, someday in the future. Personally, I don't consider it his best, but it's mighty good--maybe Hugo-nominee good, but that's for you to judge.

The Bishop story makes up a third of the 211 page volume--the remainder of the fiction, while shorter, is very impressive. Joe Pumilia's "Willowisp" is a ghost story with a difference; "Telepathos" by Ronald Cain impressed me with its force. I'd rate this anthology very highly, particularly considering that the authors are new to the field--don't pass it up if you can help it.

PHILIP K. DICK & THE UMBRELLA OF LIGHT. Angus Taylor (T-K Graphics)

This slim book is a critical analysis of Dick; the style is Heavy Scholarly, one I don't particularly care for, but the subject makes it worthwhile to wade through Taylor's muddy, awkward prose. Rather than dispute individual findings and opinions that Taylor presents, I'll recommend that you buy the volume and dispute them yourself. I will criticize this book for the same thing I criticized the Darkover study from T-K Graphics; it fails to offer objective facts, printing histories, etc., and puts the entire emphasis on analyses. Also, it footnotes chapters, rather than footnoting particular editions of Dick's work--and this is bad, because it makes it very difficult to research quotes, references, etc. I'd rather footnote an edition I don't have--at least I have an approx. idea--than have not-totally-useful chapter references. This volume is supposedly the first of a series of SF Author Studies; I hope the future writers can get off their scholarly soapbox and write more clearly and directly--if the unwieldy prose was meant to impress, it failed.

OMNIVORE. Piers Anthony (Ballantine) \*may still be available from SF Book Club

The one lingering impression I get upon completion of a Piers Anthony novel is how well he has researched his subject. This holds true for the three previous Anthony novels I've read and OMNIVORE is no exception to the rule. In this novel a three-member exploration team is sent to Nacre, a world of mushrooms and various other fungi. Through detailed descriptions early in the book and a later conversation with two of the characters, Anthony reveals what a great amount of research and study went into the background planning of OMNIVORE.

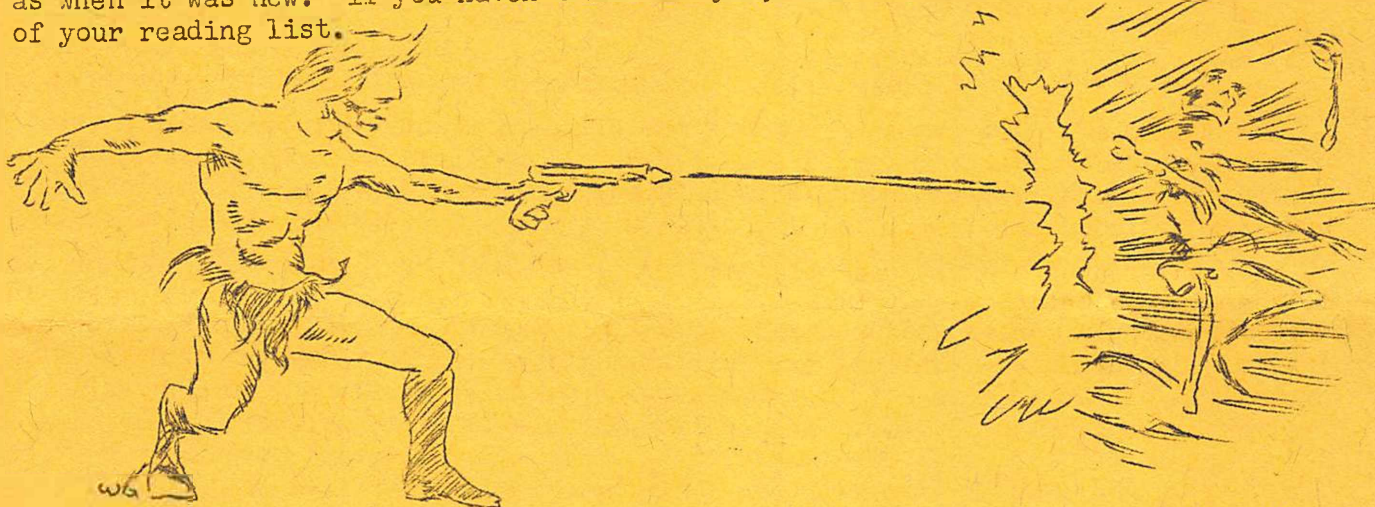
One could also say that Piers Anthony is one of the masters of the improbable character. As in RINGS OF ICE we also have in OMNIVORE three highly atypical characters; Veg, the all-brawn and not-too-much-brains member of the team who is also a vegetarian--hence the nickname; Aquilon, the beautiful female member who eats anything; and Cal, the brains of the team who is a carnivore. All three have their



quirks and I hesitate to relate them here, because it would spoil one of the most suspenseful parts of the novel wherein each one relates his past history. Which brings us to one of the most tantalizing characters in the story--Subble, a government super-agent. Subble, who has been intensively trained in various martial and mental skills, has been sent by the government to investigate what actually happened on Nacre. The method in which each member of the exploration team tells his story to Subble, who pieces the tales together, is not new by any means, but in the hands of Piers Anthony it more than suffices to catch and hold the reader's interest.

And let us not forget the alien inhabitants of Nacre, the mantas, which may well prove to be the most interesting characters of all to some, although personally I prefer the interplay of the human relations in this particular novel. The mantas are fungoid, mushroom-shaped creatures who move by slamming their one big foot against the ground with enough force to propel them in huge jumps. They are intelligent in their own alien way and communicate via light impulses emitted from their one large eye. The mantas play a larger part in the plot as the book nears its end when communication is partly established with them by Subble.

Although this book is rather old--copyright 1968--it is just as entertaining now as when it was new. If you haven't read it yet, make a point to put it near the top of your reading list.



NOTE FROM MICHAEL BISHOP: (1-14-75)"...Disch published a novel this year--334. It's probably ineligible for a Hugo because of previous publication in England--but it is nevertheless the novel of the year, the sort of thing Delany seems to be trying to do but can't quite bring off. It's out from Aven for \$1.65. Please find 334 and read it; you've probably encountered parts of it in the mag magazines and anthologies, but it's cumulative impact is considerable..."

(Susan comments: Aaagh. Yes indeed, 334 deserves a Hugo nomination, if not the award. In fact, we had said that very thing back at the first of the year, in one of our apazines; but as time passed, we forgot about it, assuming the book was published last year or somesuch. Thanks for reminding us--that's the fifth novel on our nomination ballot.)

Sue Phillips (3-8-75) "...I have it from a reliable source that 936 Packard Ave. Brian Perry disagrees with your choice of "Gone Louisville, KY 40217 With the Gods" for a Hugo nomination. He's also inclined to view offutt as a second rate author.

Brian, I should think that talent such as his is recognizeable even if the name isn't as big as Asimov or has been around as long as that venerable. When he does sf, andy has as much or more ability as any of the more recognized names. I do think that he should spend a little less time writing porno and more on sf...



"Somewhere in this zine is a reference to Barry Malzberg as being good. How can you?! Malzberg rambles. His books are conglomerates of unrelated material that someone tries to stick together and the result is something I doubt even he understands. I realize that I have only read three Malzberg books and therefore my opinion may not hold as much clout as that of someone who is more familiar with his work...

"I have already seen why you are impressed with RINGS OF ICE. It surprised me in being so good. It is one of the better novels pubbed in 1974 but isn't, I think, worth a Hugo. I have never been much impressed with Piers Anthony as a writer until recently. This and the DAW book TRIPLE DETENTE indicate that he's improving...

"I'll close by saying good luck with this; I like reading reviews because you can get some really good arguments going."

(Cliff comments: I think you've made a valid point anent Malzberg, although perhaps you're a bit too harsh. I wouldn't go so far as to call them "conglomerates of unrelated material," but I can agree with the fact that they tend to ramble--even as a Malzberg fan I can see that. You mention porno--Malzberg's CONFESSIONS OF WESTCHESTER COUNTY is very well-written (although in first person present tense) with a great deal of psychological insight--if you find it, buy it.)

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DEATH AND THE SPIDER. (Spider #4) Grant Stockbridge (Pocket Books 77953 -- 95¢)

I'm impressed. I'd heard that some of the Spider adventures were quite a notch above the typical pulp-writing of the period, but I never expected this. DEATH AND THE SPIDER is a metaphysical piece that pits the Spider against Death incarnate--the entire novel possesses a subdued unreality that the author subtly reinforces.

Pulp adventures are nice reading when you want something light--they're fine books to keep in the bathroom--but this one is definitely a cut above that level. For the newcomer to pulp heroes and/or the Spider, I recommend this one--in fact, I recommend the four Spider reissues (along with the old Berkley reprints, now out of print) to anyone who enjoys reading action-adventure. Even those of you who dislike pulp writing might be surprised by DEATH AND THE SPIDER.

THE BEST OF HENRY KUTTNER. Henry Kuttner (Doubleday) \*available from SF Book Club

Ray Bradbury entitles his introduction to this collection "Henry Kuttner: A Neglected Master;" nothing more describes the genius of Kuttner than that. I was late coming to the work of Henry Kuttner; before this volume arrived, I'd only read the short stories collected in various anthologies we have.

Kuttner writes strong, honest fiction. He has no ambitions other than to tell the story, make his point, and get on to the next item on the agenda. His style is crisp and direct and his stories are heavily sf-directed. The seventeen stories collected in this posthumous tribute to his talent are of an incredibly high quality--a quality you don't expect from stories 20 years old or more. The best thing that can be said about Kuttner is that he wrote sf that can survive out of its era--and when you think about it, that's quite a talent. Don't miss this anthology; once you finish it, you'll probably find yourself hunting down those old Kuttner paperbacks--I did.

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JOE GREEN: (1-29-75)"...writing a full-length novel is difficult for a part-time writer. Writing a series of short stories and combining them is the old and honored answer for most sf writers. Do you know how much resolution it takes to write a full novel from scratch on weekends and at night? You wouldn't believe...and the money is usually puny, for the work involved. But if you write stories, finish each, mail it, get a response, write another, and another...eventually you'll wind up with 40 to 60 thousand words on paper, in almost usable form. Then you can add a few more, rewrite as necessary, smooth and polish...if it wasn't done this way I suspect a lot fewer novels would



be written. Not the perfect answer, perhaps, but a workable one.

"As for CONSCIENCE...the novel contains 28,000 more words than the stories, most of it at the end. The last story ends on page 153 in the DAW version, and the book goes on through page 204. Also, one 4,000 word insert has been added between stories, some shorter material between others--all of Chapter 5 being new, for example. (The longer insert consists of Chapters 12 & 13) And of course much reworking was required of the existing material. In fact I transposed two stories from their original order of appearance! So a great deal of work was still involved, perhaps more overall than it takes to write a novel. Writing MIND BEHIND THE EYE took me four years from conception to appearance of the book (with many changes and a major revision along the way). Believe me, it just isn't worth it. Despite its faults, CONSCIENCE sold better and has been better received by publishers (although the reviews of MIND were much better, and I personally consider it my best book).

"If I were rich, I'd just write short stories. They satisfy my creative needs, and are a hell of a lot less work. I found it very interesting when Arthur C. Clarke told me writing shorts was his real aim in life...

"Good luck with FUTURE RETROSPECTIVE. That's a darn good first issue

"P.S. 'Most forgot. You would probably be interested in knowing my new book, STAR PROBE, will be serialized in ANALOG Oct-Nov-Dec 1975."

(Cliff comments: You point out a very real financial aspect of SF writing that many readers tend to forget at times--myself included. As I said, CONSCIENCE must be judged on its own merits, not what I wanted it to be; and on its own merits, it's successful. And the inserts add a lot to the cohesiveness of the book--were it not for the ebb-and-flow action of the climaxes, I'd not have been aware of the number of short stories included in CONSCIENCE. I'm anxiously awaiting STAR PROBE--which is six months away as I write this.)

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THE MIND PARASITES. Colin Wilson (Arkham House--\$4.00)

I enjoy the works of H.P. Lovecraft and the school of writers that seem to work in the Lovecraftian style. I had read a short story or two by Colin Wilson set in the Cthulhu Mythos, but I was unaware of the Lovecraftian base for this novel until I read the liner notes at the bookstore. Curious as to how Wilson could sustain the Lovecraftian feel for an entire novel, I bought it.

THE MIND PARASITES is a haunting, suspenseful story of an invisible race that can control the ambitions and thoughts of humanity with insanity, depression and doubt. Gilbert Austin becomes aware of the existence of the Tsathogguans, the mind parasites, and sets out to find others who can work with him to overcome them--but they become aware of him, and the story quickly becomes a taut thriller that carries the reader from the depths of the mind to the far reaches of space.

Wilson writes, for the most part, in a clean style, unadorned and straightforward. He occasionally lapses into long passages of philosophical writings that, while enjoyable, disrupt the flow of the novel; but never do they disrupt it enough to kill reader-interest. His plotline combines the supernatural Lovecraftian feel with the science-fiction approach of Brunner or Dick--a pleasant combination, to be sure.

The book also contains a fifteen-page introduction by Wilson that analyzes Lovecraft as a writer--or as Wilson calls him, "an obsessed writer." Lovecraft fans should enjoy the introduction as much or more than the book itself. I bought Wilson's THE PHILOSOPHER STONE on the basis of this novel--it's really a pleasant sleeper that sneaks up on your interest and, before you know it, you're hooked.

FUTURE RETROSPECTIVE #2



THOMAS BURNETT SWANN: (1-28-75) "...The review of HOW ARE THE MIGHTY  
FALLEN was a wonderment to me. If I had dreamed  
an ideal review, that would have been it. And you are the only review-  
ers ever to notice my poetry interspersed in my novels. Most people,  
I fear, either skip it or assume I quoted it from somebody else. Some  
of the poems were written long ago, some are written to fit a certain  
character (the lighter pieces usually, on occasion deliberately bad  
because the character in question couldn't have written a good poem).  
Anyway, poetry comes hard for me, though it was my first writing love,  
and I do like having it noticed.

"But most of all, of course, I was overwhelmed when you were so enthu-  
siastic about a book whose cover led one to expect a lurid monster  
tale (Donald Wollheim has another monster and a '4v on my next book,  
THE NOT-WORLD.

It was the hardest book I ever wrote  
because I had to be accurate to the bible and to history...

"As for your magazine, it was completely to my taste. I love a fan-  
zine with excellent reviews of books, comics and such, but dislike a  
fanzine which is nothing but inside gossip about who went to which con-  
vention. I also enjoy a fanzine in which the viewpoint of the editors  
is evident: for example, in your very valid comment on how almost no  
science fiction (and I could add fantasy) writer creates believable  
women. I think the men generally either overlook women or create them  
as they would like them to be. There never was a woman like Burroughs'  
Dejah Thoris, for example, but I imagine several million men (and a boy  
of thirteen, many years ago, who fell in love with her) wish there were.

"If we move to another genre, I think we find that the men in Gothic  
novels suffer the same fate as the women in sf novels. Either they're  
imitations of the men created by the Bronte sisters and Mrs. Radcliffe  
or they're wish-fulfillments... This is a complicated way of saying  
that I thoroughly agree with the point you made."

(2-4-75) "...I had nothing to say (I mean, I was allowed nothing to  
say) about my covers at Ace, but I thought Jeff Jones' MOONDUST exquis-  
ite. Then, for a reason I'll never know for sure, he was taken away  
from me. It may be because the book sold poorly in the first six months  
(before reviews, good or bad, could affect sales)... Long ago, Don  
Wollheim told me that he had to come up with covers which reproduced  
well in B&W photos for advance advertisement. Maybe MOONDUST didn't.  
So now I have monsters..."

(C&S comment: You make a very valid point concerning covers; a happy medium has to  
be found between the covers the fans want and the covers that sell. I  
really feel that George Barr could have done much better than he did on your two most  
recent DAW books--but maybe it helps sales (although I don't see how).

A number of people commented on the review Susan wrote in which she pointed out the  
difficulty most sf writers have with female characters. And, as you pointed out,  
it seems to extend outside sf to many, many forms of literature in which a writer con-  
cerns himself-herself with a character of the opposite sex. Of course, some writers  
have trouble creating convincing characters of their own sex, too...

The Jones cover for the novel you did in FANTASTIC was nice, although a bit grainy.  
It seemed to fit your book much better than most covers, though. I've heard rumors  
that said novel is due out in hardcover and/or paperback shortly--hope so.)



Larry Mason  
Rt. 2  
Rockmart GA 30153

Y(2-26-75) "You got FR off to a good start, and I doubt you'll have any trouble increasing circulation. A few suggestions, though. I think things would be more interesting if you interspersed your reviews with other material, such as sercon articles, letters, quotes, etc. And you can make FR more attractive by using more than one color of mimeo paper. Perhaps a different color for different sections or different types of reviews. Personally I would like to see you include a record review column...not all sf fans are rock fans, but I know a lot who are both... After the very small number of good albums released in 1974 I fear that rock, as a creative art form, is virtually dead. I'm hoping like hell 1975 will be better, but so far I've heard nothing that indicates a change is coming.

"Your reviews are generally well-written and there's a good variety of material covered... I disagree with your assessment of BRAIN WAVE. I think it may be the finest thing Poul Anderson has done, with the possible exception of TAU ZERO... I read the Andre Norton time travel books about twelve years ago, and at the time thought they were great. I fear if I tried to reread them now I would be extremely disappointed. If Ms. Norton would take to writing adult sf I would probably give her another try...

"And finally I'll list some preliminary Hugo recommendations. Of the novels I've read so far the best is TWILIGHT OF BRIAREUS by Richard Cowper... Le Guin's THE DISPOSSESSED will beat it out, though, I predict (a book which will come closer to a Nebula than a Hugo, Le Guin's is). Novella is Silverberg's "Born With The Dead." And for novelette I'm voting for offutt's "Gone With the Gods." In short story, I vote no award... Best dramatic presentation should definitely go to ZARDOZ. But I'm willing to bet that nothing I support will win an award...

"Hope your next issue is 30-plus pages and comes in colors."

(C & S comment: As you can see, we decided upon the mixture of reviews and letters for our format--obviously, we both read Geis. As to different colors of paper: I'm not really sure anyone would even notice--and if they did, they may not care.

Andre Norton's sf isn't the "juvenile SF" you imply it is--I think if you'd read any five of her books, you'd find that three of them (at least) contain "adult sf." Unfortunately, we came into SF via Andre Norton, many of us, as children, and we assume that because we were juvenile then, she was juvenile then; 'taint so.

And, finally, I'll bet you're right with "Born With the Dead" and ZARDOZ.

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BEFORE THE GOLDEN AGE. Ed. Isaac Asimov (Doubleday) \*available from SF Book Club

BEFORE THE GOLDEN AGE is a genuine novelty in modern science fiction publishing; it's one of the few books that warns you, in advance, "this is bad science fiction." As such, it is also probably one of the few books that delivers all it promises; for the most part, the contents of BEFORE THE GOLDEN AGE are badly written pulp fiction of the late twenties and early thirties style (although all selections come from the 1930's) that we generally try to forget. In fact, the only stories in this volume that were worth reprinting were "World of the Red Sun" by Clifford D. Simak and "Sidewise in Time" by Murray Leinster. The rest of the fiction should have remained buried, by all means.

However, I recommend the anthology; while the fiction is piss-poor, the introductions by Isaac Asimov are engrossing reading. This is the first chronological volume of Asimov's autobiography, and his narratives make fascinating reading. And besides, a 912-page book is a nice oddity to have on your bookshelf...



# COMICS

This has been a strange period for comics; a lot of new titles have cropped up--and a few of them are actually good. A lot of older, established comics have dropped considerably in quality to make up for it, though; the comics industry still tends to average out at mediocre.

Perhaps the worst disappointment of all is the deterioration of SWAMP THING; David Michelinie's scripts lack the drive that marked the Len Wein issues. Michelinie is apparently uncomfortable with the eerie air the comic used to have, because he's totally eliminated it in his three-issue reign as writer. And Nestor Redondo's art is so very slick that it, too, tends away from the eerie supernatural swamp-atmosphere that characterized Wrightson's visual approach. Worst of all, Redondo can't draw a Swamp Thing I can accept; the monster is too clean, too orderly for a slime-encrusted creature. I didn't think Wein and Wrightson would be missed when they left--I really looked forward to a change--but this time the change was definitely for the worse.

The change in THE SHADOW, with the tenth issue, is definitely for the better, though. ER Cruz presents the finest Shadow to grace the pages of National's comic; eerie, suspenseful and well-drawn, Cruz's Shadow flows across the page. The Denny O'Neill script is a well-written story of 1930s gangsters and politicians, and it combined perfectly with Cruz's moody artwork. This title is definitely having a rebirth after the Frank Robbins travesties it underwent.

KUNG-FU FIGHTER #1 ought to win an award for The Worst Comic of the Year--and the artist deserves special recognition. Only Pat Boyette and Tony Williams/Tallarico have managed to produce such repulsive work (with Jack Sparling a runner-up) before now--but Leopoldo Duranona surpasses both of them in his lack of talent. And Jim Dennis should stick to writing novels, where he's easier for me to ignore--his comic scripts are atrocious. This title should definitely be avoided.

I was harsh on Jim Starlin's first issue of the new Warlock; but STRANGE TALES #179 assures me that Starlin not only knows where he's going, but how he intends to get there. The rambling aspect of the first issue is eliminated here and moving action dominates. His story is very close to space opera, but Starlin gives it the overtones of an epic in this installment. Art-wise, he's beginning to resemble Ditko more and more in his layout--but he's so much better with the finished product than Steve Ditko ever was.

TARZAN #236 is just as unimpressive as always in its script--the only reason I mention it at all is to call your attention to the new artist, Franc Reyes, whose art is a dynamic cross between Kubert, Foster and Frazetta. The final page, added by Kubert, is almost indistinguishable from the Reyes art--the only factor that marks them as different is that Reyes' work is more dynamic. This is the first issue of Tarzan I've bought in a while--I really think the art is worth the 25¢ price tag.

What can I say about GIANT-SIZE INVADERS #1, except that you've read it a million times before, at least in spirit. No, it's not a reprint, but the aim of the comic is to capture the feel of the 1940's, World War II Timely comics. Captain America, Torch & Toro and Sub-Mariner team up to battle Nazis in this issue, set early in the war. The title really captures the flavor of the era; while I'm not impressed with



Frank Robbins visual interpretation, I have to admit (begrudgingly) that it's adequate. Roy Thomas does a good job of rekindling the WWII fervor that permeated the Timely titles of the 40's--and the promise of Golden Age reprints makes this the only 50¢ package from Marvel really worth the 50¢ all the way through. I'd like to see what Jack Kirby & Joe Sinnott would do with this comic, though--or Jim Steranko...

The Avenger finally makes it into the comics with JUSTICE INC. #1, from National. Al McWilliam's art is disappointingly mediocre, particularly in his versions of Dick Benson and Smitty, but it's passable when compared to other artistic travesties. I'd like to see Dick Giordano try an issue of two of this title--I envision his art every time I think about it. The script is nothing impressive--an adaptation of the first Avenger novel--but O'Neill does an acceptable job with it.

There's little to say about SPIDER-MAN #114--it appears that Gwen is back, and that's the only noteworthy thing that happened in this issue--and it takes the entire story to build up to that. Oh well, we all have our off days...

In mentioning the saga in the Avengers, I don't know what to refer to; I guess I'll flip out AVENGERS #135 and GIANT-SIZE AVENGERS #4, since they're sitting in front of me, but this story has been running for a number of issues now, skipping from one title to another as various plot-strings are introduced. These issues are must-haves for Avengers fans, since they give us both the true origin of the Vision (taa-daa) and the marriage of Vision & Scarlet Witch and of Mantis and a tree. Read it and find out for yourself--it is good, though...

UNKNOWN WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION #3 is highlighted by an Alex Nino adaptation of Harlan Ellison's "Repent, Harlequin, Said the Ticktockman" Nino's cartoonish art, brought out particularly for this tale, resembles Tim Kirk at times, yet it incorporates much more visual interplay of panels, backgrounds, etc. than Kirk normally uses. I liked the art--but I'd like to know what Harlan Ellison thought. An interview with Frank Herbert is also a pleasant bit of reading, although the entire interview fails to mention that Herbert has finished ARRAXIS, the third Dune novel (then again, I think he mentioned that it would be out 'in a while;' could be the interview was old). Once again, I recommend this title to SF fans as well as comics fans.

In passing, I'll mention that the new BEOWULF title from National is an interesting novelty (and asbit better than there boring effort at sword and sorcery, CLAW THE UNCONQUERED), but I don't anticipate it surpassing any standards of quality, because there's no inspiration to the comic. Kirby's ATLAS #1 is dulldulldull as most Kirby nowadays is--and artistically, this is his crudest yet. And the only title in the Batman family worth keeping up with is DETECTIVE COMICS, where the "BatMurderer" series is actually developing some honest-to-God suspense in that title for the first time in years. Don't bother with the Joker #1 unless your supply of bathroom reading material is low--it's eminently forgettable.

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MISCELLANEOUS REVIEWS OF FANZINES,  
MAGAZINES, RECORDS, OR WHATEVER I  
FEEL LIKE PUTTING INTO PRINT

This has been a good week for us, fanzine-wise. First off, the quarter has slacked up enough at school to give me enough free time to read Dick Geis's ALIEN CRITIC/SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #12. This issue contained an excellent piece on Har-

lan Ellison, written by Dick Delap; a criticism of the ENCYCLOPIEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY by Barry Malzberg; and an interesting Ted White column, which contains the editorial which was banned from the March 1975 AMAZING by the publishers; all this in addition to the reviews and letters that never fail to entertain. If you only subscribe to one fanzine, TAG should be it (after the one you're reading, of course).

FUTURE RETROSPECTIVE #2



Then Brian Perry's FAT CAT BOOKS, a small new-and-used book dealership (see Brian's address accompanying his letter this), came through with some issues of OUTWORLDS and ALGOL I had ordered--thank God that by that time the finals were virtually over, because from the day those fanzines arrived onward, I didn't study for anything.

Bill Bower's OUTWORLDS 21/22 was quite impressive; the atmosphere is more subdued than in the Geiszine, and the emphasis is more heavily shifted to wellwritten articles and columns by a variety of writers. And Bill himself is an excellent fanwriter--I wish he had used more of his own material in the fanzine, for the Editorial (and notes of comment in the lettercol) are all he wrote. The letters column this issue comes to the forefront, however, since it's feud-filled and quite lengthy. For any of you who haven't ordered this zine yet, I recommend you do so--the address is Bill Bowers, Box 2521, North Canton, Ohio 44720--\$1.50 gets you the double issue.

ALGOL #23 is Slick; Don Pfiel should be able to produce such a professional-looking package. At the same time, Andy Porter keeps the fanzine unpretentious enough to make you aware it is a fanzine. This issue has a section devoted to Arthur Clarke--probably one of the most interesting series of pieces about Clarke I've seen anywhere. William Lanahan offers a somewhat simplistic look at the psychology of John Norman's Gor series; Ted White's column is interesting, as all Ted White columns are; and Richard Lupoff's book review column is a treasure of well-written opinions. The fanzine is lavishly adorned with very, very fine art, and the layout is very free and uncluttered. Yes, indeed, ALGOL is Slick; it's also well-worth \$1.25 from Andrew Porter, PO Box 4175, New York NY 10017.

And before I forget, let me give you Dick Geis' address on ALIEN CRITIC/SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW: it's Richard E. Geis, PO Box 11408, Portland Oregon 97211. (\$1)

No matter how well organized I am (and I'm usually not), I manage to forget something I had vowed to mention. Last issue was no exception; I had fully intended to review SFINCTOR #s 1 & 2. SFINCTOR is a very fannish, very relaxed fannish newszine; it claims nothing else, but it's determined to do a fine job in delivering that claim. The zines are filled with con news, publication announcements, COAs, World-con news, and anything else that seems to fit. Costs are very low (8 issues for \$1) so be sure to order SFINCTOR from Craig Miller, Elliot Weinstein & Blenn Mitchell, 9115 Beverlywood St., Los Angeles, CALIF 90034. (Make checks payable to Craig)

So much for fanzine reviews--there are others I could mention, but looking through them is distracting, since I always find something I either didn't read the first time or else I consider it worth reading again.

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Since the income tax refund had come and we were feeling very, very affluent, we decided to blow \$5 for the both of us to see THE TOWERING INFERNO. It would have probably been just as entertaining if we had set fire to the money and watched it burn--and that wouldn't have been drawn out into a tedious two and a half hours.

The movie was a bomb. Disaster flicks seem to presume that the grandeur of the catastrophe eliminates any need for characterization or motivation--there's a "let's watch the idiots scramble to survive" syndrome that dominates the films. This one was no exception; they hired some of the highest-paid actors of the cinema, and then they didn't even have to act. Unless you classify acting like morons as "acting."

Irwin Allen's special effects were impressive to begin with, but even they lost their novelty after a while. And the climax of the movie is so utterly ridiculous it makes you wish it had come first, so you could have walked out on the film. If you ever must miss a movie, let this one be it.



The February-March-April ANALOGS have contained a surprisingly enjoyable serialized novel by Gordon R. Dickson & Harry Harrison, LIFEBOAT. It's strong, crisp science fiction in the traditional manner. It's a survival-under-catastrophic-circumstances piece of writing that'll never win any awards--and with justifiable reason, since it isn't that good--but makes for pleasant reading. I never have cared an awful lot for Harry Harrison's writing, but this collaboration seems to contain more Dickson than Harrison, at least in plot. ANALOG's shorter fiction has been very disappointing of late, though--this should be the year Ben Bova fails to win a Hugo for sure--so if you dislike Harrison/Dickson novels, or if you thought James White handled the same idea better than Dickson or Harrison would, you may as well pass this up--unless, like me, you're also a Kelly Freas fan, in which case you buy the magazine no matter what I gripe about.

Mike Bishop's "Allegiances" is the cover story of the February 1975 GALAXY; it's a well-written tale of alien contact, set in and around New Atlanta. The story relates to a number of other short works Bishop has set in this future-postulate, so don't be surprised if it pops up soon in a collection containing all the stories along these lines. Anyway, before I digress further: as you'd expect from Michael Bishop, it's well-written and entertaining, although I personally don't consider it as dynamic a work as "Cathadonian Odyssey" or "Death and Designation..." My only complaint in the entire story is one that ties in with a point I brought out last issue; that is, male authors have trouble writing convincingly-female characters. Clio is a well-delineated person, but it was hard for me to accept her as a female. Thank God, though, she's not one of those Heinlein-men-in-drag that serve as women in far too many SF works--they aren't even people for the most part. And, of course, this issue of GALAXY contains the middle segment of Zelazny's SIGN OF THE UNICORN; that's two good reasons to shell out 75¢ for the February GAL.

Like everyone else, we're curious about the new format for VERTEX. I haven't bought an issue of the magazine for about eight months now because it's so overpriced, but the new 75¢-tabloid size may arouse my curiosity enough to sell me on it for an issue or two. Unfortunately, the new format means that they're going to be losing a lot of excellent graphics, which is the major drawing point of VERTEX right now--with the ridiculously poor fiction they run for the most part, they have to depend on something beside the printed word to catch your interest. I fully expect it to fold in the new format, but it'll be a novelty...

Somewhere under the debris that clutters our house at present is an issue of Linda Bushyager's KARASS; I hope I can dig it up, because I really think it deserves some recognition & recommendation. Ah, here it is; KARASS #11 is the latest we have (and thanks, Mike Weber, for the loan of it), but it'll definitely go on our must-get list. KARASS is an informal news-and-views zine that presents a lot of Linda Bushyager's personality in its pages--it's vibrant and interesting from cover to mailing label, and the layout and graphics make it even more impressive. This issue gives a lot of vital-for-the-con-going-fan information on 1977 Worldcon bids--if you're not sure who to support, be sure to get this from Linda if it's still available. There are also nice tidbits of news, a few book reviews and fanzine reviews, and some con news. Cost is 4/\$1 from Linda Bushyager, 1614 Evans Ave., Prospect Park, Pa. 19076. If you order, ask for #11, definitely.

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And so goes another issue of FUTURE RETROSPECTIVE. Thanks are extended to all those who wrote and/or subscribed; there were a few letters received but not used due to space limitations (Wade Gilbreath, Joe Brancatelli, Gary Brown, Andy Whitehead, Meade Frierson and anyone else we may have been forced to omit--the letters were interesting and we want more). We can't print all the letters--also, we have to edit some letters to save space--but everyone is urged to write nonetheless; LoCs should get you a copy of FR #3, whether used or not.

And that's it; it's been fun, and we're looking forward to the next issue as much as we hope you are--and it should be mailed by May 1st. Drop us a line and let us know what you thought about what you read, okay? This has been FUTURE RETROSPECTIVE.