

# FUTURE RETROSPECTIVE





# FUTURE RETROSPECTIVE #5



is written and edited by Cliff & Susan Biggers (except where otherwise noted). FUTURE RETROSPECTIVE is a fanzine of science fiction/fantasy reviews, published on an approximately-bimonthly basis. Mailing address is: 621 Olive Street, Cedartown, GA 30125.

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Letters of comment are solicited; in addition, fanart is more than welcome for these pages, mail to the address given above.



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It's been a leisurely month and a week since the last FR was mailed out, so I guess it's time to get these stencils finished up, print the entire zine and mail out this, the fifth issue of FUTURE RETROSPECTIVE...

The urgings of ennui make it awfully difficult, though. I have this tendency toward inaction that gets awfully bad between Halloween and Christmas; so bad that any fanac at all becomes virtually a chore. I finally figured it out this year.

It's the cold, you see; during that time span, we Georgians (remember us, the barefoot, hay-chewing folks who bring you peanuts, peaches and Jimmy Carter?) begin to get our first days of truly cold weather; you know, ice-on-the-ground twenty-degree type cold. I'm not a cold-natured beast; while heat bothers

being an editorial of sorts by Cliff and Susan Biggers.

me, cold destroys my will, saps my energy and rots my teeth (the last isn't proven yet, so DNQ). Susan is even worse off; when the first signs of frost come about, she buries her tiny little body beneath such a huge mound of blankets, sheets, etc., that I have trouble realizing she's in the bed. It's not uncommon to find her wrapped up beneath a sheet, two blankets and an electric blanket on high--at eight o'clock in the evening. She gets a lot of reading done at this time, folks...

So why does this cause such a lull in our fanzine production? Quite simply, it's like this; we live in a stucco house, "stucco" being a fancy word for plaster over concrete blocks. That means no insulation in the walls, astute reader; and no insulation in the walls means that our library, where the mimeograph is, stays at the 60° range all winter long. By January, I'm used to it; but in those early months, I avoid the library religiously. So oodles of zines get written but none of them get printed! Honest! If you want to drive by sometimes, I'll let you read all the stencils.

At any rate, perhaps the ennui will be broken at last; a week ago, we took \$20 that I earned by supervising an SAT exam and bought an electric heater. Those things seem to violate the law of conservation of energy in that they suck in enormous amounts of power and give out tiny amounts of heat; but the heat accumulates, and today, when it was 30° outside, our library was (gasp) 67°. Salvation; now that I can bear to stand in there and print for a few hours, perhaps the day of a winter-lull in Biggers-fanac has come to an end.

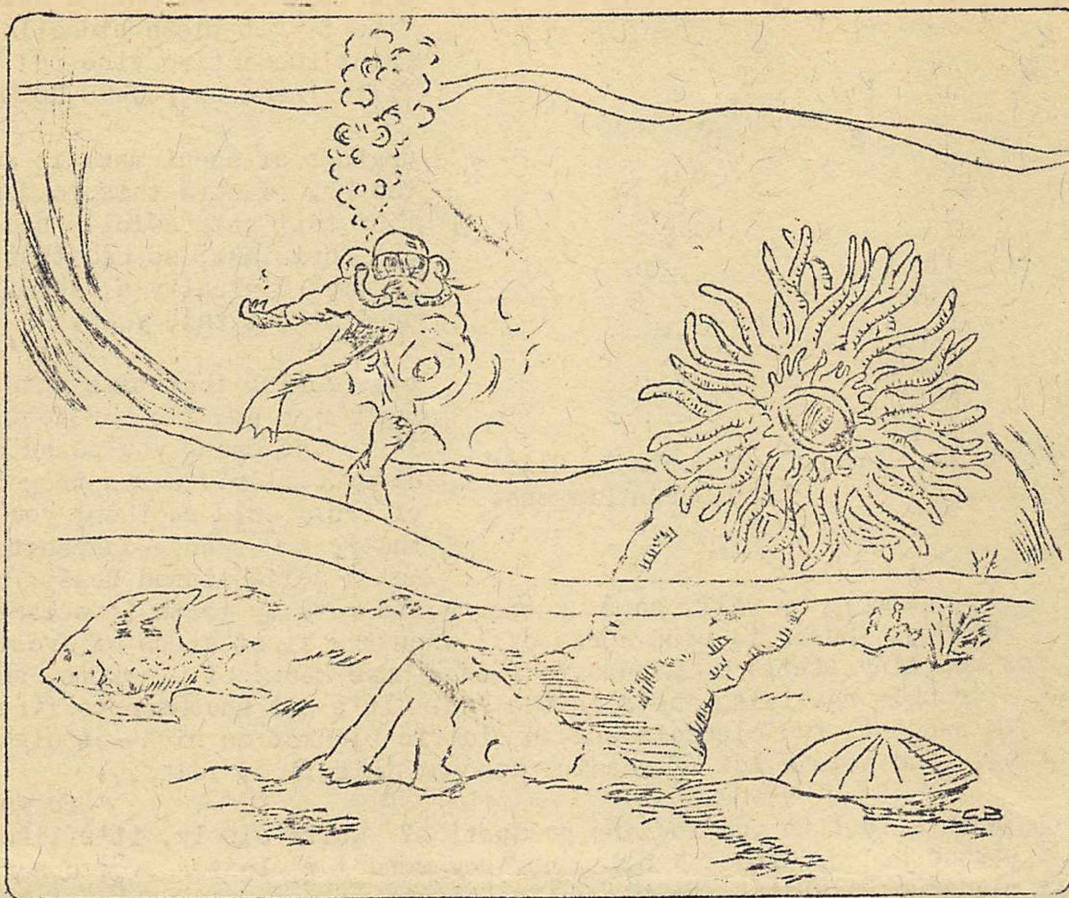
As far as personal incidents go, nothing noteworthy has happened since FR #4 went out; I'm still plugging away as a high-school English teacher and Susan's still playing data-processing student and all's right with the world. We've received heaps of good books since the last FR, some of which are reviewed in this FR; we've also finished up our fourth term as CE of the apa MYRIAD and are beginning the fifth (and final) term for us.

SUSAN'S FEW LINES: I keep getting cheated; I was supposed to get an entire page, and then came the final stencil tally and I realized, to my chagrin, that we had stencilled one page too many of reviews and my editorial-page, being unwritten as of yet, was (\*choke\*) cancelled. So I wait until FR #6 to relate the horrors of losing the envelope with all your fanzine's LOCs in it, or the troubles caused by miscounting your spot illos and leaving space for one too many in the fanzine. Those things happen, I'm afraid; and around here, they happen with too much regularity.

Now additions to the review-copies listings are DAW and Arkham House; reviews of recent releases from both companies are contained in this issue's BOOKS section. And speaking of BOOKS, let's end this and get into the reviews...



# B O O K S



THE "EARLY" SERIES FROM DOUBLEDAY

THE EARLY ASIMOV (Isaac Asimov -- \$10) EARLY DEL REY (Lester del Rey -- \$7.95)

THE EARLY WILLIAMSON (Jack Williamson -- \$5.95) THE EARLY LONG (Frank Belknap Long -- \$7.95)

Every now and then, a publisher comes up with an idea that strikes me as being so inspired, so brilliant in concept that I can only wonder how in the world it was unthought of for such a long time. Doubleday has come up with just such an idea with the "Early" series; a collection of the earliest fiction by four of SF/fantasy's finest authors, liberally spiced with anecdotes, memories and nostalgia chunks of the past contributed by the authors themselves.

The "Early" series began in 1972 with the publication of a hefty collection of Isaac Asimov's earliest published fiction; but for the Asimov fans, the fiction was of secondary importance to the autobiographical material scattered between the stories. Asimov has proven himself to be a remarkably talented writer of nonfiction, and this book, with its heavy Asimovian flavor and its sweeping-strokes portrait of John W. Campbell done in words by Asimov, one of Campbell's three great talents of the 1940s ASCENDING era, is a treasure trove for the fan interested in getting a true perspective on the pulp era. The fiction runs the gamut from awkwardly embarrassing ("The Ballistan Menace" and "Half Breed"--as well as its sequel--are extremely poor Asimov, and of minor importance) to the remarkably impressive ("Trends" and "The Little Man On the Subway" are polished, professional pieces, the two most impressive of the volume).

THE EARLY ASIMOV is a valuable book, one that deserves a place on any SF fan's bookshelf; but I had assumed it to be an oddity, a one-of-a-kind book published just to get Asimov's early fiction (and autobiographical notes) into print.

I was quite wrong--although the three-year gap between THE EARLY ASIMOV and EARLY DEL REY seems to indicate that the series actually grew from the popularity of the first volume, rather than being a master plan.



The next in the series of collected early works by various authors is EARLY DEL REY. Prior to the time I read this book, I had considered del Rey one of the minor science fiction authors, one of little merit and interest. I realized how wrong my opinion of this fine author was shortly after I started this book.

Included in EARLY DEL REY are twenty-four stories ranging from his first published story in 1938 to 1951. These twenty-four stories give the reader a fascinating insight into the very talented Lester del Rey and what he can do with words. My favorite was the last story in the book, "Wind Between the Worlds," an interesting extrapolation on what can go wrong when matter transmitters are used. Another story I thought really enjoyable was "Anything," a simple fun-type of story in which del Rey "what ifs" the existence of the Little People in today's world and what sort of reception they might get. However, stories which were not as impressive were the mainly technical, hard-science type of story, such as "Habit," which is about a rocket racing through the solar system--sort of a cosmic Indianapolis 500--and "The Stars Look Down" in which two men who have been lifelong rivals engage in a rather lengthy no-holds-barred race to develop a new rocket fuel. Looking back from a safe distance of 30-odd years, such stories seem obviously dated; if technical details are overlooked, though, del Rey's powerful, entertaining writing style is present in even the weakest tales.

The thing that made EARLY DEL REY a special delight to read was the introductions and the afterwords to each story. Besides giving you invaluable information about the actual writing of each story and insight into the author himself, these prefaces give rare glimpses into the character of the greatest SF editor of all, John W. Campbell, Jr. I highly recommend EARLY DEL REY to all science fiction readers; you will find the introductions fully as interesting--if not more so--as the stories themselves. But be warned: this is a very inspirational book and if you have any leanings at all towards writing, you just might find yourself attempting some stories after reading how del Rey himself did it.

The third book in the series is undoubtedly the weakest one; THE EARLY WILLIAMSON suffers both from the extreme shortness of the collection (when compared with the first two, it seems remarkably slim) and from Williamson's weakness in the writing of introductory and afterword material. No doubt about it, Jack Williamson is one of the most underrated talents still writing, and he most assuredly deserved a place in this series; but obviously Williamson feels dwarfed by Asimov in the introductory-material area (Asimov is a hard man to follow, I'll admit), and as a result he writes with the feeling that he's holding back on the reader.

Williamson's collection, like the collection of FBLong material that followed it, came from a somewhat earlier period; in Williamson's case, his material all comes from the 1928-1933 timespan, and therefore fills in an important gap in the series; it gives us first-hand memories of that early, pre-Campbellian era of romantic SF. Fiction-wise, "The Doom From Planet 4" and "The Plutonian Terror" are the finest stories in the volume, showing Williamson's rich, lush use of language in combination with a typically-Williamson system of lean, direct plot development.

The biggest disappointment with THE EARLY WILLIAMSON is that it seems to present all too little of the work of one of SF's luminaries; at a mere 199 pages, this volume is overshadowed by the others in the series.

The most recent--and unfortunately, probably the final--volume in the series is THE EARLY LONG, a collection of SF and weird fiction by an author who has been greatly overlooked in recent years--Frank Belknap Long. In the midst of all the interest devoted to Long's memories of HPLovecraft, too many people have managed to overlook his talent as a writer. And more than anything else, Frank Belknap Long is most assuredly a talented author; words flow so naturally in his collection, both in the non-fiction and fiction segments, that Long comes close to recreating the feel of an oral telling of his material--you can imagine that you've talked with the man rather than having read words set in hard type and printed on off-white paper. He makes everything he



writes of come alive, and the opportunity to read some of these stories for the first time is, for me, a rare delight.

I suspect that much attention will be given to this book because of its discussions of Howard Phillips Lovecraft; and I feel sure that Long will do very little complaining, since that makes this the perfect teaser for his upcoming Arkham House volume, HPL: DREAMER ON THE NIGHT SIDE. But it's time that people outside of the Lovecraftian-weird-fiction realm realized the man's talent as a story-teller, and this volume offers the perfect opportunity to acquaint yourself with his work.

THE EARLY LONG covers a large span--twenty years, from 1924 to 1944--and presents seventeen of Long's stories, most of which were originally published in WEIRD TALES or UNKNOWN WORLDS. The WT stories are impressive and horrifying, but the finest tale in the book, "Dark Vision," is the first of a number of stories Long did for UNKNOWN WORLDS--and all the later stories came very near the quality level Long set with "Dark Vision." For the WT fan, the excellent "Hounds of Tindalos" is included as well; and these two stories should assure Long a place in any listing of outstanding authors in the field.

THE EARLY LONG is a valuable book, an asset to any library; for, like EARLY DEL REY, it serves to bring into focus the talent of an underrated author.

And the "Early" series is one four-volume set that all collectors should own; the latter two volumes are not available in Book Club editions as the first two are, but are worth the cost of acquiring. The return in entertainment and insight into the early period of SF writing will be well worth the cash outlay, I assure you.

—Susan Biggers



#### LETTER FROM GENE WOLFE (10-18-75):

"I hope you'll publish this so Mike Bishop will know how much pleasure it gave me to read his review of PEACE. Tell him it's set in 10 pt. Bookman.

"It's always nice to get FR--that makes it sound as old as Yandro, so I suppose it means you're established, mentally, with me. Your retrospective section is full of good news--still, I'd think twice about running a lot of short reviews. Short reviews, and plot summary, are the vermin of reviewing.

~~Yadda/short/letters/are/the/vermin/of/~~  
~~the/fanzine.~~

CLIFF COMMENTS: The news that we're established in your mind is quite good indeed; now, if a few other people would accept the fact that we intend to be around for a while and would review a copy of this fanzine, fergoshsakes, I'd be even happier!

And your comments concerning short reviews seem to be indicative of the feelings of all who took the time to answer the query. I tend to think the space given to them could be better used with one or two longer reviews so that's what we intend to do. The biggest nagging worry, though, is that we're not reviewing as much as we'd like to; but the limitations of space make it impossible to squeeze any more reviews in any one issue without resorting to those "mini-reviews," so we lose either way. \*sigh\*

LATE NOTE: As we were finishing up these stencils for FUTURE RETROSPECTIVE #5, we received notice that there will be at least one more book in the "Early" series--THE EARLY POHL is scheduled for February release from Doubleday, at \$6.95.



I suppose whether or not someone likes a book depends on how well that someone is able to identify with the main character. I, personally, was unable to identify with the major character in Michael Coney's latest novel, RAX. Alika-Drove, a boy of undisclosed age, presumably just entering adolescence, discovers love and loses his innocence toward the true facts of life--and I don't mean sexual facts. Actually, the phrase that comes most often to mind while ruminating on RAX is "Heinlein juvenile". All the requisites are there: bright, precocious youngster, who thinks he's smarter than the adults, and frequently proves this to be true, and his subsequent growth into adulthood through various maturing situations, so that by the end of the book he is quite a different person emotionally than when the novel began. Needless to say, RAX turns out to be a study in the character development of a young boy just entering puberty, with very little science fiction at all.

Coney's secondary character, Pallahaxi-Browneyes, shows even less development; she's a shallow, shy little thing, always afraid of losing Drove to another girl, and in her desperation to keep him she offers the supposed ultimate in the feminine bag of wiles--her virginity. Afterwards, as they walk through the town, everyone they met was able to tell what had happened simply by the womanly glow radiating from Browneyes. Once again, one wonders whether the author really believes these myths or is using them purely for expediency. The character of Ribbon, Browneyes' girlfriend and rival for Drove, was much more interesting: something of a tomboy, loud and insulting, possessing much more depth than Browneyes. For a while one almost thinks that Ribbon and Drove will form a relationship, but such is not to be.

Actually, there is very little alien culture in RAX. Coney, who has always impressed me with his unique social concepts and ability to create truly different civilizations, gives us only a tantalizing tidbit of his talent. Without the ice-goblins, predators who live in bodies of water and catch their meals by freezing the water around the unsuspecting prey, the grume, a thick water condition caused by evaporation, and the lorin this could very well be by Earth. Coney is very frustrating because he tells the reader just enough about the lorin to make him expect a full explanation is forthcoming; it never is. The lorins' uncanny ability to sense whenever a person is in trouble and come to their rescue is never explained; perhaps Coney intended for us to use our imaginations as to their origins and purposes. If Coney had spent more time developing the idea of the lorin--as the original inhabitants of the planet, for instance--instead of on Drove's character development, RAX would have been at least a rival to MIRROR IMAGE, if not better. If you're a Coney fan, buy and read RAX; you'll probably enjoy it, as I did, but finish it wishing for a little something more than what he gave.

--Susan Biggers

THE HOOK SERIES -- Tully Zetford (Pinnacle Books -- \$1.25 @)

#1 - WHIRLPOOL OF STARS (P220528) #2 - THE BOOSTED MAN (P220630) #3 - STAR CITY (P220712)

These are the first three books written by Zetford, a Britisher, as an answer to Perry Rhodan--at least it appears that way to me. But there is a difference--Hook is a much more likeable and readable character.

The time is the 10,000th century, Earth dating, and Earth is only one planet among a myriad planets and life forms. Hook is equally at home on Earth, a starship, or an alien planet. There is one exception: Hook is a loner--he belongs to no Econorg and doesn't carry a credit card embedded in his wrist. His card was removed when he was picked for the Boosted or Powerman Project. In the Project his muscles and bones were given a metallic base rather than carbon and implants in his brain also gave him other powers--but only when he's around a true Boosted man--you see, he never finished the training.

Book #1 starts with an engine failure on a starship causing the passengers to be put out in lifeboats--with the only planet around not recognizing many of the Econorgs--TEM, Interstellar Travel Inc., etc. Hook goes through plenty: he starts out broke,



then helps stop Econorg robbery and finishes by being handsomely rewarded.

In the second book Hook ends up on a planet run by the Boosted Men for their own nefarious purposes. Hook helps to free the inhabitants who have been brainwashed into believing that the current state of affairs is paradise.

The third book tells about Hook and three others who have stolen fifty kilos of micro-recordings and are going to sell them. The three plan to kill Hook, but naturally they fail, lose their ship and money and fall victim to Hook's heroics.

These books are heavy on fiction, light on science and leave certain aspects of Hook's powers and other things to the reader's imagination. If you're looking for serious science fiction, the Hook series are not the ones to try to find it in. But for some solid, light science fiction reading, Hook is the one.

--Barry Hunter

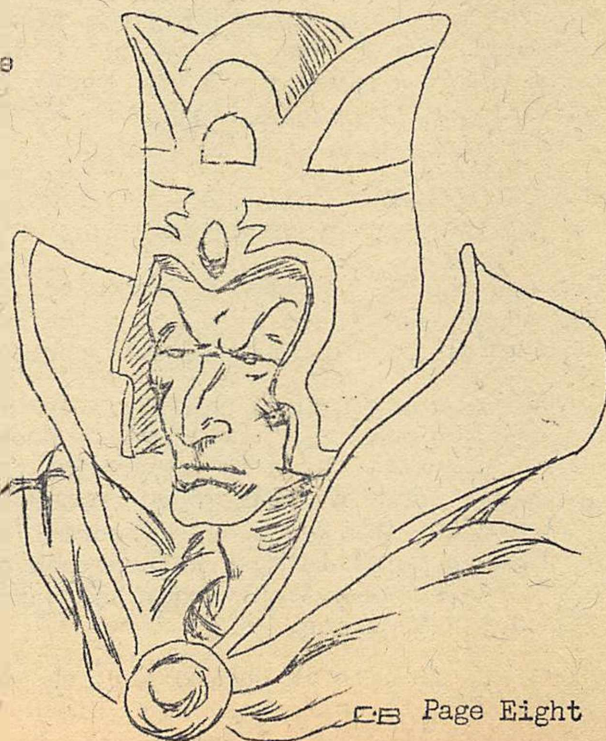
LETTER FROM MIKE BISHOP (11-11-75):

"Today is, or used to be (until the government decided to give its employees a number of three-day weekends and rearranged the calendar), Veterans' Day. It is also Fyodor Dostoevsky's birthday. Tomorrow is my birthday, and I will be thirty. The juxtaposition of these facts is not meant to imply anything, except perhaps contrast and my own bemused sense of having accomplished far less at this advanced age than I had been sure I would ten years ago as a self-styled and probably snotty-nosed artist in the making." Now I can only sigh. As a friend of mine will no doubt tell me in one day's time, "When Keats was your age, Bishop, he'd been dead four years..."

A novella--THE SAMURAI AND THE WILLOWS--is scheduled for the February issue of F&SF, which should be out at the end of December. Recently proofed the galleys for the short novel AND STRANGE AT ECBATAN THE TREES, which will be out from Harper and Row in March. Have a signed contract with Harper and Row for another novel, STOLEN FACES, whose date of publication is something I can't even guess at now. Another long novel is out to this same publisher, but my agent tells me its length is probably prohibitive, and since the alien characters in the book are from the double-star system of 61 Cygnus which went nova (no kidding, this is the truth) in August of this year (or rather some eleven-odd years ago, the stars' distance from us being 11.1 light-years) I am beginning to think that the universe is trying to tell me something and that this particular novel was never meant to see print. I just wish my cosmic critic had chosen a more subtle method of revealing the novel's demerits. This is one of the imperious, and unpredictable, of writing science fiction that deserves even more attention than it's received, and it's very very tempting to say "to hell with this head-against-the-wall business" and start writing stories exclusively about human being, who really deserve more of our attention anyway. A funny category, science fiction..."

HUMAN COMMENTS: With the impressiveness of your first novel, I eagerly await the arrival of your second. And the fact that it's a hardcover publication makes it particularly nice.

Your point about science often spoiling SF is well-made; I wonder how many other authors have run into this problem? I recall Asimov and Pohl and Niven talking about how scientific discoveries made earlier stories implausible, but it rarely happens that the novel becomes implausible before publication.





KILLERBOWL. Gary A. Wolf (Doubleday -- \$5.95)

With the popularity of Norman Jewison's production of *ROLLERBALL*, there's a real tendency to compare this book to the series of Michael Harrison stories that formed the basis for that movie. I even made that superficial observation when the book first arrived; the emphasis on violent sports is similar, the blood-and-guts games of the future seem to derive from the same unquenching thirst for death and mutilation, and the motivation of the protagonists--trying to clean up their respective sports and prove themselves simultaneously--is likewise similar. But Wolf's book was begun long before the movie proved itself so extremely popular, and at very nearly the same time Harrison began his series of stories--and little things like that make these simple "copying-a-popular-movie" accusations a bit too weak to take seriously.

On its own, *KILLERBOWL* is an excellently done book; the violence is a satirical extension of today's game of football, with the primary differences being (a) the game is now played on the streets instead of on a field, and (b) weapons are allowed. By setting the book a mere 35 years in the future, Wolf would be making his novel a weak one if he was trying for accuracy in his predictions; but he's not predicting at all. Wolf isn't saying, "this is how it will be in 2010;" instead, he's giving us a modern parable of man's obsession with violence. Of course he doesn't believe the game will evolve so greatly in 35 years--and all those who find this a detriment to the book should reread it, looking at what he's saying about man's innate tendency towards violence and murder, not as a sports-prophecy.

T.K. Mann, professional street-football player, is getting a little old; not only that, but his primary adversary, Harv Matison, is younger, faster and much more blood-thirsty than Mann. This alone would make a weak, *ROLLERBALL*-type story; but when Mann discovers that the networks have been using illegal methods to determine the winners of the games in advance, Mann takes it on himself to avenge the deaths of his teammates--men who had been chosen to die before the game was ever played. The emphasis is on violent action, presented in a cinematic, constantly-shifting style; but Wolf handles it well, using his language quite competently to tell the story without losing the reader in endless detail.

All in all, this is an enjoyable book, well worth the cost and the time to read it; Wolf hasn't produced anything that you'll consider for an award next year, but he's turned out a book that should be a big seller for Doubleday, and rightfully so; more than anything else, it entertains the reader.

NAMELESS PLACES. Gerald W. Page, editor. (Arkham House -- \$7.50)

Jerry Page has proven himself as an editor with the outstanding early issues of *COVEN 13* (later *WITCHCRAFT AND SORCERY*), which presented well-done fantasy/horror stories by proven authors and newcomers. With this anthology, finally out from Arkham after numerous delays, he proves himself as a logical successor to August Derleth in the original anthology line for Arkham.

*NAMELESS PLACES* is not merely a horror anthology--and while this may disappoint many readers, I find it quite refreshing. There is a mixture of horror, fantasy, science fiction and humor in the book, and every bit of it is well-done. Even Lin Carter, who has yet to produce a macabre story I found tolerable, hit it lucky with this book--his two stories were still quite poor, mind you, but not as poor as his prior work (including those "posthumous collaborations" with C.A. Smith, for which he should be drawn and quartered). The highlights of the book are the stories "Dark Vintage" by Joe Pumlila (a medical vampire tale quite different from Matheson's *I AM LEGEND*), "The Gods of Earth" by Gary Myers (a moody, introspective tale of ancient gods who long to escape our planet--and their/its contact with an unsuspecting human) and "Worldsong" by Jerry Page himself (a science fiction short reminiscent of Tubb's *Dumarest* series in a superficial way, but much more somber and moving in its presentation). There are no real low points, though; Page has taken the time to put together



a truly impressive volume, and one quite deserving of the prestigious Arkham House colophon. And for the \$7.50 price tag, the 279 pages are extremely impressive; the anthology offers twenty-three authors, presenting some of their finest fiction, and it makes a wonderful evening's reading. As a final note, the Tim Kirk cover helps set the mood perfectly; Kirk's gothic art belongs with Arkham. --Cliff Biggers

#### LETTER FROM PIERS ANTHONY:

(11-13-75) "Which reminds me: we have a character named Sue in CURSE OF THE NINJA, martial arts novel number 6 now-in-progress, that we expect to have a contract on soon's we get the sample section in to the editor. Don't get upset; she's a real person, because most of the characters in this particular novel are real, but she's not this Susan. I want to make that clear, because the real--that is, the one from whom the character is modeled--bears a certain resemblance to your Susan physically, and I'd hate to have you get the wrong idea. She is Jason Striker's mistress of the moment, see. Naturally there are sex scenes. Normally, I do not use real people in my fiction but this is a special situation, and all real characters are in with their express permission. You see, Striker is amnesiac, has no memory of his past, so he has to learn judo all over again, so he becomes a student at my judo club and encounters my classmates. Most of his judo experiences there actually happened to me, and everyone knows this, so I want it quite clear that Susan B is not the one, as she will instantly verify...Susan? Tell him you're not...Susan, tell him...now look--

(oOo) A likely story--I know all about the rendezvous in Ocala... )oOo)

"I normally buzz through a fanzine and check the margins where anything interests me. Only one check this time (it's not that reviews aren't interesting, it's that there usually isn't anything much to remark on) by the review of the Tuck Encyclopedia of SF and F--and this is a check of frustration, because you don't tell what's in it. I mean, if it is the first volume of three, does that mean it goes from A through F, in which case I might be in it, or from 1946 through 1956, in which case I would not be in it, or what? You spend your whole column remarking on how incredible it is that a man in Tasmania can do anything this complete, but before I shell out any \$20 for one third of a reference I want to know more about it than where the editor hails from. You have not done a review here, you've done a ghashvow of little value to your readers. For shame!

(oOo) Oops; caught! You're quite right; the Tuck ENCYCLOPEDIA review was a very brief piece that did, indeed, fail to tell what was in the first volume. For your first \$20, you get WHO'S WHO A-L, with a fairly complete bibliography (not magazine publications, though). You're there, on page 239, under JACOB, PIERS ANTHONY DILLINGHAM--but since the bibliography is only complete through 1968, only four of your novels are listed, including one of your collaborations with Margroff. Thanks for pointing out the oversight. )oOo)

"So how would I handle a review of an expansive reference? All right--I don't have the present energy to do a formal one (still recovering from the effort of completing CLUSTER, 102,000 words, itself only the first of three) so will buzz out an informal one, and trust you to send a copy of the issue to the editor so he knows what I said.

"As you may know, I have a fairly long history of review indexing, starting back in 1962 when I bought a book new and too late discovered I already had it on my shelf--under a different title. Such waste of money annoyed me all to pieces, and I got ornery when annoyed, so I set out to do something about it. Years later this had become my INDEX OF SCIENCE FICTION BOOK REVIEWS--about three thousand titles with one to a dozen reviews listed for each, plus assorted attachments like a listing of the reviewers, alternate titles, etc. My purpose was to provide any collector with a handy reference that would enable him to identify a book before he bought it; if the new title offered no hint, he could look up some of the reviews listed--his own magazine collection serving as his library of reviews--and see how familiar it looked. For example, he might see UTOPIA 14 by Vonnegut on sale in paperback, and check it



out only to discover that it was merely a retitling of Player Piano already on his shelf. So he could spare himself aggravation of publication.

"But after several hundred hours of my own effort, and much kindly indexing assistance by fans like Buck Coulson, Ed Meskys, Dick Tiedman and others, we had no way to get it into print. I had a column on the subject in the fanzine BEABEHEMA some years back, and another fan, Phyrne Bacon, decided to do something about getting it updated and into print, and this eventually led to an arrangement with H.W. Hall, associated with a university in Texas. We assigned the rights to him, and he was to publish the index at last.

"This year his index is out from GALE, costing \$45, with no credits to any of us who did the work. Startled, I investigated. Hall phoned me to explain that he had set aside my index and compiled a similar one of his own, and that was the one he published. He sent me a copy of his annual update, and I bought a copy of the main index from GALE. He acknowledged that the existence of our review index showed him that there was interest in such a thing, but the publisher wanted other material to be included, so it was easier to start over from scratch. I can verify from my own indexing experience that this is true; if you wish, for example, to add the page numbers of the issues of the magazines in which given reviews appear, and your existing index does not give them, you have to look up every entry all over again and might as well start from scratch. It would be no more work to do your own index, than to adapt the existing one. And if it is all your own, you have control, which is important. So it made sense for him, and there is no legal reason why he should not have done this. Whether there is an ethical issue when many hundreds of hours of another person's time are discarded without so much as an acknowledgment so that you can use his basic notion--I'm too close to the situation to say. But as I always try to do, I'm making clear my own connection to the existing index, because my opinion may be colored by a certain underlying frustration. Sure as hell, if I ever do anything remotely similar, I'll either sell it or publish it myself, and not trust to any fannish help; my time is about the most precious thing I have and I don't like wasting it, or having it wasted for me. Chalk this one up to experience.

"So what do I have for my \$45.00? First, I have to say (and I believe this is objective), Hal Hall's SCIENCE FICTION BOOK REVIEW INDEX, 1923-1973, is grotesquely overpriced. My index could have covered a similar territory at one tenth the price; I'll document that in a moment. The published index is intended for libraries, not fans, however; it is a fine big hardbound book, well printed, durable, well laid out--if what you want is a good looking reference, this is certainly it. Our fan-nish publication would hardly have matched this format. And, unfortunately, for a reference of limited interest in hardcover, such prices do have to be charged, lest the publisher go broke. You have to recoup your expenses from a few hundred sales, rather than a few thousands or tens of thousands. So the pricing is necessary; I should qualify my statement to clarify that for the individual fan or reader it is overpriced.

"What does it cover? A lot. We had picked up only the SF magazines and similar; this has all of them--and more complete than we could manage--plus a number of review fanzines, fringe magazines, and mainstream publications. It still managed to miss some, and because of an apparent difference in attitude it missed some good material in the ones it did index, but as I well know, the job was so huge that everything can't be picked up. I think my policy of actually reading the reviews I listed led to a number of fringe benefits, but I can't wish that on other compilers. So much fanzine column material going into depth on SF books--such as my own in SF REVIEW and elsewhere--was missed, while I believe a number of minor mentions of little use to the reader were included. Our index differentiated; this does not. This also provides no clarifying information on title changes; my example of Utopia 14 is not listed here. Or another example: I had occasion to remark on Sturgeon to someone recently, and said I thought he'd done a dozen or so novels. Then I wondered whether I was right, so I looked him up in Hall's Index--and found 22 books listed. Oh-oh--had I missed by that much? But when I looked at the actual entries I recognized several as story collections, like Caviar. This book gives no hint



whether a given title is a novel, a collection, an anthology or even nonfiction; you have to guess. And for Sturgeon it lists WITHOUT SORCERY and NOT WITHOUT SORCERY as two separate books; as I understand it, the latter was an excerpt from the first, rather than a whole new book. Thus, for me, the usefulness of the Hall index is diminished; I have to go back to my own to get the sort of information I want, while on the other hand I see no need for the listing of magazine page numbers. The magazine's table of contents will show you where the review section is quickly enough.

"So evidently this is what the publisher wanted--page numbers instead of novel-collection--anthology distinctions or title changes. Yet each index compiler must do the job the way he and his publisher think best. I feel it makes Hall's index seem to offer more while actually offering less usable material--but I am, as noted, biased. For those who want the sort of thing he has done, I have to say it is an excellent job; you will not find a more thorough listing of reviews of SF books, I'm sure. And it has one overwhelming advantage of the one I compiled: it is in print and available. Since my purpose was to make such a listing available, I can be satisfied that now the job has been done, and I hope fans will go to their libraries and use this Index. It is thorough, it is current, and apart from the quibbles I noted, it is accurate. If you are a magazine collector, or have access to a collection, you can readily locate the reviews of the book you might consider buying for yourself or as a gift, and thus can act on information instead of the publisher's misleading blurbs. I recommend it.

"Correction on one impression: I said above that I suspected a number of minor mentions of little use to the reader had been included--but in checking the Sturgeon entries against those in my own index, which latter does differentiate between full reviews and mentions, I saw that none of the "mentions" were listed in Hall's Index. So presumably the reviews listed are all full ones. It can be hard to know where to draw the line, of course; I remember that some Boucher "mentions" were more relevant than some Conklin full reviews. But Boucher was an exceptional man. (Original editor of F & SF, in case the name is not familiar.)

"Okay--there's your informal comment, done in my fashion. You will now have a center of controversy in your fanzine; a turbulent cloud of controversy always follows me about like an evil spirit, messing up my innocuous comments.

"Back to your letter: LASER has only one book of mine; I have been over-extended with other contracts and have had to turn down the notion of any more work for LASER this year. Probably my syntax confused you; I was talking about several novels, but only one of them was for Elwood. The CLUSTER series that he rejected is being published by AVON. I have no idea when that one, BUT WHAT OF EARTH?, will be published; last I heard, Buck Coulson was going to revise it. I will be interested to see what develops; very seldom do I discover editorial or other revision of my books to improve them, but Elwood seems to be concerned that every detail be right, and we'll see. I have a double standard on my novels: if it is an important one, such as MACROSCOPE, I am very sensitive to any interference in the text; but if it is an average one, like BUT WHAT OF EARTH?, I give the editor as much rope as he wants. Then, slowly and sometimes painfully, I ascertain where my future important work should go."

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AKAS. Stephen Goldin. (Laser 72002 -- 95¢)

The first release from Laser, SEEDS OF CHANGE, has nearly proven disastrous for them in the review-field; the book wasn't all-bad, but it was so humdrum and uninspired that most readers have assumed that the trend has been set. Those who judged the entire line by that first book should judge again--and this time, start with a book that shows a little more talent, care and imagination; such a title would be SEEDS, which is undoubtedly the finest of their first six numbered releases.

Stephen Goldin is a competent author, a craftsman who knows what he's doing. He has no aspirations above telling a good story and holding his reader; and SEEDS does a good job on both fronts. Story-wise, the book grips you from the very beginning;



it operates primarily as a murder mystery, but the mystery is well-done. The aliens in HERDS, however, aren't quite so gripping; in fact, for the most part, the entire alien sub-plot could be removed without weakening the book an awful lot (so long as another unknown witness was added). Perhaps it is here that Goldin comes closest to failing; while the book works well with Gamma, the alien esper, it would work equally well without him. In this respect, the entire book becomes reminiscent of the ads GALAXY ran on its covers in the early 50s; one page ads, they were divided into two columns. One column told a typical formula-western, the other column altered that formula-western into a space-opera. Goldin has done the same alteration with a murder mystery; however, the book entertains well enough that the reader has little tendency to complain. Laser seems to be putting the emphasis on entertainment, rather than serious literary efforts. In the realm of entertainment, Goldin does a capable job, bringing back memories of John W. Campbell's ANALOG of the early 60s, replete with serials much like this novel.

The most grating problem Goldin has is characterization; Wally and Stella Stoneham, the villain and victim, come across as cardboard as a shoe-box and with half the depth. Goldin seems to have put every effort forth to create a mid-50s macho male, and the character seems quite out of place in a more modern book. But I've heard that Elwood has encouraged his writers to produce semi-macho SF, oriented towards the "adventurous male," so perhaps the blame shouldn't lie too heavily on Goldin. Nonetheless, he makes up for it later on, and once the sheriff enters the novel the plot overtakes the characterization in prime emphasis.

This book seems to define the norm that Laser is searching for; low-key, entertaining SF, the light-reading sort that seems to have become secondary in today's publishing market. If that's the kind of fiction you've been missing, try this one. cb

THE ILLUMINATUS TRILOGY: (I) THE EYE IN THE PYRAMID (#4688 - \$1.50) all available  
 Robert Shea and (II) THE GOLDEN APPLE (#4691 - \$1.50) from Dell Books  
 Robert Anton Wilson (III) LEVIATHAN (#4742 - \$1.50)

Pre-release publicity on this trilogy was quite heavy, and as a result I eagerly awaited the arrival of the first of the books. The Illuminatus Trilogy will not be remembered as classic SF, but it will no doubt be the source of much controversy in Sarnines for the next year or so; it's that kind of book/series.

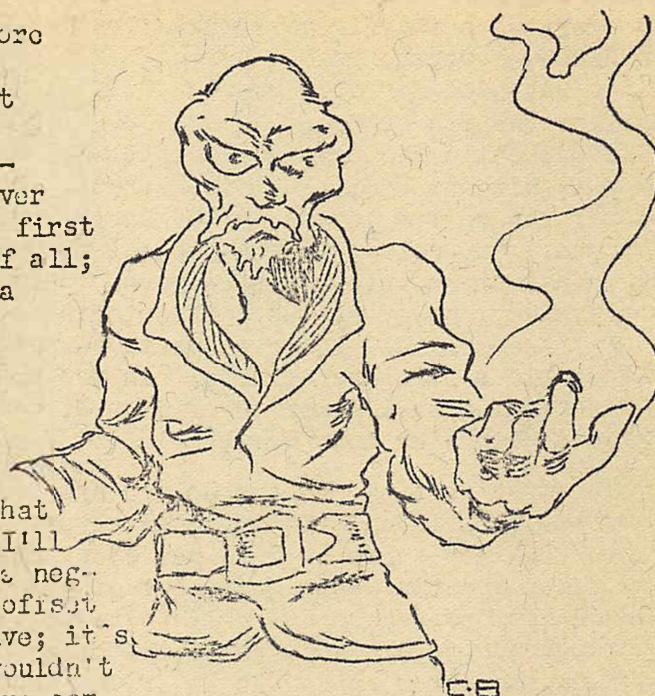
The Illuminatus Trilogy is a gigantic farce, folks; the trilogy begins with that deadpan feel that tries so hard to remain serious that you immediately suspect it. The premise of the book centers on the Illuminatus, an ancient, shrouded-in-mystery organization that, it is claimed, is responsible for assassinations, political upheavals, economic rises and falls, and social trends. The Illuminatus seems to have been involved in a mysterious bombing, and Saul Goodman, a police detective, is called in to investigate. Saul offers the central focus for the trilogy, although characters jump in and fade out so quickly that the reader is pulled into a thousand little whirlpools that whirl him in circles and then release him in exactly the same spot he began. Plotstrings begin and end nowhere, seemingly cast off or forgotten for the remainder of the novel. Fact and fiction is mixed liberally in the book, with quotes from such opposing sources as PLAYBOY and the NECRONOMICON appearing on opposing pages. Lovecraft himself makes an appearance in the trilogy, and countless references are made to his works. Assassins are revealed, then discarded; dead men prove to be quite alive.

It's a chaotic novel, a tremendous farce; it finally reaches its apex when, in the third volume, one of the characters decides they are all characters in a book. It grabs the reader, pulls him into the mire of subplots and refuses to let go.

The first volume of the long novel is fairly tame; while it hints at the confusion that follows, it never gives the reader a liberal dose of it. As you progress through



series, though, references become more and more esoteric, plotstrings become more liberally scattered, and characters dance in and out at a confusing pace. By the third volume, the gimmick has gotten old, the storyline has become stale, and Shea and Wilson fail to deliver the climax that had been foreshadowed in the first two books. This is the most disappointing of all; not that the authors tried to pull off such a difficult task, but that they seemingly lost interest in the final volume and gave the reader a mockery of a trilogy instead of a true conclusion.



Shea and Wilson offer numerous reviews of the book within its pages; if you find one that you feel inclined to agree with, feel free. I'll refrain from quoting any of them, because the negative reviews seem to be included merely to offset any negative reaction the series might receive; it's as if the authors are saying, "we knew you wouldn't understand what we were doing, so here's a pre-composed review to use, rather than admit your lack of insight." And that's the way the trilogy ends; it mocks the reader, contemptuously showing its (and the authors') unconcern for reader satisfaction. It is a bad trilogy--in fact, it's a horrid one--but the worst disappointment of all is that it presents the first segment to a good trilogy that Shea and Wilson lack either the talent or determination to deliver. At \$4.50, this entire series should definitely be passed up.--C. Biggers

THE WIND'S TWELVE QUARTERS. Ursula K. LeGuin. (Harper and Row - 8.95)

Of all the writers of SF to emerge in the 1960s, not one is more important today than Ursula Le Guin. Among other things, she is the first author in the field to win both the Hugo and the Nebula for the same novel twice; as a testimony to her talent, this speaks well of what a reader can expect from Le Guin.

THE WIND'S TWELVE QUARTERS is her first collection of short fiction, and as such it spans the time from her first SF to the recent award-winning short story, "The Day Before the Revolution." Twelve years of fiction, each with its own introduction written especially for this volume, are presented; the true testimony to her talent, though, is that "Seamley's Necklace" or "April in Paris" stand up as well today as they did twelve years ago, when they were the product of a new, unknown author. As an aid to the reader, the stories in this book are presented roughly in the order of creation, so you can follow the development of the Le Guin style to its present form.

This volume is long overdue; Harper and Row has made up for the absence of a book of collected short works by Le Guin by making this book a massive 302 pages, though, so it offers its money's worth in entertainment. The story, "Winter's King," set in the World of LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS, is undoubtedly the finest in the book; but none of the stories are disappointments, and that's a compliment to any author.

--Cliff Biggers

CARD FROM ROBERT BLOCH (10-8-75):

"A hasty note to you both; and a big thanks for FUTURE RETROSPECTIVE #4, which I enjoyed. In particular I appreciate the reviews, which I generally find myself agreeing with. I'm also grateful for information on books I haven't read--and, due to lack of time probably will never get to read. SF is getting a bit too big for anyone to keep up with without unlimited time and money, so you're performing a valuable and commendable service."



THE EXILE WAITING. Vonda N. McIntyre. (Nelson Doubleday--\$1.98) \*available from SF Book Club

This is Vonda McIntyre's first novel, and as a first novel it is certainly competent. She seems to be playing it safe here, using tried and true themes and ideas: Earth after The War, devastated by man at last, and populated by a race of pitiful, frightened leftovers of humanity. Naturally, after all that radiation, there are mutants and that's what the novel is about: a telepathic girl, Mischa, whose desire to leave Earth for better worlds is the force that is driving her to accomplish her ambition at any cost.

Once again, the character of Mischa was only competent; I didn't feel any femaleness coming through, as I do whenever I read an Andre Norton book--at least no femaleness that I recognized. For all that names mean, Mischa could have been a male with very little changes necessary. Perhaps Mischa had to be this way--cold, ruthless, no soft inner core at all--in the harsh world of the future that the author created. However, upon meeting Jan Hikaru and developing the beginnings of love, Mischa becomes more female; it could be that a male character is necessary to bring out the female traits in a character. Strangely enough, I must confess that for a third of the book I thought Jan was female also; it was odd that the characters gave the reverse sex impression from what they really were--at least that was the impression I got from the book.

THE EXILE WAITING is a slow starter; I didn't get really interested in the plot and plight of the characters until about halfway through the book. The meeting of Jan and Mischa is about the time things begin to pick up. From there on, it is an enjoyable book to read; the author has created some interesting details necessary to flesh out a world: the feudal system of civilization in which the people live, contrasted with the underground society of mutants who have been banished to a life of wandering because of their differences, and the pseudosibs, laboratory twins whose brains are linked telepathically and who can provide the only means of Mischa's escape from Earth. If you can stick with the story, it is most definitely worth your time, if for nothing more than the pleasure of reading an author's first novel.

THE STOCHASTIC MAN. Robert Silverberg. (Harper & Row -- \$7.95)

In the past eight years, Silverberg has proven himself as a superb author of SF, the equal of any figure in the field. Beginning with THE BOOK OF SKULIS, Silverberg began moving out of the strictly-SF field and into a more human, introverted type of fiction--and it's a style that he's handled well, for every novel he's produced since then has been an excellent combination of science fiction and internal analyses of the main characters.

THE STOCHASTIC MAN is no exception to this general pattern; while it is one of his most science fictional works in the past four years, it still devotes itself to the development/destruction of a character, Lew Nichols. Nichols is a stochastic man--an individual able to see into the future, figuratively, and make amazingly accurate predictions regarding public opinion; this makes him a prime candidate for a campaign administrator for an up-and-coming presidential candidate. The novel begins to alter its directions when Lew comes into contact with Martin Carvajal--for Carvajal is a true stochastic man, whose ability to see into the future via random glimpses is useful but uncontrolled. Nichols is quickly pulled into a tangled, interlocked relationship with Carvajal that costs him his job, his marriage, and threatens his sanity. Silverberg takes the readers into the persona of Nichols, allowing us to feel his confusion as he comes to realize the futility of all he has done.

THE STOCHASTIC MAN is one of the small handful of novels written in the past year that is even slightly deserving of a Hugo nomination; and the fact that it's Silverberg's next-to-the-last novel for a while, due to his retirement, will no doubt insure the book's becoming a winner in Kansas City next Labor Day. But a Hugo would not be a gift, but a well-deserved honor for this novel; weak conclusion notwithstanding, THE STOCHASTIC MAN is a cohesive, complex novel that fully demonstrates Robert



Silverberg's immense talent at depicting human beings, with all their intricacies and irrationalities. This book is definitely worth getting in the Harper & Row hardcover; it's too impressive to wait on until the paperback edition is published.

--Cliff Biggers

CARD FROM JAMES TIPTREE, JR. (11-13-75):

"Do I thank Susan, Cliff or Whom for your warm review of WARM WORLDS? Anyway, dear Whom, it brought joy to this moody, somber, superficial, joyless heart and although I am learning it isn't quite conventional to thank reviewers, I couldn't resist.

"You're quite right, too, of course--I have the insane idea that the Reader wants every word to count and doesn't want to be bored by redundancy and filler. So I swear to do what probably 9/10s of the readers wish I would not. Thanks for liking it; we really write for our friends, you know. The strange, crazy, lovable, disreputable, quarrelsome network of those who....those who.... Oh hell. Those who need a hole in the ceiling."

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CLIFF COMMENTS: Due to a foul-up in communication around here, I misunderstood Susan's intentions and put the reviewer-credits on the contents page; the initials immediately after the page number indicate the reviewer. This was quite an awkward situation, since most people managed to miss it; thus, we'll revert to the post-review initialling with this issue, which is much easier to follow. The review of WARM WORLDS was by me, though, to save you from looking it up.

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((I've forgotten to credit a few reviews this time, though--see contents pg.))

THE YEAR'S BEST FANTASY STORIES. Lin Carter. (DAW UY 1199 -- \$1.25)

Lin Carter is probably best known as an editor--during the time in which he was in charge of the Ballantine Adult Fantasy line, a great number of important fantasy works were issued or brought back into print. Don Wollheim must have been impressed also, for he has chosen Lin Carter to prepare for DAW an anthology of outstanding shorter works in the fantasy field. This sort of book is sorely needed today; now that Ballantine has become more of a reprint company than an important publisher of new material, there is no major fantasy publisher (unless Centaur Press could qualify) in the mass-market paperback field. So DAW is now attempting to fill in the gap, using the editor who made the Ballantine Adult Fantasy line so successful.

Somewhere along the line, though, the magic failed; instead of producing an outstanding volume of fantasy, Lin Carter has put together a humdrum collection whose most outstanding work is scheduled for printing in Carter's still-unavailable KADATH. Of course, the fault can't lie solely with Carter; in all honesty, he's had awfully little to choose from in the past two years. But nonetheless, the reader should be able to expect a bit more for his money.

Carter's biggest fault is his ingratiating tendency to work his name or the name of one of his own works into virtually every paragraph. Carter overrates himself as an author constantly in this book, even to the extent of using one of his own stories in the collection, and a shoddy Thongor story at that.

While the book is an overall disappointment, the appearance of a Hannes Bok tale, "Jewel Quest," and an outstanding L. Sprague de Camp work, "The Emperor's Fan," make it bearable. The rest of the stories range from competent to fairly poor, and that makes THE YEAR'S BEST FANTASY STORIES a pretty critical statement of the quality of fantasy today. If these are the best, I'm glad that I've managed to miss the worst.

If you're a fantasy-buff like I am, this is worth picking up; otherwise, the money can be better spent elsewhere. If only the overall quality had lived up to the standards set by the impeccable George Barr cover...

--Cliff Biggers



"For reasons mainly concerned with a lack of time, I read a bare minimum of SF nowadays, and thus most of your reviews are beyond my capability to reply to. I do enjoy the letters you get from various pros detailing their works in progress, but there isn't a great deal one can say about a listing of the next five Phil Farmer books. I"

"About the only sf book I've read of late has been Smith's NORSTRILIA which I thoroughly enjoyed (despite thinking the Ballantine package was mediocre at best!), so I'm pleased to see your favorable comments concerning it. From that novel I'm hard-pressed to explain the almost mythical reputation Smith holds in certain circles, but it's certainly an enjoyable and interesting work.

"Being a native of Toronto, home of the Harlequin publishing empire, I'm naturally interested in reactions to Laser Books, and I believe this is the first formal review of one of Elwood's new brainchildren that I've seen. I know Tom Monteleone, and he seems like a very pleasant fellow, but I'm afraid I'll never be able to forget the reading that Gardner Dozois gave from SEEDS OF CHANGE at last year's Disclave. Gardner had an entire roomful of fan in hysterics by simply reading passages from Tom's book which Laser had been giving away free at the con. Probably the passages he read took on added depths of inanity from his clever reading style, but he must have had something pretty poor to work with. When I eventually got around to reading my own copy of the book, I gave up after three or four pages. I've heard that two of the first seven Laser books are readable, but that's hardly a good percentage. But I'm sure they'll be a popular series, if only from Harlequin's sophisticated distribution methods and Kelly's attractive covers. Seems a shame that sf should be further tainted with such mediocrity...

I have to admit that I was most interested in the fanzine reviews as most of my reading of late has been in the fanzine area. You seem to have a more serious orientation than I do, rating fanzine dealing with reviews and writers and sf above well-written fanzines which deal with non-professional themes, but that's okay. I always enjoy seeing other people reacting to the fanzines I've read and either enjoyed or been bored by..."

SUSAN COMMENTS: I'm afraid I must disagree with you concerning the Freas covers. While Kelly is my favorite sf illustrator, his covers for Laser have been mass-produced hackwork with virtually none of the Freas talent in evidence. I wish he'd improve the quality and vary the layout of the covers so as to eradicate the feeling of sameness.

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THE BOOK OF PARADOX. Louise Cooper. (Bell 3343 -- \$1.25)

The Frazetta cover on this book leads you to expect yet another hackwork sword and sorcery novel; instead, THE BOOK OF PARADOX is one of the most enigmatic books I've read in years, full of contradictions and convolutions that flow together to relate a marvelous story of death, love and the search for a second life.

Cooper writes this book in conjunction with Tarot cards, so that each chapter (and the introduction of each major character of the story) is tied in with a certain type of card. This has its obvious advantages and disadvantages; while it makes many of the characters predictable, it also helps keep the reader in suspense as he follows the development of the story--a paradoxical situation, but what else would you expect with this book?

And paradoxical it is; the conclusion of the novel is both satisfying and confounding, serving as a perfect accent to the book in its entirety. This is a type of book that would suffer if it were imitated--the originality is one of its primary drawing cards--but THE BOOK OF PARADOX itself is an enjoyable two hours of reading, well worth the cost of the book.

---Susan Biggers



POSTCARD FROM JOE GREEN (10/19/75):

"Many thanks for FR 4. Very good, as usual. Wish I had as much time to read as you two. Am just now able to finish DUNE, after all these years.

"By and large I agree with your expressed tastes and preferences (the only way to judge a critic is, do we agree on prior known books? If not, forget it! I don't accept anyone's judgement as automatically superior to mind. Of course, when it comes to movie reviews, PLAYBOY is extremely reliable. If they hated it, I'll like it, and vice versa.). But I can't agree at all! on Cordwainer Smith. His style is not bad, just different! And Effective! You ignore his power of imagination, one of the fines in our field. And you couldn't be more wrong about his short stories. Most of them are gems, brilliant and concise efforts to convey a unique vision. He was one of the best. I have been a fan of his since "Scanners" in 1950."

SUSAN COMMENTS: Cliff did a double-take when he first looked over the card, because he thought he had recommended the Ballantine NONFERTILIA. But in re-reading it, I can see how it might appear that he was putting down the Smith style; he wasn't saying it was bad, just that he expected it to be bad. When I read the book, my entire feeling was, "if anyone else was to try this, they'd fall on their faces." Smith takes something totally preposterous and makes it work, somehow; I've yet to try his shorter fiction, but after receiving a negative recommendation from Cliff and a positive recommendation from you, I'll have to try THE BEST OF CORDWAINER SMITH.

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THE ELLUVON GIFT. Simon Lang. (Avon — \$1.25)

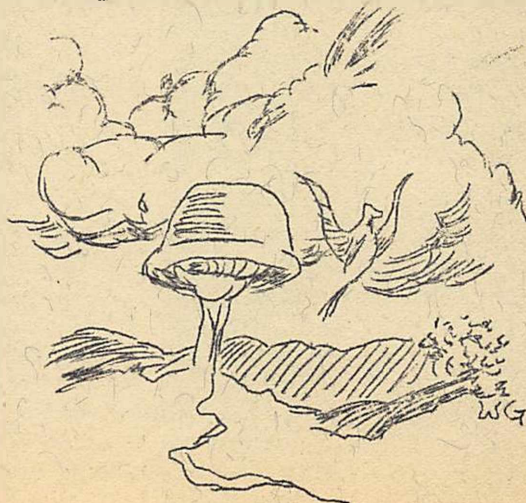
THE ELLUVON GIFT follows Simon Lang's ALL THE GODS OF EISERNON as the second book of the Eisernon series. Chronicling the adventures of Science Officer Dao Marik aboard the intragalactic Federation sub Skipjack, it has all the ingredients of classic space opera.

In THE ELLUVON GIFT we have the sudden appearance of a mysterious alien race. Where are they from and what do they want? Lang poses these questions as Conflict. He writes a fast-paced, interesting tale of suspense and intrigue as his protagonist works to answer the questions posed. The book ends as Lang tries to sidestep the issue with a fallacious answer and a promise of adventure to come.

In THE ELLUVON GIFT Lang is marking time. His whole purpose, I suspect, is to advance the character relationships from the first book and set up his third volume. Well conceived and more fully developed, ALL THE GODS OF EISERNON is a better book than THE ELLUVON GIFT. While Lang gives some background from ALL THE GODS, it isn't enough. You need to read both books.

Simon Lang uses a disconcerting mixture of well-worn cliches and fresh ideas in a writing style that grips. I enjoyed the first book very much and ripped through the second in a couple of sittings. For the reasons stated above, I was left with a bad taste in my head, and yet, here I sit with an itch to get my hands on the next book.

--Wade Gilbreath





CARD FROM L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP: (16 Oct 1975)

"Thanks for the copy of FUTURE RETROSPECTIVE #4 & for the kind remarks about my Lovecraft. As for the less kind remarks, on a couple of points I agree with the reviewer and have tried, in editing the book for PB publication next year, to mend the faults complained of. It has been noted that Conover's HPL is a more attractive man than mine; but that is only natural, since Conover was a pen pal of HPL only in the latter's last year, when he had given up most of his more eccentric habits, poses and prejudices and was, one might say, at his best. My book, which includes his spoiled childhood, maladjusted adolescence, & psychoneurotic youth, is bound to give a less favorable impression."

CLIFF COMMENTS: While I did note that your opinion of Lovecraft seemed to differ from my opinion of Lovecraft in portions of your HPL: A BIOGRAPHY, there were no sections in which I felt you were presenting your opinion as total fact. I feel that many of the Lovecraftians who have devastated the book so resoundingly in print underestimate the ability of the reader to differentiate your biographical presentation of data about HPL with statements based on your opinion. I've seen the issue raised that a biography should contain none of the writer's opinions, only fact. I'm unwilling to accept that definition as a set standard for what a biography must be, because I feel a successful biography must be more than a compendium of dry facts. Whether the opinions agree or differ, I feel that HPL: A BIOGRAPHY is a valuable book to any fan of H.P. Lovecraft. When you become a fan of a specialized genre, or of a particular author's works, you find that many of your fellowfans will engage in picking nits rather than looking at the overall presentation; this seems to be the case with the biography. To be sure, I disagree strongly with some of your conclusions, but I can see how you drew them and do not see how a fair-minded reader can condemn the total biography for its opinion-content.

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RED NAILS. Robert E. Howard. (Don Grant -- \$15). Illustrated by George Barr.

Don Grant is a high-quality limited-edition publisher who has been involved in reprinting the entirety of R.E. Howard's CONAN fiction in deluxe hardcover illustrated editions; RED NAILS is the fourth such volume, and is destined to sell out in almost as little time as the first volume, THE PEOPLE OF THE BLACK CIRCLE.

RED NAILS is an expensive volume, produced only for the avid Conan fan. It's a slim book, 142 large-sized pages, printed in sepia on excellent paper and perfectly bound. It contains four color plates, four full-page line drawings and numerous small illustrations by George Barr, an excellent artist and the best illustrator in the series thus far.

Story-wise, this is typical Howard-Conan material, although its higher quality than many of the Conan tales. RED NAILS is a story of swordsmanship and sorcery inside the walls of a dead city; it is a tale of seductresses and warrior-women; it is a tale of adventure and suspense. This is the kind of sword and sorcery at which Robert Howard excelled, and that makes it the most impressive book of the four to appear from Grant. I suspect, though, that those of you looking merely for reading material will be more satisfied with the Conan paperbacks from now-defunct Lancer (if you can find them used); these books from Don Grant are not for casual readers, but for Howardian collectors, and are prices commensurate with the quality of their production.

Only one complaint comes to mind on these Grant Conan volumes, and that is the lack of appeal of the grey dustwrappers with only a small line-drawing printed in red in the lower right-hand cover of each book; color dustwrappers would have been much more impressive and would have added immensely to the beauty of the books. Nonetheless, RED NAILS is worth the investment if you can afford it and if you enjoy the type of sword and sorcery Robert Howard wrote. --Cliff Biggers



THE EXPENDABLES. Richard Avery. (Fawcett -- \$1.25@)  
#1 - The Deathworms of Kratos (P3306) #2 - The Rings of Tantalus (P3307)

To start off a new series of pulp-style SF of some quality, Fawcett could have done a number of things--fortunately, they did all the right ones. Two excellent covers by Ken Kelly--both of which relate to the stories--and a good cover price (\$1.25) should help Avery become a high-selling author.

Both books are very readable and moderately plausible. They bring to mind a couple of older science fiction series--Starwolf by Edmond Hamilton and Lucky Starr by Isaac Asimov--but definitely lack the juvenility of much space-opera SF.

The Expendables are misfits on Earth for various reasons--political, racial, mental, physical, etc.--and their job is to "prove" planets for colonization since they are the least likely to be missed.

Avery has taken the overpopulated, resource-depleted-Earth scenario and added a new twist; faster-than-light travel and teleportation have been proven to work, but people must be put into suspended animation to avoid insanity during the trips. Robots do the work on the FTL trips to enable the human population to arrive on the new planets, "Proven" for colonization, in excellent physical and mental health. The Expendables could be risked, however; and they take quite a number of risks in these first two books, and no doubt will take many more in the books to come.

In the first book, THE DEATHWORMS OF KRATOS, we meet the Expendables, led by James Conrad, stripped of his Space Service rank for disobeying orders. After a good bit of series preparation, Avery gets into the actual story, a routine plot of planet-proving that involves the overcoming of Deathworms--3 meters in diameter, 90 meters long and highly destructive. Routine, but competently done.

THE RINGS OF TANTALUS expands the group with the addition of 4 new members, one of whom is a saboteur for the Third World Nations. His job is to prove that the money going into the Expendables project should be spent on trying to improve a dying Earth. Once again, the plot is predictable formula work, but on a higher level than much of the pulp-type SF being done today.

I hope to see many more of these; they are for the hardcore SF fan (and pulp fan) and the emphasis is on action and adventure. They're highly recommended.

--Barry Hunter

THE GREEN GENE. Peter Dickinson. (DAW UY120 -- \$1.25)

Peter Dickinson is a British author who keeps turning out very British SF along the lines of Edmund Cooper or Richard Cowper. His books are enjoyable, well-paced and manage to pull off the most ludicrous plot-devices very smoothly--and there is no better example of this than in THE GREEN GENE.

Dickinson takes a whimsical plot idea and handles it in an extremely-deadpan fashion; in THE GREEN GENE, all the Celtic peoples have turned green, thereby causing all sorts of racial tensions between the verdant Celts and the traditionally-hued Saxons. Then an Indian, "Pete" Humayan, claims to be able to track down the gene that causes the green coloration and is immediately brought to England, where he serves to present to the reader an outsider's look at the racially segregated culture that has grown up around the green/pink racial tensions.

The book offers a very satirical look into English culture, and at the same time tells a well-paced story of suspense, espionage and strife in a country torn between two races. Dickinson's bizarre characters give the book a remarkable flavor, accenting the humor of the story perfectly. All in all, THE GREEN GENE is one of the better ways to spend a buck and a quarter nowadays.

--Susan Biggers



## A HANDFUL OF FANZINE REVIEWS

by Cliff Biggers

This has been a good time for fanzines; due to trades, convention purchases, etc., I've accumulated quite a large stack of fanzines for review this time--more, in fact, than either of us can possibly hope to get through. Some reviews are included in this issue; the fanzines we don't get to will have to carry over until FR #6.

The highlight of the past few months is the arrival of the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth issues of OUTWORLDS, published by Bill Bowers (PO Box 2521, North Canton, OH 44720). The 25th issue is primarily LoCs, but the subject matter is so varied that the issue makes interesting reading for anyone, whether familiar with prior issues of OW or not. The 26th issue, though, is the best fanzine to come through the mails in many months, managing to usurp the pinnacle usually held by Dick Geis' SFR; and that's a hard feat to accomplish. The Piers Anthony/Dean Koontz dispute comes to a head with dual articles/columns, which help to bring the entire issue out of the vague shadows it had been in and present readers with facts about the Koontz/Anthony battle. David Gerrold has some important things to say regarding Worldcons, particularly the fannish cliqueishness that seems to have recently grown up around them. Poul Anderson presents a provocative article on American foreign policy, one I disagree with almost entirely but must nonetheless give serious consideration to. And of course there's the casual, smooth writing of Bill Bowers himself, which is the cement that pulls the entire thing together. A four issue sub is well worth the \$4 cost.

SF ECHO presents a double issue, 23 & 24, and this hefty 164-page fanzine is well worth the \$2 that it costs (from Ed Connors, 1805 N. Gale Ave., Peoria, ILL 61604). SF ECHO is an odd-sized, bound fanzine that presents a superb collection of fannish articles, columns and LoCs. It's very unpretentious, informal and low-key. The only liability this issue has is the extreme amount of space devoted to the results of a poll handled by Paul Walker; this takes up about fifty pages, and the question/answer session really becomes tedious after a while. This is a fanzine that takes hold of the reader quickly, though, and even overlong sections like this can't prevent your enjoyment of it.

Speaking of fanzines that take hold--there's always YANDRO, from Robert & Juanita Coulson (Rt. 3, Hartford City, IN 47348). Subscriptions are \$3 for 5 issues, which is a low price for the material you receive. The Coulson family contains a number of entertaining writers, and the latest issue, #233, also contains non-Coulson material by Bob Tucker and a hilarious piece concerning cats and cat food by Michael Coney. My only complaint is the exclusive use of what I term (with some disdain) "mini-reviews;" I never feel I know why the Coulsons like or dislike a book, because they never let the review develop fully. I can't fully accept a three-line comment as a review, and ten-twelve lines just barely begin to fall into the classification. If you enjoy "recommended/not recommended" types of reviews, though, you'll have absolutely no gripes with the zine. I recommend it, mini-reviews notwithstanding.

WONDER POINT #2 is a bit of a disappointment after the low-key but solid first issue, but still shows promise. The primary disappointment is the absence of most of the material alluded to in the first issue; there are reasons for that, I've been informed by Sue, but I was really looking forward to that Biggle interview... Some good reviews, fair artwork and a piece of fanfiction I found to be a little laborious due to the stilted, grandiose dialogue (fiction by Jack Young) fill out the issue. My primary criticism is the page wasted on a correction of errors in Gary Steele's con report of Rivercon; outside of apas, none of Sue's readership would have seen the con report, making the correction useless. Worth trading for, and a 5/\$3 subscription should be worthwhile; being produced at a con, this issue was of lower quality than future issues should be. (Sue Phillips, 936 Packard, Louisville, KY 40217). 21



Roger Sween (Box 408, Platteville, WI 53818) sends along a copy of FAN PUBLISHING RECORD #4, which is nothing more than a listing of fanzines he has received, cost, frequency, and contents. "Nothing more" is really an unkind phrase to use, because that implies a disappointment with this issue; on the contrary, I found Roger's listing to be invaluable, and furthermore I recommend that all fanzine editors send him a copy of their zine in trade. He lists everything he receives in here, and the listing alone should be valuable to the faned needing a little publicity. If you don't publish a fanzine, this issue can be utilized as a buying guide with superb results; if you wish to subscribe, send Roger \$3 for a ten-issue subscription. I hope the response is enough so that Roger can keep FPR running; it's assured of a fine recommendation from me for the duration of its run.

And there's DON-O-SAUR #43, from Don Thompson (7498 Canosa Court, Westminster, COLO 80030); this issue is primarily a con report on his experiences with Aussiecon, and the long report gives Don a chance to show off his talent at personal fanwriting; I was most impressed with the quality of the report, as opposed to the countless reports I've seen that seemed to be nothing more than a convention schedule in retrospect, or a listing of who ate with whom when, etc.; this report gives us shards of memory, feelings, impressions, and a lot of Don C. Thompson. No price listed that I can find offhand, but write him and find out about getting a copy; it's well worth having for any fan of superb writing.

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As I said earlier, there are a number of fanzines here that we meant to review but just didn't have the space for; FORERUNNER QUARTERLY, SIMULACRUM #2, SFR #15, CHAO #16 #16, KARASS #17, FANTASIAE #31, DYNATRON—just to name a few. I'm hoping that either Susan or I can hit a few of those next issue, along with anything else we receive between now and then.

For the variation in printing in this issue, we apologize, also; using some Hoyer stencils we had purchased from nearby fans proved to be a bad idea for FR, because they were rather old, and as a result they had a tendency to cut hyper-thin lines and to chop out "s"s, "B"s, and anything else that seemed to qualify for the honors. Next issue will be done on the old standby, the AB Dick F2660s, which provide excellent reproduction at a reasonable cost. In other words, don't gripe to us about the printing—we hate it as much as you do, and we already know about it.

Next FR (#6) is due out about six to eight weeks after you receive this one. Let's hope we succeed.

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