

S O N O F T H E W S F A J O U R N A L

SF/Fantasy News/Review 'zine -- 2nd Jan. '74 Issue -- (Vol. 20, #6; Whole #120)
Editor & Publisher: Don Miller - - - - - 25¢ per copy, 10/\$2.00

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In Brief --

As most of you could see from #119, our month-long layoff from publishing may have improved our eyesight a bit--but it did nothing for the mimeo problem. We have since had the repairman in, and he did all that he could--so we won't know whether the "operation" has been a success until we run this issue off. Cross your fingers....

We now have custody of an offset machine (ABDICK 320); it will be a while, however, before we begin running things off on it, as we have supplies to get in and a lot to learn about its operation and maintenance. Part of TWJ #83 and most of #84 will be run on it, if all goes well. And we are expecting delivery of a ditto machine any day now. If all three machines work properly, things will be looking up for 1974! (Now, paper will become so scarce and supplies so expensive that we won't be able to afford to publish anything....)

Don't forget the two polls announced in SOTWJ #113 and repeated last issue; deadline is 31 Jan. '74 (we will accept late entries from traders and overseas readers as long as poll results have not yet been published). Also, don't forget to complete and return TWJ/SOTWJ Questionnaires (deadline 15 Jan '74, but late returns accepted under same conditions as poll results).

We have a lot of catching-up to do, after the month-long layoff. So expect next few issues to have fewer (but longer) sections than usual. The pile of fanzines and books that arrived in Dec. has to be seen to be believed.... We will also be cleaning out our newspaper clipping files under "The Media Morgue".

SOTWJ is approx. weekly; subs: 25¢ (10p) ea., 10/\$2 (80p) or multiples thereof; all subs incl. any issue(s) of THE WSFA JOURNAL pubbed during sub (count as 2 or more issues, dep. on length). For info on airmail, "Collector's" (3rd-class) subs, ads, Overseas Agents (list in #95, revisions in #114), etc., write ed. Address Code: A, Overseas Agent; C, Contributor; H, L, or M, WSFA Honorary, Life, or Regular Member, resp. (# = # of WSFA issues left on sub); K, Something of yours is mentioned/reviewed herein; N, You are mentioned herein; R, For Review; S, Sample; T, Trade (Trade/Sub details in #89); W or X, Subber via 1st- or 3rd-class mail, resp. (# = # of issues left on sub); X, Last issue, unless....

TWJ/SOTWJ

% D. Miller

12315 Judson Road

Wheaton, Maryland

U.S.A. 20906

TO: MICHAEL RESNICK (W-7)
At. 1, Box 26
St. Mary's Road
Libertyville, IL 60048

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VERTEX 1:6 (Feb. '74) (Mankind Pub. Co., 8060 Melrose Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90046; ed. Donald J. Pfeil; bi-monthly; 8" x 10 5/8"; \$1.50 ea., 6/\$8, 12/\$14, 24/\$24 (Canada, add \$1/yr.; elsewhere, add \$2/yr.)) -- 100 pp., incl. covers; front cover by Don Davis; interior illos by Stevan Arnold, Alicia Austin, Roger MacGowan, Monte Rogers, Susan Jenkins; cartoon by Bill Rotsler. Fiction: "Mission for a Veteran", by Neil Shapiro; "Heisenberg is Dead", by Richard Ashby; "One Little Room an Everywhere", by Joseph F. Patrouch, Jr.; "And No Potatoes", by Walt Liebscher; "Guilty as Charged", by Alice Laurence & William Carlson; "The Mars Stone", by Paul Bond; "A Matter of Taste", by Mary McClellan Johnson; "The Schlemihl Hypothesis", by Leonard Tushnet; "Nobody Lives Around There", by Gregory Benford; "Vampire's Lament", by Don Kerr. Features: Articles ("The Unhuman Explorers", by James Sutherland; "Selenography", by Jay Arrow; "The Image of Women in Science Fiction", by Joanna Russ); "Vertex Interviews Philip K. Dick", by Arthur Byron Cover; "Designs for Outer Space", by Don Pfeil (Apollo patches); Editorial; "Moment in History" (Monument to the Mercury Seven); News & Reviews.

WEIRD TALES 47:3 (Winter, '73) (Leo Margulies; 8230 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90048; ed. Sam Moskowitz; quarterly; 6 3/8" x 9 3/8"; 75¢ ea.) -- 96 pp. / covers; front cover by Bill Edwards(?--can't make it out); interior illos by Don Rico. Fiction: "The Balloon Tree", by Albert Page Mitchell (18??); "Sea Curse", by Robert E. Howard (WEIRD TALES, 5/28); "The Terror of the Water-Tank", by William Hope Hodgson (BLUE BOOK, 9/07); "Chicken Soup", by Katherine MacLean & Mary Kornbluth; "The Figure with the Scythe", by August Derleth & Mark Schorer (THE TRYOUT, 1/27); "The Cats of Rome", by Mirian Allen deFord; "Ghostly Hands", by deFord (TALES OF MAGIC & MYSTERY, 1/28); "The Double Tower", by Clark Ashton Smith & Lin Carter; "The Mysterious Card", by Cleveland Moffett (THE BLACK CAT, 2/96); "The Mysterious Card Unveiled", by Moffett (TBC, 8/96); "The Splendid Apparition", by Robert W. Chambers (?); "The Dramatic in My Destiny", by Emma Frances Dawson (THE CALIFORNIAN, 1/80). Features: Verse ("The House", by H.P. Lovecraft; "Time", by Olaf Stapledon; "Challenge", by Virgil Finlay); Articles ("William Hope Hodgson--The Final Years", by Sam Moskowitz; "How We Found Circe", by A. Merritt (THE AMERICAN WEEKLY, '42, as part of The Story Behind the Story)); "The Eyrie" (lettercolumn).

THE MEDIA MORGUE

TV Notes -- ABC-TV is planning a "MAD Magazine TV Special", with animation by Don Martin, Jack Davis, Mort Drucker, Dave Berg, & Prokias. They also plan a remake (script by Carol Sobieski), of the 1950 mystery classic, Diabolique. And, buoyed by the very high ratings for their screenings of the first three Apes films, CBS-TV is getting increasingly serious about a weekly Apes series next year. ## Kohoutek's comet has been receiving extended coverage from the local networks; unfortunately, it has failed to live up to its initial promise. ## Things you probably missed (and should watch for next time around): WETA-TV's (hopefully) annual reenactment of Norman Corwin's radio drama, "The Plot to Overthrow Christmas" (the third time we've seen it--this time in the hospital--and we still haven't got it on tape....); the CBS Playhouse 90 presentation of Brian Moore's Catholics; "The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club" (WETA-TV; another Lord Peter Wimsey adventure for those who liked the very fine "Clouds of Witness"); a one-hour CBS-TV special on comets; "The Borrowers" (NBC Hall of Fame presentation of children's fantasy by Mary Norton). ## The recent spate of "Frankenstein" films on TV received extensive coverage in the local press. Worthy of note is the WASHINGTON POST's "The Monster Mish-Mish" (9/12/73; by Alan Kriegsman; discusses the old films and spinoffs, and the new films: Thames TV's b&w version starring Ian Holm ("a somewhat slow and overearnest film, which was nevertheless quite compelling in its peak moments"); NBC's four-hour "Frankenstein: The True Story" ("long on spectacle but short on genuine mood"), starring Michael Sarrazin; and a three-hour ABC-TV version, starring Bo Svenson, which Kriegsman failed to see).

(dissecting)

^ THE HEART OF THE MATTER:
Magazines for Sep., 1973

Operational Procedures
Supervised by
Richard Delap

I count four stories of especial interest from a total of nearly thirty in this month's magazines, and while there are several other readable items among the supply, the month again does not average out much better than the preceeding months of undistinguished effort.

It should be noted that F&SF has another "special" issue, this one dedicated to the very deserving Frederik Pohl, with an odd but nonetheless interesting appreciation by Lester del Rey and Mark Owings' well-researched bibliographical list. WEIRD TALES has increased the number of new stories, but the reprints are of better quality, with a very good story in this issue by Gustav Meyrink (author of The Golem) and some mildly entertaining items by Bradbury, Marti-Ibanez, and (surprise!) Robert E. Howard. And GALAXY once again returns to a monthly format. (Will this attempt at a monthly last longer than the one in 1968? Flip a coin....)

You might as well zip through most of this month's offerings speedily and hope for a higher average in October, when both F&SF and GALAXY have anniversary issues with an "all-star" lineup.

FANTASTIC -- September:

Serial:

The Son of Black Morca (conclusion) -- Alexei & Cory Panshin.

Novelette:

The Stuff of Time -- Gordon Eklund.

Alfred Newkom is an ambitious man, and as such he is not willing to let the disappointing realities of the day destroy his plans for glory. So he invents a time machine--but a very special one that exists in his own head, one which carries him to the future where his fame (as inventor of the time machine) has gained him wide influence. Eklund, too, is ambitious but not adept enough to make a viable story out of this rather contrived psychological fantasy. The basic idea is somewhat clever but it cuts blindly with the clumsy surgery it performs on its characters and lays open nothing more than a few well-established cliches.

Short Stories:

A Witch in Time -- Janet Fox.

Fox's perplexing fantasy is interesting for its individual scenes of slightly mad, sometimes surreal descriptions of a young witch, Arcana, who is kidnapped and forced to undergo a quest into the heart of Time itself. Arcana herself is the only solidarity to which the reader can cling in this backwards, forwards, upside-down journey that almost makes sense and never quite manages it. I'm not sure Fox ever meant to do more than give the reader a good mind-tweak for a moment or two, but at that she seems to have succeeded quite well. Good of kind.

Dem Bones -- John K. Diomedes.

The setting is the black ghetto and the characters are pimps, whores and youngsters who respond to their environment the best way they know how. The place of the story is "heaven", according to the story's blurb (which spells it out for readers who won't quite catch the drift from the story itself), and Diomedes's attitude is not so much cynical as objective--we are conditioned to our own heavens and hells. You may not agree, but the story is slick and nicely written.

The Nights of Dreadful Silence -- Glen Cook.

With a sorcerer and dumb hero working together to gain a pretty but none-too-virginal princess, Cook tries a humorous turn on a standard fantasy and turns out a so-so story that never quite works the way it should. He shies away from the bawdiness that could turn it into a very good farce and is never quite able

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DISSECTING THE HEART OF THE MATTER (Continued) --

to concoct the witty dialogues necessary to make it really funny. A nice try but none too successful.

AFC -- Karl T. Pflock.

A salesman is slowly being driven out of his mind by "visions" of horrible creatures on an alien world. His doctor's therapy is not working and it seems the salesman is doomed to a mental hospital. So far, fairly ordinary stuff, but then Pflock explains the situation with an extraneous third character who recounts a similar plot in an SF story he's just read. All very neatly tied up, of course, but an obscenely contrived mess that wouldn't convince a five-year-old retard. Worthless drivel.

Moment of Truth in Suburb Junction -- David R. Bunch.

I often have trouble distinguishing between Bunch's meaningful and meaningless tales--and I suspect he writes both in about equal number--but my unease seems to be the delight of many readers, so this newest "fable" may please Bunch fans. The moment of truth comes from injections given by an old man to all the people of Suburb Junction, but like much of Bunch's work the satire is diffuse and littered with seeming traps of trivia. Bunch fans will eat it up; the rest of us will have to search for more identifiable snacks.

Isaiah -- Barry Malzberg.

A touchy subject, religion, but SF, perhaps most of all literatures, has turned it every way but loose. Here Malzberg examines the Jewish faith in light of modern concepts as a man seeks to find the binding element of a persistent faith. What he finds, however, is variety, and when he reports his find--well, something obviously must be done. The concluding touch of irreverence is very carefully balanced against a sober lead-in and I think Malzberg makes his point well. Interesting.

* * * *

ANALOG -- September:

Serial:

The Far Call (part two) -- Gordon R. Dickson.

Novelette:

Override -- George R. R. Martin.

The corpse handlers on the planet Grotto--men who use corpses for the hard labor of digging out rare swirlstones from cave walls, corpses reanimated and controlled with "synthabrain"--are threatened with expulsion from Grotto when one powerful man who detests the use of corpses acquires control of the mining concession. There are problems in handling this story that Martin unfortunately never solves--the morality of using mindless human flesh is cautiously sidestepped, the "science" of reanimating corpses simplified to the point of the ridiculous, and the basic mystery-suspense plotting so constricting that every time a character tries to display real emotion he begins to sound unaccountably confused. Fair.

Short Stories:

Persephone and Hades -- Scott W. Schumack.

World War Three has nearly destroyed man and every trace of his presence in our solar system; all that remains is Necropolis, an underground "city" in Nevada where the last man alive, Robert Carver, is not quite a man. He is a cyborg and he watches over the computerized refuge, a tin god (pun intended) alone. But when the one survivor of cryonics storage revives, a young woman determined to stay alive, the story's game of deadly cat-and-mouse begins also to reveal the psychology of the battle's participants, which aids the suspense immeasurably. Perhaps not the most imaginative SF story of the year, but certainly one of the more entertaining and pleasurable ones. Very well done.

Prisoner 794 -- M. Max Maxwell.

The author postulates a new sort of isolation for unrehabilitable prisoners--orbiting prison cells in space. But a problem develops when the government tries

(Cont. next page)

DISSECTING THE HEART OF THE MATTER (Continued) --

to imprison the inventor of the "optibrain" (optical computer) used to run this new prison setup. In fact, quite a number of problems develop, all at the same time and all very convenient for dumping some action into an otherwise dull and silly story. Routine.

Crying Willow -- Edward Rager.

Campbell used to show a predilection for these short little fluffs that take a one-joke idea and beat it to death with half-wit humor. Rager here employs the idea that plants suffer pain and produce sound, but unlike Roald Dahl's horror classic, "The Sound Machine", Rager deals in laughs (?) about a sadist (who likes to torture plants) vs. LEAF (the League to Eliminate the Abuse of Flora). It's a witless and stupid story, hardly worth the time it takes to condemn it.

Martyr -- Laurence M. Janifer.

Five students seclude themselves with an atomic bomb and attempt to black-mail the government into conceding to their demands (which are never delineated). In resolving this dilemma, Janifer poses some questions on martyrdom, morality and violence, but forces his answers through a strainer of questionable suppositions. His students are morons and his mediator's success with them too certain to give the story (actually, another of those damned lectures) any suspense.

Science:

The Case for the Hydrogen-Oxygen Car -- William J. D. Escher.

* * * *

FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION -- September:

Special Frederik Pohl Section:

Frederik Pohl: Frontiersman -- Lester del Rey.

Frederik Pohl: Bibliography -- Mark Owings.

Novella:

In the Problem Pit -- Frederik Pohl.

I have been particularly pleased with Pohl's fiction since his recent return to a regular output, as he seems to have taken over the area of intense character development that Silverberg began and failed to mature in recent years. In this story he brings together a diverse group of ordinary people in the problem pit, an isolated cave in Puerto Rico maintained as a think-tank which combines the thoughts of both professionals and non-professionals for a new approach to problem solving. Pohl's own approach is an extremely effective diversity, leaping back and forth grandly but precisely between first- and third-person narrative interspersed with background information that is set aside in concise statements when, as Pohl wisely realizes, it cannot be dropped into the character interplay with conviction. Best of all are his characters, some of whom carry the load of plot cohesion but all of whom are real and determined personalities. There are no stick figures here. My one objection is the melodrama of the conclusion--not that it isn't possible, or even probable, just that it carries a tinge of being too definitive and conclusive for the realism that precedes it. It's a very minor objection, however, and the story is otherwise so successful that I heartily recommend you read it.

Novelette:

Cage a Man -- F. M. Busby.

Man's indomitable spirit, in all its brutality and gentleness, determinism and fear, is strikingly captured in this intense and remarkably adroit account of an alien race of lobster-like creatures, the Demu, who are set on surgically adapting all other species into images of themselves. As in Heinlein's The Puppet Masters, Busby convinces the reader that man will not be easily subdued, and better than Heinlein creates a human character whose struggle against such domination is explored on a very human level which gives some depth to the subtle reverse satire of the plot. Barton is imprisoned, deprived, tortured and humiliated in every conceivable physical and psychological way, but he finds within himself the methods to resist, to endure, to survive, in one of the longest and most emotionally exhausting and moving sequences I've read in quite some time. There is an

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DISSECTING THE HEART OF THE MATTER (Continued) --

expanded novel version of this story due soon. I'm certainly going to read it; I suggest you do the same. Excellent.

Short Stories:

The Helmet -- Barry N. Malzberg.

The world is ruled by scaled green aliens called the Masters, and humans wear helmets which make their domination seem more agreeable than it is. One man, unjustly accused of removing his helmet without permission, is then doomed to terrible punishment--to live with reality. There are of course many interpretations applicable here (Malzberg's primary goal seems religious) but none of them are good enough to alleviate the triteness of Malzberg's bland catalytic plot. I Wish I May, I Wish I Might -- Bill Pronzini.

The problem with this story is technique, not idea. The idea is an old one, that of a young boy who finds a bottle on the seashore and uncorks a djinn who gives him three wishes, and Pronzini offers a resolution both emotionally powerful and touching. Yet the story doesn't work, for rather than finishing his subtle buildup with an equally subtle finishing touch, Pronzini clouts the reader with a blunt-instrument climax that downgrades the reader's intelligence and destroys the careful mood. Disappointing.

The Cryonauts -- Edward Wellen.

World leaders have joined to sign an agreement to leave cryonics subjects in cold storage until the problems of overpopulation are solved. The meeting, however, becomes a shambles as the leaders suffer what seems to be an unexplainable delusion, and it's up to IC (Interpol Computer) to find an explanation. Wellen doesn't seem quite sure how to handle his story--he's wary of turning it into an all-out farce yet the rather dramatic conclusion is rushed through as if it weren't important. It's an interesting idea that, I'm afraid, just isn't carried out satisfactorily.

Reprint:

Dominions Beyond /1954/ -- Ward Moore.

Science:

Signs of the Times -- Isaac Asimov.

GALAXY -- September:

Serial:

Rendezvous with Rama (part one) -- Arthur C. Clarke.

Novelette:

The Old King's Answers -- Colin Kapp.

One more colonization story, this one with the supervising resident from Earth reporting the planet Loric Four, despite nearly perfect planetary conditions, is unsuitable for settlement. Earth is dubious and sends a survey team to check out this report, and one member, Professor Seemly Vivian, a highly professional but not cold woman, begins to slowly unravel the reasons for the resident's assessment. There's a catchy development involving the native life-form, bearlike creatures with highly evolved pheromone communication, but the plot is never excitingly ripened, ambling along at a steady but wearisome pace that crowds a lot of explanation into tiresomely long-winded dialogues. Routine.

Short Stories:

Triggerman -- Lou Fisher.

Keal is a player in a double game--first, a game of chess with an alien, in which Keal always loses but is ever forced to play again; second, as a triggerman sent along with several other men to reach a cave in the Colorado mountains, where he will press a button to retaliate for the atomic attack that has destroyed the country. Although Fisher is concerned with the human urge to resist domination, his symbolic character lacks humanity and real passion and is never more than an author's pawn. Fair.

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DISSECTING THE HEART OF THE MATTER (Continued) --Quickening -- W. Macfarlane.

Intricately plotted (with a novel's-worth of incident in less than 20 pages) and even more intricately detailed (with a whole alien world's social structure clearly mapped), Macfarlane once more shows his talented versatility to be deserving of more credit than he usually receives. His hero, CosCros, is a rebel against the "true" democracy of his world, and he becomes even more rebellious when a spaceship from Earth lands and its crew promises "instant" and total democracy for this democracy-loving world. CosCros' intelligence is keen and forces the reader to look sharply and re-examine accepted and established concepts of social good, morality, and necessity. The philosophy is perhaps arguable, but Macfarlane's approach is testy and determined and his story is a damned good shakedown.

Quarantine -- Doris Piserchia.

Isolationism is a basic form that adapts to many scales, as Piserchia demonstrates in this story of a woman who draws away from her husband, both of whom have drawn away from a plague-ridden world by barricading themselves in their apartment. This is a very simple sort of symbolism, too vague and singularly fashioned for more demanding readers, too thin in plot for those who want story development on a broader scale. It offers very little insight into the defeat and revenge that permeates its outlook.

Circle of Flies -- Michael Hatt.

A strange battle rages on and on over the surface of the planet Zetha, a planet due to self-destruct because of its erratic orbit. The native Gutus fight a division of the Terran Force (which itself consists of members from several humanoid species), a battle that seems to make little sense. Hatt moves from military stratagems to psychological exploration of the men in combat and the varied peccadillos that have placed them in this war-torn hell. A bit confusing at first, perhaps, the story builds quite carefully to a well-plotted and convincing conclusion. Good of kind.

And Baby Makes Three -- William J. Earls.

A young couple purchase a "baby", a lifelike robot doll that fast becomes the woman's primary interest in life, so real that she begins to ignore both her husband and the programming rules necessary to keep the doll in "good health". Earls comes through with a reasonably solid climax, but the difficulty comes with holding the reader's interest until he can pull his surprise. Since the story gives little exploration of the woman's psychological need and skims through on a very shaky premise, the reader may have, as I did, mixed feelings about the final effect. Fair.

* * * *

WEIRD TALES -- Fall:Short Stories:Eloi Eloi Lama Sabachthani -- William Hope Hodgson.

/Although actually a reprint, originally published in England, 1919, under the title "The Baumoff Explosion", this marks its first U.S. publication, and so qualifies as a "new" story./

While it has a weak introduction and suffers from its outdated "science", this story overcomes its drawbacks and rather clumsy dialogue to reach a quite effective dramatic peak. It tells of one man's efforts to understand and duplicate the darkness that fell as Christ hung on the cross, efforts that come to fruition from both his scientific ability and his Christian devotion. As his experiment goes awry in an ending of unexpected horror, the reader will be appalled and fascinated by the man's fanatical journey into the unknown. Tentative and sometimes crude, it is still a very readable story that holds its years fairly well.

Eternal Rediffusion -- Leslie J. Johnson & Eric Frank Russell.

This collaboration was written in the Thirties and after reading it one shouldn't be surprised that it was nearly forty years finding a publisher (one
(Over)

DISSECTING THE HEART OF THE MATTER (Continued) --

may, however, be astounded that it was published at all). It is a horribly over-written tale of life beyond death and death beyond life--first one, then the other, in two vaguely related episodes--stuffed like a bloated turkey with clumsy metaphors and an almost endless stream of random adjectives. Very amateur.

Sword in the Snow -- E. C. Tubb.

Set upon by ferocious wolves during a snowstorm, Malkar battles his way with sword and courage to the safety of a mysterious inn protected by a spell of "benign sorcery". Tired and lonely, Malkar at last succumbs to the charms of a pretty serving girl only to discover that his situation has become more perilous than ever. Tubb might have achieved some aura of cheap thrills in this mediocre s&s story, but he kills it with the corny wolf prologue and a decided lack of terror in the conclusion.

Funeral in Another Town -- Jerry Jacobson.

Amis Bannerman, famed lawyer and mystery novelist, is an unpleasant man whose love affair with the dollar supercedes his dedication to his clients. In addition, his revengeful action towards a struggling new magazine (which has published one of his stories and, after delayed payment, has perished from Bannerman's malicious letters to fellow authors) shows him an impatient, heartless man. Jacobson sets this up very patly for a tale of revenge, but doesn't set it up carefully enough to fool the reader, who will see the predictable outcome very early. Fair.

The Utmost Abomination -- Clark Ashton Smith & Lin Carter.

Zylac, a magician of Hyperborea, takes in an orphaned young man (to whose late father Zylac owes a great debt), and the youngster provides the story's narrative about Zylac's intense studies to unravel the mysteries of the legendary "serpent-folk" until at last this curiosity drives him to his doom. Carter's development of Smith's 400-word outline is so much involved in recreating Smith's distinctive style that the reader is busy stumbling over sentences like this-- "the profound and preternatural attainments of Zylac had won for the archimage the commingled envy and respect of his colleagues who practiced the arts of goety in those more populous realms meridional to his own"--and, hopefully, may not have time to worry about the thin plot. Fair.

Reprints:

The Clash of Dishes /1903/ -- Ian Maclaren.

The Man in the Bottle /1912/ -- Gustav Meyrink.

The Smiling People /1946/ -- Ray Bradbury.

The Man on the Ground /1933/ -- Robert E. Howard.

The Buried Paradise /undated/ -- Felix Marti-Ibanez.

The Fate of the "Senegambian Queen" /1900/ -- Warden Allan Curtis.

Verse:

Atlantis -- Stanton A. Coblentz.

Song for Wood Horns -- A. Merritt.

Great Ashtoreth -- Frank Belknap Long.

Articles:

Supernatural Horror In Literature /condensed revision/ -- H. P. Lovecraft.

William Hope Hodgson--Novelist (part two) -- Sam Moskowitz.

Art Portfolio:

Virgil Finlay.

ON THE MOVE (Changes-of-Address) --

Nick Jones, Apt. 10, 1436 Pendrell St., Vancouver 5, B.C., Canada V66 1S4.

Leland Sapiro (RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY), Box 14451 Univ. Sta., Gainesville, FL 32604.

Don Livingstone, 8555 Southlands Crescent, Chilliwack 5, B.C., Canada V2P 1A8.

Ross Peterson, 185 Russet Rd., Stamford, CT 06903.

Gerald Shifrin, 20 Maplewood Ct., Apt. 3, Gaithersburg, MD 20760.

Beresford Smith, 4 Meadowbrook Dr., East Windsor, NJ 03520.

BOOK REVIEWS -- SF/Fantasy:

Grendel, by John Gardner (Ballantine Books). /Reviewer, DON D'AMMASSA/

There is no way to adequately describe this book. Gardner has taken the Beowulf saga and retold parts of it from the point of view of Grendel, the monster. In his eyes it is the humans who are the aggressors, and Gardner makes an excellent case for him. This is not a humorous book, and it is not light reading. Gardner has adopted the outlook of a non-human being with a depth of ability that is wasted in the mainstream novels he has written in the past. Buy this book. In fact, buy several copies and give them to your friends.

Star Surgeon, by James White (Ballantine; 1963). /Reviewer, KEN OZANNE/

A novel of "Sector Twelve General Hospital"--an immense, and fascinating hospital in space with facilities for and patients of hundreds of different races. There have been a lot of stories about "Sector General" (they used to be a mainstay of NEW WORLDS in the fifties) and all are worth reading. In this, the hospital becomes the focal point of an interstellar war. Not the best of the series, but it was a good series. Another that I'd like to see gathered together.

Recommended. (But there is a touch of nostalgia in it.)

Destiny Doll, by Clifford Simak (Berkley Books). /Reviewer, DON D'AMMASSA/

Simak seems to have lost control of his writing ability. After such excellent novels as Way Station, Time and Again, and Goblin Reservation, it is a shame to see him turn out such disappointingly minor pieces as All Flesh is Grass, Out of Their Minds, and Destiny Doll. This novel is an amalgamation of the quest novel from fantasy, classic space opera from SF, liberally sprinkled with psychedelic scenes and irreality from surrealist fiction. Dabbling in each, Simak succeeds with none.

King of Argent, by John T. Phillifent (DAW Books). /Reviewer, DAVID STEVER/

Yet one more of the minor books that Wollheim insists on publishing, King is the story of a scout who discovers a planet almost solid in heavy metals. His boss (and his father's former partner) gives him the chance to explore the planet. In order to do this, he must be "converted" to a metabolism that can survive on Argent, turning him into the golden-skinned fellow on the cover. The "conversion" is achieved with the use of balonium, that miracle stuff which allows the author to sidestep science, but once on the planet, the book turns into Phillifent's best-written book to date. That might not be saying much, but it makes the book much better than the average DAW book, and means that I might even buy his next book to see if he can keep it up. Worth reading, but it still tends to be light fare.

A Place of Demons, by Heinrich Graat (Belmont-Tower Books). /DON D'AMMASSA/

This is the third adventure of Ben Camden (previously seen in The Revenge of Increase Sewall and The Devil and Ben Camden). Camden becomes involved in each adventure with devil worshippers, demons, and similar entities. In this third novel, the spirit of Increase Sewall, thwarted in the first novel, returns to possess another human being. After suitable adventures, Ben Camden and Good reign triumphant. Despite my sarcasm, and my general distaste for the supernatural, all three of these books were well written and fairly entertaining, far above the average quality from Belmont.

The Big Eye, by Max Ehrlich (Boardman; 1954). /Reviewer, KEN OZANNE/

How the world was threatened by a wandering planet but everyone prayed and went back to God and it didn't hit us after all and it all turned out to be a plot to bring us to God by the leading astronomers who knew it wouldn't hit us anyway. Why "The Big Eye"? Seems the planet just happens to look like that.

Definitely not recommended.

(Over)

BOOKWORLD (Continued) -- Mysteries:

The Snatch, by Bill Pronzini (Pocket Books 9/73; from 1971 hardcover). /GEORGE FERGUS/

Any book about a private investigator who collects old pulps can't be all bad (even if they are mainly detective pulps). And indeed this is only half bad--the main plot about a kidnapping is mediocre, with dull characters, but the subplot concerning the hero's girlfriend who feels that he is still a little boy trying to pretend he is Philip Marlowe or Sam Spade (he quit the police department to be a P.I. but hardly makes enough money to live on) is very good. Two sequels are already out in hard covers, and this could develop into a good series. Mildly recommended.

Clouds of Witness, by Dorothy L. Sayers (Avon Books(?)). /MIKE BLAKE/

Clouds of Witness, incidentally, was adapted by the BBC for television and recently broadcast on Public Television on Masterpiece Theater. Lord Peter Wimsey must exonerate his brother, the Duke of Denver, from the charge of murdering their sister's fiancée. His efforts are complicated by the Duke's sense of honor, which forbids him from revealing the name of his secret mistress, a married woman, who is his only alibi, and the fact that English law specifies he must be tried by a jury of his peers, which because of his title requires a special session of the House of Lords. That he was found on the night in question bending over the victim's body holding the murder weapon does not help either. Second in series.

One for the Road, by Fredric Brown (Bantam Books). /Reviewer, DON D'AMASSA/

This was one of Fred Brown's last, and best, mystery novels, previously appearing as The Amy Waggoner Murder. A young apprentice newsman becomes involved in the murder of a beautiful, alcoholic stranger in a small town in Arizona. The mystery plot is straightforward and masterful, and the book is peopled with unusually vivid characters. The characterization and background is so strong, in fact, that the novel could succeed even with the mystery element removed.

BOOKS ANNOUNCED (Announcements received by SOTWJ) --

BALLANTINE BOOKS (201 E. 50th St., NY, NY 10022) -- Dec. '73 Releases:

Jupiter, by Frederik & Carol Pohl (eds.) (\$1.25; w/introduction by Isaac Asimov) -- A collection of the "best stories ever written about Jupiter and/or its satellites", published to coincide with Pioneer 10's Dec. 3 Jupiter rendezvous.

Two Views of Wonder, by Tom Scortia & Chelsea Quinn Yarbro (eds.) (\$1.25) -- Collection of original SF stories based on themes presented by the editors to 12 authors, paired (one theme per pair) into male/female teams, in order to see how the different sexes would approach similar themes.

The People of the Mist, by H. Rider Haggard (\$1.25; introd. by Ian Carter) -- A fantasy adventure, first published in 1894, which "explores the dark heart of cryptic Africa and the theme of a lost civilization"; written "at the height of Haggard's powers" and "considered to be an unparalleled example of the imaginative romance". Its last American printing was in 1915.

DOUBLEDAY & CO., INC., 245 Park Ave., NY, NY 10017 -- Dec. '73 release:

Aliens from Space: The Real Story of Unidentified Flying Objects, by Maj. Donald E. Keyhoe; 336 pp.; \$7.95) -- "A climax of over 20 years of factual investigation, this startling book reveals new, important discoveries about UFO's and discloses why the Air Force has concealed its classified information from the public. With specific verified cases, it adds documented proof that UFOs are spacecraft from a more technically advanced world."

DOUBLEDAY S.F. BOOK CLUB, Garden City, NY -- Feb. '74 releases:

Astounding: A John W. Campbell Memorial Anthology, ed. Harry Harrison (\$2.49) -- 13 original stories by writers "who earned their fame in the pages of ASTOUNDING".

The Day of Their Return, by Poul Anderson (\$1.49) -- Aeneas Ivar Frederiksen seeks the aid of "god-like brain beings" called Elders against the Terran Empire, and its oppressive rule of his home planet.

Plus assorted alternates from previous months.