



1972. It is 18 backwards.

It's a pity we are usually for the lateness and appearance of this issue. Our problems began when our layout editor departed with the job half done and we had to try to piece together his jigsaw puzzle. Then we had to train new people to produce our own and run the press. Finally we could not use our usual plate burning equipment and had to have our plates burned by someone who was not motivated to be careful. The press is already 80 percent laid out and we have access to a new plate making process. It should be out very soon and look infinitely better. The editors and staff.

NIEKAS

SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY



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APOLOGIES EXPLANATIONS AND PREDICTIONS

We apologize to our contributors and subscribers for the lateness of
this issue. Our only excuse is a reorganization, shift in staff
members and duties, and the learning of new tasks. NIEKAS 32 is
almost completely typed and should appear in December 1983. During
1984 we will try a semi-annual schedule and re-evaluate it at the end
of the year.

NIEKAS CHAPBOOKS

We are proud to announce the availability of the first NIEKAS
CHAPBOOK. "50 EXTREMELY SF STORIES" edited by Mike Bastraw, with an
introduction by Robert Bloch. All stories are 50 words long or less.
Cost is \$3.95 plus 75c postage. Dealers may order at standard discount
discount directly from us or from F&SF BOOK CO. Box 415, Staten
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Please address all correspondence, subscriptions, material and
review books to NIEKAS at RFD #1 Box 63, Center Harbor NH 03226,
unless directed to do otherwise.

ART AND ARTICLES NEEDED

We need art and articles on Austin Tappen Wright and ISLANDIA for
the next NIEKAS, and must receive it very soon to be able to use it.
We also need art and articles on John Myers Myers for NIEKAS 33.
And of course we will always be glad to consider other articles
poems and artwork.

BUMBEJIMAS

Ed Meškys

THE LAWS OF MAGIC

I just read for the first time Poul Anderson's OPERATION CHAOS (recorded as Talking Book TB 4274) and am currently re-reading deCamp and Pratt's Harold Shea stories (being recorded for me by Sherna Comerford). When I mentioned this to Sandy Parker, she commented that Shea opened up the whole genre of the laws of magic and the like, and made way for stories like Anderson's OPERATION CHAOS and Heinlein's MAGIC INC (aka DEVIL MAKES THE LAW). This caused some cogitation on my part, and made me wish I knew more about the history of SF and fantasy. Sandy's point was that this was the first story to imply that magic had its own rules... namely that of similarity and of contagion and that most spells were based on these. She likened this to Asimov's formulation of the three laws of robotics which were so complete and so logical that they had to be reckoned with by all subsequent writers of robot stories. Is Sandy right? Were deCamp and Pratt the first to formulate these laws? And were they the first to come up with the idea of alternate worlds where the laws of nature are different? Alternate worlds where history is different have a long history... stories of the South

winning the Civil War, etc. But it seems to me that this is the first presentation of the concept of alternate worlds where the very laws of nature are different. There have been many other such stories, both fantasy like the Harold Shea stories and SF like Asimov's THE GODS THEMSELVES.

I thought the Harold Shea stories were very well known, especially since Ballantine recently re-issued the first three as THE COMPLETE ENCHANTER, but several people I have talked to have not read them. The first one, THE ROARING TRUMPET, appeared in UNKNOWN magazine in May 1940. In this one, Harold Shea visits the land of the Norse gods. At about the same time Lester del Rey wrote another story about the Norse gods, but John W. Campbell rejected it because it was too similar to the ROARING.

A decade later Lester brought out DAY OF THE GIANTS about Ragnarok (the Norse Armagedden) and the Fimbulwinter coming to OUR Earth, the Norse gods appearing and a human being getting entangled. This has nothing about laws of magic, or alternate universes, but I wonder if it is a rewrite of the story Campbell bounced. It has to be a rewrite because an atomic bomb is involved in the climax... that is, if there is any connection whatever. Anyhow, this is one of my favorite del Rey stories and I hope one of my volunteer readers will tape it for me.

In the Harold Shea stories our technical devices don't work in the other universes he visits just because their laws ARE different. (The atomic bomb works in Lester's story because it is in this universe and there is no talk of any other.) The Shea stories are humorous. Shea is pompous and slow to learn, and there are beautiful bits throughout the story... such as the guy who is in the dungeon with Harold who, once every hour, runs up to the bars of his cell and yells "Yngvi is a louse!" This business is never explained, but is just there.

De Camp and Pratt wrote two more Shea stories for UNKNOWN, THE MATHEMATICS OF MAGIC in the August 1940 issue, and THE CASTLE OF IRON in the April 1941 issue. They wrote other delightful fantasies too, THE UNDESIRE PRINCES, among others. Just like Lovecraft and his circle playing games with each other's characters, the writers for UNKNOWN occasionally did the same. In THE CASE OF THE FRIENDLY CORPSE (August 1941) L Ron Hubbard had Shea meet a horrible death offstage, without mentioning him by name, but making it clear that he did mean it to be Harold. UNKNOWN folded in 1943, and there was no more market for stories of this type. Around 1950 Gnome Press issued three stories in hardcover, the first two as THE INCOMPLETE ENCHANTER and the third alone under its original title. (Recently Ballantine issued all three as THE COMPLETE ENCHANTER.)





Around the same time de Camp and Pratt got together to write two Mc Shea stories, *WALL OF SERPENTS* and *GREEN MAGICIAN*. These were eventually combined in the book *WALL OF SERPENTS*, published by Avalon. Unfortunately the rights could not be regained from the original publishers for inclusion in *THE COMPLETE ENCHANTER*.

In these stories Shea and companions visit literary worlds, like Spencer's *FAIRY QUEEN* or mythologies like the Finnish. In each of these stories someone or something important is left behind leaving an opening for another story.

Fletcher Pratt died in 1956 and there will be no more Harold Shea stories. Sprague de Camp has said on many occasions that he alone had one style of writing, and Pratt alone had another style of writing, but when the two got together they wrote in a third style which neither could achieve alone.

Sandy lumped Heinlein's *MAGIC INC* into this genre. I read it over a quarter of a century ago and have only the vaguest memory of the story. I do remember that magicians were trying to organize into a labor union, and restaurants featured magic meals which would vanish after consumption for the weight conscious. Were laws of magic discussed? Sandy said nothing of alternate universes, but did these play a part? Discussing the story with Mike and Sherwood they mentioned *WALDO* was really quite similar, though neither remembered about the laws of magic. I read the two stories around 1951 or 1952 in the combined volume but

assumed that they had just been lumped together because they were too short to stand alone in a book. *MAGIC INC* had appeared in *UNKNOWN* while *WALDO* had appeared in *ASTOUNDING* in 1942. But Mike pointed out that *WALDO* could be considered fantasy because the plot involved airplanes that started crashing because people no longer believed in the principles on which they worked. Incidentally, *WALDO* is supposed to have given its title to be used as the name for manipulators as used in handling dangerous substances... radioactives, toxic or explosives. I have never seen a technical publication which called them that, and back when I was in high school and on a group tour of the Brookhaven National Labs I had even asked the engineers operating the manipulators about it. None of them had ever heard of the word *waldo*.

OPERATION CHAOS is set wholly in a world where magic works and there are witches, werewolves and other beings incubi and succubi, devils and the like. It is a framed collection of four stories where the hero sends, by telepathy to our world, his reminiscences as part of a scientific experiment. Our worlds are supposed to be fairly close for the transfer to occur. Here some physical technology is present... explosives exist and are used in warfare, for instance. Einstein lived in that world too, and developed his work on the photoelectric effect and special relativity, though there is no mention of his work on Brownian Motion and general relativity. Explosives are

still in use, though General Electric is working on a containment spell that could be recited by a machine in microseconds to stop it. The Second World War involves heretical Moslem sect which has conquered much of the world, including part of the U.S.. The first story deals with the tail end of this war, the second with a salamander that is set free as a result of a college prank and destroys half a city before it is stopped. In the third an incubus/succubus almost seduces the hero and heroine on their honeymoon. I had read this somewhere before,

as well as the last and longest story. In that one the devil sets up a Gnostic church to try to gain control of the world but it is stopped by the hero and heroine and is replaced by a changeling and transported to hell as a result of a spell cast in anger by a minor flunky in the church who is sincere and does not know the satanic connection. This had appeared in *F & SF* about the year after *NIEKAS* had run a piece by Ray Nelson on Gnosticism... in the mid 60's. I remember asking Paul at a party or con whether the story had been in any way inspired by the article and subsequent discussion, but it hadn't.

In this story the culture is similar to our own, but magic is an integral part of it... as in Randall Garrett's Lord Darcy stories. Broomsticks and magic carpets are the normal modes of transportation, crystal balls are used instead of telephones, etc. Garrett had some technology in his stories too... such as coal burning trains in the

PATTERNS & Notes from Elfhill

by Diana L. Paxson

THE SPACE RACE, BIOREGIONS, AND THE RENAISSANCE OF THE CELTIC HARP...

I no longer recall who in the family it was that picked up our first Alan Stivell record about four years ago. But I remember the result, which was one of revelation - of a new sound, and of a long-lost and deeply desired other world. Also I remember perfectly the evening last February on which I was privileged to hear Alan Stivell live at the American Music Hall in San Francisco. And that was a revelation too...

But there is more to be considered here than music (though music like Stivell's might well be considered its own excuse for being). For Alan Stivell, and for many others involved in the folk music movement today, their art is only part of a political and cultural revolution which is gathering momentum and significance for the future of the race.

Alan Stivell has made some half dozen records, and I have attempted to memorize them all. However, until that night in February I had comforted myself with the fond notion that the tapestry of sound I heard was being produced by multiple instruments and electronics. This proved to be not necessarily so. With thirty harpstrings and the same number of fingers available to me, all of those sounds were being produced by Alan Stivell.

Which of course tells you nothing at all about what the music was LIKE.... Even the recordings can't quite equal the impact of that live performance, where the contact high produced by some 450 people, who had all memorized the records and would have killed for the tickets, was added to the impact of live vibrations upon the senses. The metal-strung Celtic harp has a tone unlike that of any other instrument - plangent like that of a harpsichord, but with more resonance, and capable of a delicacy and variety of effects which range from lusty strumming to an ethereal shimmer that accounts for the reputed presence of harps in heaven. This is especially true when the performer is a master, although the harp is an exceptionally forgiving instrument upon which it is almost impossible to make a really unpleasant sound.

Stivell is a master not only of his instrument but of his audience. Opening with evocative melodies, he moved on to longer pieces which effectively placed his listeners in a state of trance in which the music could impact directly upon the subconscious. The OAKLAND TRIBUNE's music critic Larry Kelp commented that

"...it seemed as if he were able to tap into Western man's pre-historic collective unconscious and open up new meaning to sounds that our ancestors created, and we have since

forgotten." (TRIBUNE/TODAY, February 12, 1982)

For once, I not only have no quarrel with a reviewer, but find it difficult to find additional words!

Although Stivell can play other instruments, his weapon of choice is the CLAIRSEACH - the Celtic harp. Harps, of course, have been played all over the world, but the Irish appear to have been the first to add a pillar to the basic C-shaped harp, thereby strengthening it sufficiently to withstand the tension of wire strings (Figure 1). This type of harp quickly spread throughout Europe, though its shape varied and gut or horsehair strings were sometimes still used. In the neo-classical period, the destruction of the economic base that had supported the harpers in Wales and Ireland and the invention of the pedal harp (ancestor of today's concert harp) conspired to destroy the clairsach tradition for two hundred years.

A major force in the recent revival of Celtic music in general and harp playing in particular has been Alan Stivell. Stivell is a Breton, one of that strange race of Celts who were unwillingly amalgamated into the kingdom of France and have resisted being absorbed by it ever since. Only recently a Napoleonic law was revoked that had allowed the registration of births only if the child had an approved French name.

Alan Stivell, growing up in this tradition, wanted to play the instrument that epitomized Celtic culture, and since at that time NOBODY was building authentic harps, his father built him one so that he could learn to play. This was the harp he played in San Francisco, and in twenty-seven years both he and the harp have developed a unique resonance and rapport (a well-made harp gets better and better for the first fifty years, then, if well-cared for, may remain superb for up to two hundred years - I wish I could say the same!). Although years have warped its curve perceptibly, when it begins to sing it resonates in the guts of the listener.

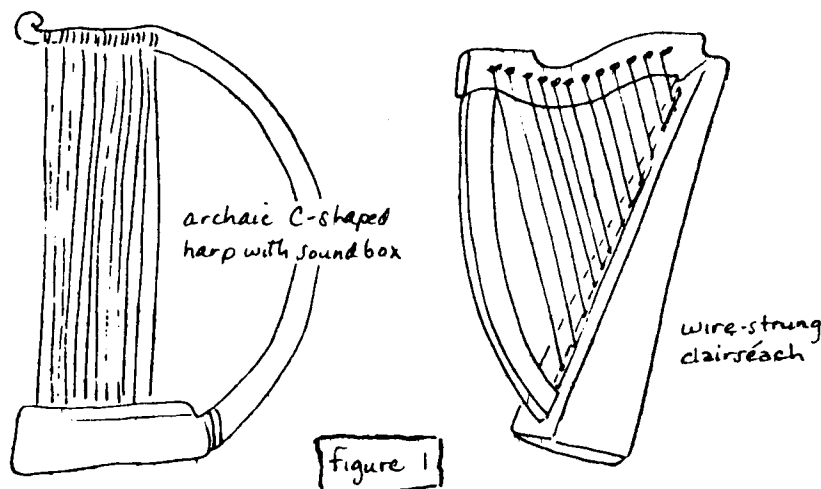
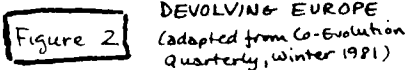


Figure 1

His belief in the potential popularity of authentic music and instruments appears to have been justified. In Brittany, his example was followed by numerous other groups. In Ireland, the movement was headed by "The Chieftains", whose music for the film BARRY LYNDON

But as the larger nations have

The Winter 1981 issue of the
CO-EVOLUTION QUARTERLY focused on
cultural and physical bioregions, and



It has been repeatedly demonstrated that the most cost-effective way to solve problems is at the grass-roots level. But this cannot occur unless communities have some sense of

identity and control over their own destinies. It has also been shown again and again that the most efficient way to give people a sense of identity is through language, mythology, music, and other aspects of culture.

Despite the best efforts of the great powers to eradicate ethnic groups within their borders, they are not only surviving, but in many places beginning to flourish anew. Ironically, the technology (particularly transportation and communication) most characteristic of the global monoculture (e.g., McLuhan's "global village") has also facilitated the preservation and transmission of the remnants of traditional cultures. Furthermore, representatives of what is coming to

be known as the "Fourth World" are discovering each other and finding strength in alliance.

The Fourth World Assembly held in London last year was attended by representatives of a variety of ethnic groups from areas including those shown on the map of Europe in Figure 2. Many of them are familiar - the continuing struggle of Ireland to reconcile the demands of politics and identity are only too well known, and the activities of the Basque separatists have been equally sensational. In the United States, the fight of the Amerind tribes and nations for survival has attracted the most attention, although a regional identity appears to be emerging in other areas as well. Indeed, if Indian writer Vine Deloria

(GOD IS RED) is correct, each bioregion has its own characteristic spirit which will eventually shape the culture of any group living there. One view of the "natural" regional divisions of North America is presented by Joel Garreau in his book THE NINE NATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA (Houghton-Mifflin, 1981) (see Figure 3).

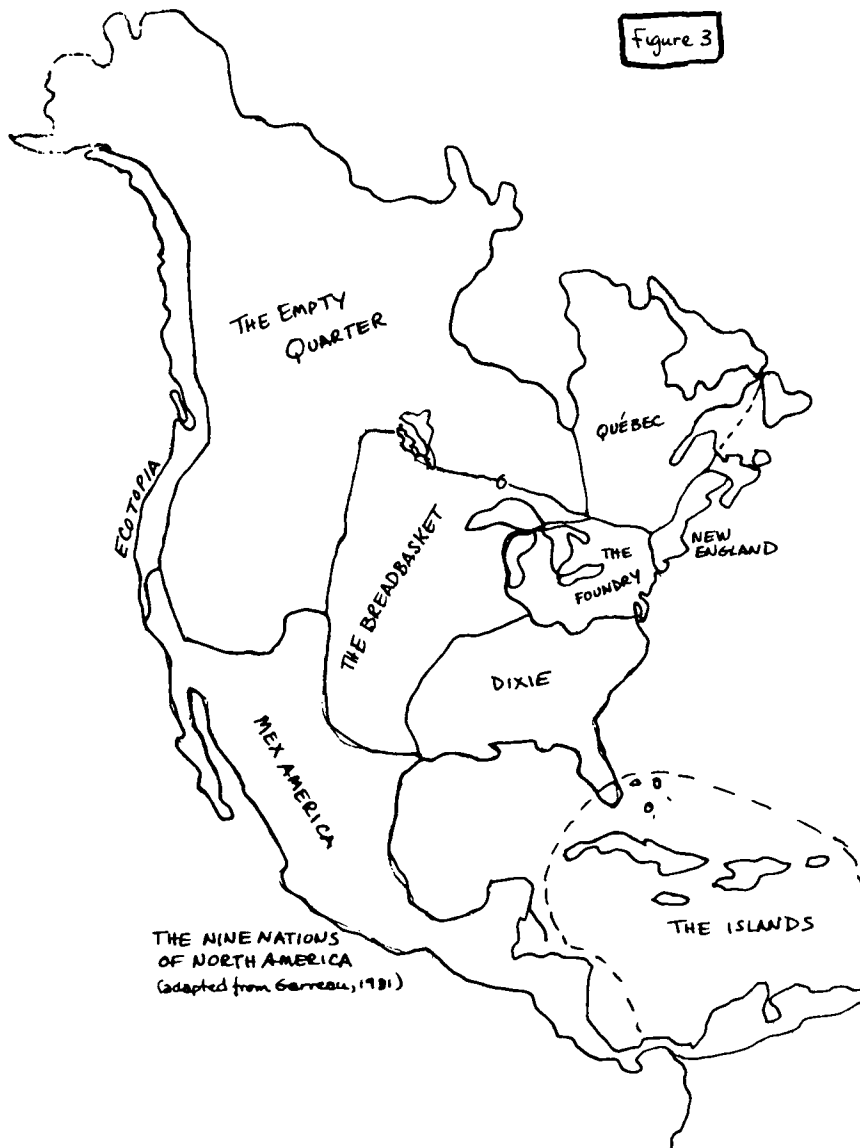
All this has some interesting implications for the development of a Space Program and the evolution of intergalactic civilizations if/when practical space travel is achieved. So far, progress in what is chauvinistically called "the Conquest of Space" has been made by just those overindustrialized superpowers whose repressive policies the cultures of the Fourth World oppose. It is their contention that devolution into a diversity of cultures would enable us to achieve a steady-state economy/ecology in which use of renewable resources would enable the population to survive indefinitely, making space exploration unnecessary.

And yet, devoutly as I desire a world of cultural and biological variety, I still dream of the stars. Surely there must be a way for us to have our cake and eat it too, to maintain diversity and control and still retain a planetary organization which could serve those purposes (and only those purposes) for which such an organization is uniquely qualified. The collection and management of the resources required to explore and possibly colonize this and other galaxies should surely be one of these.

Furthermore, it seems likely that a race brought up to accept and cherish variation would be more able to deal constructively with alien intelligences than the product of a monoculture.... And such an approach to government could accept the tendency of groups of humans to develop unique cultures and identities as soon as they are separated from the majority for any length of time. It may be argued whether a monoculture is practicable for one planet, but it seems unlikely that it would be attainable (or desirable) in a Galactic Empire!

In my more optimistic moments, I persist in hoping that some compromise will be achieved, and that instead of blowing ourselves out of pieces or eating ourselves out of house and home, we will in the course of time build new cultures among the stars. And if this comes to pass, I am certain that somewhere among those spaces, the alien air will carry the plangent, plaintive tones of a Celtic harp...

Figure 3





THE INTEGRATORS

I have just finished one of the most pleasant literary experiences of my life - reading a ten-thousand-page book. On many afternoons these past few years I've sat in my favourite chair and sipped good strong black coffee while turning its pages. And I've ended many a day with an hour in bed and a chapter or two. I shall miss those hours: and now that I have finished the book I feel again the loss that I sensed when, a few months ago, I heard the news of the death of its authors.

I never met Will and Ariel Durant, nor did I ever have the chance to see or hear them on television or radio. Their DUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY (1977) told me more about their experiences and less about themselves than I had wished; it confirmed me in my suspicion that the most productive writers lead the blandest lives. So perhaps an evening in their company would not have been the intellectual feast I had imagined; but through the years it has taken me to read THE STORY OF CIVILIZATION I have entertained that fantasy in my mind.

OUR ORIENTAL HERITAGE, the first volume of THE STORY OF CIVILIZATION, appeared in 1935. THE AGE OF NAPOLEON, the final volume of the series, was published forty years later. Originally intended as a four-volume book, THE STORY OF CIVILIZATION swelled to eleven volumes comprising 9941 pages. The series was a popular and critical success: it sold well, and won for its authors the 1968 Pulitzer Prize for general nonfiction for their volume on ROUSSEAU AND REVOLUTION.

* * *

I had never intended to read THE STORY OF CIVILIZATION. Multi-volumed

works with grandiose titles have always repelled me. GREAT BOOKS OF THE WESTERN WORLD and THE HARVARD CLASSICS - two series that adorn unread the bookshelves of so many middle-class households - are assortments of obsolete translations whose principal merit often lies in being in the public domain. They have never tempted me. I have tried to scale the walls of dullness that surround the OXFORD HISTORY OF ENGLAND and the CAMBRIDGE MEDIAEVAL HISTORY, only to find those citadels of impeccable scholarship soporifically insurmountable. And these were compilations of the greatest writers, the most learned historians. How could any single writer's account of human history be anything but unsatisfyingly superficial?

I had seen THE STORY OF CIVILIZATION in homes and libraries. (As a Book-of-the-Month Club premium, it must have induced many thousands of readers to join.) And I had wondered how many of those impressively bulky sets of eleven lengthy volumes had ever had their pages opened - and what small fraction of these had been read through to their conclusion.

And then my brother gave me THE STORY OF CIVILIZATION as a birthday present. I wouldn't have bought it for myself - nor would I ever have bought myself a recorder, or a subscription to THE NEW REPUBLIC, or a bottle of Liechtensteiner wine. I have learned to trust the judgement reflected in my brother's choice of presents.

* * *

As I began my reading of OUR ORIENTAL HERITAGE, I began to sense something of Will Durant's qualifications for the immense task he had set for himself. Before exploring the

civilizations of Babylonia and the Nile, he began his narrative with a brief account of human prehistory. This drew upon anthropology for its material, and Durant made it clear that there are basic traits which are universal among human beings. Throughout THE STORY OF CIVILIZATION reappears the theme of human nature triumphant over ideology. The essential impulse to marry, to raise children, and to amass the resources to provide for them is the underlying force governing the lives of the overwhelming majority of the world's people, past and present. Any system of politics, economics, religion which ignores this force is doomed to failure.

To Will and Ariel Durant - Ariel joined her husband as co-author midway through the series - civilization transcends the mere chronicling of kings and empires. It embraces "statesmanship, war, economics, morals, manners, religion, science, medicine, philosophy, literature, drama, music, and art." Most importantly, it regards all of these as inextricably interconnected. One cannot understand the politics of 19th-century Europe without some knowledge of the philosophy of Voltaire; one cannot comprehend Gothic architecture without knowing the basic elements of Catholic theology. This insistence on what the Durants call "integral history" pervades their work. And so for ten thousand pages of limpid and often witty prose - they are seldom able to resist an opportunity to work a bilingual pun into their narrative - they synthesize the achievements and the scandals of millenia.

The Durants make no claim to originality of scholarship or even of interpretation. In both they follow standard authorities as to matters of history, politics, and technology.

Out their discussions of art, music, philosophy, and literature are founded primarily upon originals. They have travelled extensively, and can speak of architecture, painting, and sculpture from first-hand contact; they have listened extensively to the music of many centuries; and they have read the literary and philosophical texts of which they speak, often in their original languages.

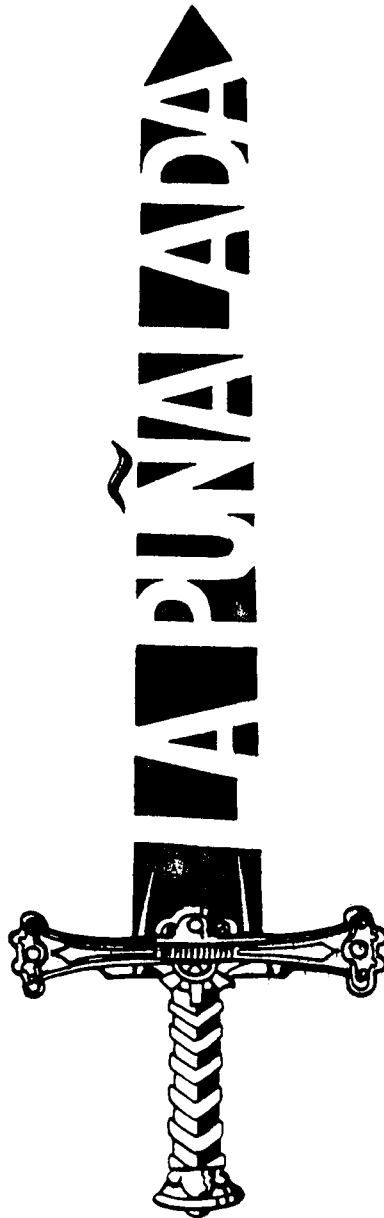
They are scrupulous in their citations, and supply extensive bibliographical guides at the end of each volume. Many of the secondary works they drew upon for the earlier books of THE STORY OF CIVILIZATION have been superseded by more recent scholarship. But the thousands of titles listed in their bibliographies will help to console me for having come to the end of their narrative.

As these bibliographies show, the Durants have read extensively. They have made many trips to the sites of the works of art and historical events of which they write. And they have considered carefully and thoughtfully the significance of their experiences and their reading. They have brought together, in a very long but very readable narrative, a great many of the elements of the human achievement. Their narrative inevitably reflects their prejudices and biases; but their candour warns the reader to make allowance for prejudice, and their biases are informed by a sympathetic humanity of spirit that compels the reader's respect if not his agreement.

I consider myself fortunate to have spent much of the last four years in the company of the Durants. As I recommend THE STORY OF CIVILIZATION to my friends I do so with the same eagerness that I feel when I bring together two friends of mine, unknown to each other, whom I expect each to gain greatly from acquaintance with the other. For myself, I have other works of theirs to read. I have not yet opened THE STORY OF PHILOSOPHY or THE LESSONS OF HISTORY. And I will still have on my bookshelves THE STORY OF CIVILIZATION to serve as guide and companion through my own explorations of the human experience.

#

White River Junction, Vermont
17 March 1982



Raphael Folch-pi

SAFE AND ALIVE AND LIVING IN MIAMI?

Yes, Miami, mind you; it's not the end of the world but you can see it from here.

It has been almost a year since there has been a contribution from this quarter. It's both about time and rapidly becoming necessary if I am to remain part of this concern. In ALICE IN WONDERLAND the King advises the White Rabbit to "begin at the beginning, and go on till you come to the end; then stop." This, with minor variations, I shall do.

In 1980 I decided to try my hand as an independent consultant for the various technical companies in the Boston area. This is a euphemism for starving; rather interesting lines of work including brokering bones. How do you get an elephant hip in Chicago to Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology in trade for a giraffe tibia from the Toronto Zoo for a whale ear bulla you're holding on ice in Boston? You broker, like crazy. It's amazing what you can do with a telephone these days. With that and a series of road and traffic surveys for air pollution studies, body and soul were somehow kept together.

After my father's death in 1979, my mother sold our house in Boston and I moved into a large three-bedroom in Waltham, Mass., with Bill Rudow, the then president of the L-5 Society, Boston Chapter, and another L-5er named David Long. We had some high old times out in Waltham including much fun, movie-making, and L-5 activities. In the fall of 1980 Bill went to a Boston Star Trek Assoc. convention in Braintree, Mass., and met a young lady by the name of Gail Paradis, who turned out to have a roommate by the name of Terri Rogers. To make a long story short, Terri and I were married on January 9, 1982. We invited most of the world and, despite the cold and snow, a significant fraction actually came.

We are now residing in Miami, just itching for a chance to return to civilization, i.e., Boston.

SO WHAT'S IN FLORIDA??

So why come so far from home? Greed, pure and simple. A company called Racal-Milgo, the world's biggest little international British communications company, that's what! I came down to Miami to join a new software support group in RMI's customer service section. This occurred in March and April of 1981.

NEAR DEATH AND DYING

So we ended up in Miami, but not just yet. In March of 1981, on the eve of leaving for the south of the South, I was admitted to Mass. General Hospital in Boston with a high fever, dizziness, swollen glands, muscular pain, and an entire litany of symptoms of unknown etiology. Diagnosis? Lymphoma: cancer of the lymphatic or white blood cell immunity system. Prognosis? Poor. Treatment? Chemotherapy. Resistance therapy was started. Time to live? Unknown.

One of the problems with cancer therapy, chemo or otherwise, is that it's a negative treatment. Kill the cancer without killing the patient. The hematologist was convinced; the lab results were not in yet, and on a cold rainy March morning the "Team" came in to tell the patient the Bad News. My totally unexpected reaction to their careful preparation was to burst into tears. Apparently doctors are not very well schooled in bedside manner these days.

Because of a series of fortuitous (read: miraculous) circumstances, we had a direct line to the leading Lymphoma expert in the world. The connection was that my maternal grandmother, Gertrude Babcock, knew the rector of the major Episcopal Church in Milwaukee. His sister was a nun at the convent of the Sisters of St. Margaret in Boston, the Episcopal convent for the Church of the Advent, where Terri and I were going to church. Anyway, about 50 years ago a foundling baby girl had been left on the steps of the convent and the baby had been adopted by the then Mother Superior and put through school all the way to an advanced degree in biochemistry at Harvard. My mother, during her tenure at Harvard as a part-time graduate student in Romance languages, made friends with this woman who was the chief lab collaborator of this man, the great Lymphoma expert. I don't know what Mr. Spock might give as the chances of this string of events happening, but they're remote enough to be proof positive (for me) of God or at least a mighty good imitation of one. Whoever or Whatever You are, thank You, Father.

So this guy walks in, takes one look at me, and he says, "You just don't look like a candidate for Lymphoma. An overweight case of something, but not Lymphoma."

Meanwhile, in the interests of sanity, a lymph node removal was called for and the lab tests finally

came back - normal. Not that I wasn't sick, but with respect to cancer? Not this time, sports fans! So, within 72 hours, the death sentence had been removed and we were back to Square One. So what was it? Final diagnosis: a massive, smouldering case of Mononucleosis. Yup, Mono.

The previous medical history, when reviewed in 20/20 hindsight, showed a classical atypical presentation. The case was a classic error of misdiagnosis, so common that it is used as a standard case study exercise in medical school. I do not like being a medical exercise, and this hematologist was voted one of the "doctors that doctors go to see" by BOSTON MAGAZINE in one of those Who's Who articles so favored by magazines. Right.

Since coming down here to Miami, there has been at least one more false alarm about possible cancer. This resulted in a trip to Boston in December of 1981 which turned out to be a rude and practical education in the consumer's end of the medico-industrial complex. I shan't bore you with details. If interest has been piqued, buy me a beer at a con sometime and I'll be happy to fill you in.

Since then, much to the astonishment of the doctors, and much to both my personal joy and my perverted sense of justice, I'm getting slowly but steadily better.

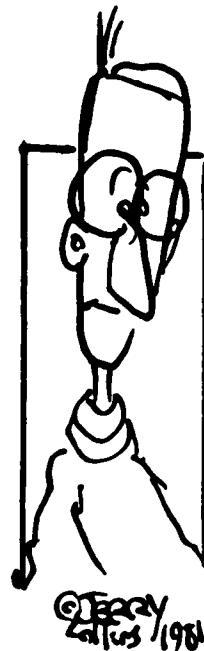


Life goes on....

That's pretty much it from here. To fill in the blanks will take more time and space than what is available here.

On the unsettled accounts page payable, is an unrestricted plotline about computers, and an unfinished and thoroughly unauthorized history of the early days of the L-5 Society, Boston Chapter. Also to the crew of NIEKAS up in those marvelous climes called Central New Hampshire, our best wishes for continuing good fortune, especially to Mike B. who really has been the ramrod of the operation since coming on board. If NIEKAS ever wins a Hugo, Mike Bastraw will be the man who was responsible in large part.

For my part, I have my Terri.





THE HAUNTED LIBRARY

by Don D'Amassa

paperbacks) was *SUFFER THE CHILDREN*. The supernatural element here is a family curse, apparently the result of the brutal murder of a child generations ago. Now Jack Conger is faced with the obvious mental problems of the younger of his two daughters, and he becomes increasingly convinced that she is somehow linked to the disappearance of a number of neighborhood children.

When I first read *SUFFER THE CHILDREN*, I found it quite suspenseful, but it should be pointed out that Saul cheats, inflicting the child with an inability to speak, brushing past any situation that might have straightened matters out. There is more genuine suspense and a better plot in *PUNISH THE SINNERS*, which develops characters more fully as it portrays a small group of renegade priests engaged in murder by mind power, choosing as their victims the children of their parishes. Saul utilizes children as his victims in almost every case, even though his characterization in their case is not nearly as convincing as with his adult characters. Again, the book is suspenseful so long as you are able to ignore the fatuous protagonist, whose bumbling incompetence allows the evil power to survive detection again and again.

CRY FOR THE STRANGERS contains only the faintest taint of the supernatural, a curse lingering from the days of the Indians. It is better plotted than the earlier books, but not as suspenseful. The small town of Clarke Harbor is preternaturally opposed to newcomers, and the small group of new residents around whom the story is centered meet an escalating campaign of terror, culminating in murder and mayhem. *COMES THE BLIND FURY* returned to the theme of the first novel, with a murdered child's spirit returning to seek vengeance. During the last three installments

of this column, I endeavored to survey a wide variety of authors, books, and themes, to provide some idea of the range and nature of the horror fiction genre. For many science fiction fans, horror fiction is generally thought of exclusively in terms of *DRACULA*, *FRANKENSTEIN*, *DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE*, a smattering of ghost and horror short stories, Poe, and perhaps Shirley Jackson's *THE HAUNTING OF HILL HOUSE*. Otherwise, their familiarity tends to be limited to the occasional works by authors such as Leiber, Bloch, or perhaps Dean Koontz under one or another of his several pseudonyms.

But now let's look at a few of the writers within the horror genre who seem to have found a home there. Stephen King, as mentioned before, seems to transcend genre, and he is a familiar enough phenomenon that I don't plan to discuss him at any length here (other than to mention that his most recent novel, *CUJO*, is quite good, and minimally supernatural). Peter Straub seems to be headed for similar heights, though he has remained strictly within the supernatural genre with *JULIA*, *IF YOU COULD SEE ME NOW*, and *GHOST STORY* (all from Pocket), the lattermost of which is a long, excellent tale of supernatural revenge. His newest, *SHADOWLAND* (Berkley paperback) is as superbly written during its first half, but begins to descend into obscurity about half way, a very disappointing follow up.

Below these two are a half dozen writers of varying ability. The first of these to be discussed here is John Saul, whose reputation among horror fans is not the best, probably because of his propensity to use gore and violence in place of more subtle forms of horror. Saul's first novel (all five are Dell) on those who tormented her, even though the actual tormentors are long since dead. Saul was here clearly reworking ground he had already harvested, a charge that is

almost equally true of *WHEN THE WIND BLOWS*, an inversion of *CRY FOR THE STRANGERS*. Once again, there is only the slightest element of the supernatural, the ghosts of stillborn Indian babies living in a mountain. But where the earlier novel was about a town that turned on a small group of people, this is about a family that turns against an entire town. A wealthy, domineering woman and her mentally twisted middle-aged daughter appear perfectly normal when they take temporary custody of a suddenly orphaned child, but there is some secret from the younger woman's past, aggravated by the cries of the Indian children, that is setting all of their feet on a horrible course. In a vacuum, this would be a readable but unmemorable novel, but the obvious repetition of earlier themes is depressing. Saul seems incapable of striking out into new ground, and his understanding and use of the supernatural seem at best a convenience of plot and setting.

Michael McDowell is a more recent and more interesting writer. His first novel, *THE AMULET* (Avon), concerns a cursed piece of jewelry that drives all who possess it to murder and death. Its origin is murky, apparently somehow conjured up by an introspective woman embittered over the accidental disfigurement and brain damaging of her adult son. Her daughter-in-law, the protagonist of the novel, suspects the connection as a series of murders, suicides, and accidental deaths plagues the small town of Pine Cone, Alabama, but it is only after several of these that she is able to act incisively.

There are successes and failures in the novel. The suspense is maintained by a series of bizarre killings, but they come so quickly that we are not allowed to develop much sympathy for the victims, and the breakneck pace never lures us into dropping our guard. On the other hand, there are some subtle, authentic horrors, not so much in the amulet as in the passages

dealing with the unresponsive, convalescent son. McDowell was subsequently to write a much better follow up, COLD MOON OVER BABYLON (Avon).

COLD MOON is in form a more conventional ghost story, also a story of supernatural revenge. The warped son of an elderly banker murders a young girl who threatens to publicize his sexual relationship with her. Shortly thereafter, a series of manifestations begins to plague him, but his growing insanity drives him to further murder, the supernatural powers and his own madness feeding upon each other as the novel builds inevitably toward a predictable but nonetheless satisfying climax. McDowell is clearly a better writer than Saul, even on the basis of just two novels. A third, GILDED NEEDLES (Avon), has also appeared, but despite packaging that implies the supernatural, it is a very mundane historical novel filled with suspense and better plotted than most, but containing not the slightest trace of fantasy.

McDowell's most recent novel, THE ELEMENTALS (Avon) returns to the supernatural with a vengeance - no pun intended. Demonstrating that the excellent characterization of GILDED NEEDLES was no fluke, he has presented us here with two wealthy and idiosyncratic families, linked by marriage and circumstance. Their encounter with the enigmatic supernatural inhabitants of a deserted Victorian house on a remote beach is frightening in intensity as well as innovative in its manifestations. McDowell sets the stage with a series of only vaguely related and clearly unnatural events. The vague description of just what the disincorporate source of everything really is bends my rule of clear order in a supernatural story (mentioned in the first installment of this column) but McDowell brings it off successfully anyway. There is a strong possibility that Stephen King will face a major rival as McDowell further hones his writing talents.

One of the less interesting but possibly more promising writers to appear in the genre in recent years is Robert McCammon. McCammon's debut came with the novel BAAL (Avon), which was a rather obvious imitation of THE OMEN and its sequels. The child of rape, Baal is the ancient demon reincarnated, and he first enlists other children, then adults in his plan to return the world to the sway of evil, or some such. McCammon did not seem at all at ease with his subject matter; not only

does he follow very predictable paths, but he also appears to throw in supernatural events almost at random.

His second novel was BETHANY'S SIN (Avon), which might well have been titled THE STEPFORD HUSBANDS. The title is the name of a small town wherein the women seem to have joined some weird organization that transforms them into fiery-eyed nightriders who wander around, slicing the occasional limb off a passing male. Although not quite as bad as the above might indicate, it is nonetheless a very imitative work with little to recommend it.

McCammon began to improve noticeably with his third novel, THE NIGHT BOAT (Avon). When a treasure hunter inadvertently causes a sunken submarine to rise derelict to the surface, he deems it an odd happenstance. The uncanny fashion with which the submarine seems to seek out and destroy helpless victims is initially well done (though reminiscent at times of Simpson & Burger's GHOST BOAT from Dell), but the novel devolves in the final chapters into a World War II version of the film, THE FOG; with axe-swinging zombies seeking victims.

The first really first class novel from McCammon is THEY THIRST (Avon), which you might assume correctly from the title to be a vampire novel. Once more McCammon is borrowing, this time from Stephen King's SALEM'S LOT, with literally scores of vampires plaguing Los Angeles. It seems that an ageless but still immature vampire master has decided to raise an entire army of his kind and conquer the world. To this end, his first objective is the total conversion of Los Angeles. Although there is an obvious debt to King, THEY THIRST is a novel that stands on its own quite well, and is certainly one of the most interesting offerings on the vampire theme. It is also McCammon's longest book, almost too long, as the element of suspense begins to wear a bit as we enter the waning chapters.

The last author I want to discuss this time around is Graham Masterton, who also writes under the name Thomas Luke. Masterton does not appear to have a very high reputation among horror fans, possibly because his stories rely more on shock and gore than on the slow development of mood. Clearly he writes a substantially different kind of story, and many of his novels almost seem to fall into a formula. But if so, it is a fairly successful formula, and has produced

a handful of novels that are, at a minimum, entertaining and usually capable of raising a bit of gooseflesh as well.

The most famous, though not necessarily the best of his novels was his very first, THE MANITOU (Pinnacle). Filmed with limited success, this is the story of the ancient Indian sorcerer who reappears, born from the neck tumor of a modern-day woman, to exact his revenge on the evil white man. The sorcerous battle through the corridors of the hospital was extremely well done. Unfortunately, the success of the novel convinced Masterton to write a sequel, REVENGE OF THE MANITOU (Pinnacle) which was markedly less successful, though still entertaining in its fashion.

Two very similar novels are THE DJINN and THE DEVILS OF D-DAY (Pinnacle) both concerning ancient curses. The first should be obvious from the title; it involves an evil and powerful Far Eastern Spirit. In the latter, a genuinely demonic force is pent up within a deserted tank on a forgotten European battlefield until inadvertently set loose. Both novels rely heavily on a series of horrible deaths, as does the less successful novel CHARNEL HOUSE (Pinnacle), which also features Indian magic. This, unfortunately, is a trend that has manifested itself frequently in horror and science fiction films recently - the wise old Indian who knows it is all because we are no longer in harmony with nature.

Masterton, who also wrote a fair SF novel for Ace (THE PLAGUE) and a really horrid supernatural novel titled THE SPHINX (Pinnacle) has recently done two novels for Pocket. One was a straight suspense story but the other was the best of the recent crop of novels about a Presidential candidate in league with the devil. THE HELL CANDIDATE is perhaps Masterton's most ambitious novel, and the real horror lies not with the demonic manifestations, but with the plausibility of the candidate's use of patriotic fervor in an evil cause.

That should wind up this installment. Suggestions, questions, etc. are welcome at any time. The first five columns in this series should have provided a fairly comprehensive overview of the field of supernatural horror fiction as it is presently manifesting itself. Next time we'll look more closely at some of the other authors active in this context.

ON THE SHOULDERS OF THE VANGUARD

BY HARRY ANDRUSCHAK



It has been a very trying four months since I last typed up something for NIEKAS. My heart goes out to Mike Bastraw who recruited me as a columnist to get all the good inside news of what is going on at JPL with the Planetary Exploration Program. At present the only good news is that we are still alive, sort of.

Building 230, the Space Flight Operations Facility (SFOF) is half empty. Every morning I go in through the basement doors and pass the room with the DSN (Deep Space Network) computers. But half of the first floor is empty...goodbye Halley Interceptor. Farewell to the team that was trying to reduce the many tapes of data still not processed from the 1973 Mariner-Venus-Mercury, Helios, Viking, Seasat, and Voyager. We still do not know the precise orbit of Mercury since the tape that has the information is still not processed.

The third floor is two-thirds empty. Gone is MTIS, Mission Telemetry Imaging System. That's the gang that brought you real-time pictures on TV during the encounters. Gone too is the Univac Batch system. And that is not the worst thing that will befall the third floor.

Building 264 is in no better shape. The fifth floor with its Voyager Operational Center is quiet nowadays, as a cold-iron watch keeps minimal monitoring of the two Voyager spacecraft. The building is slowly emptying of personnel, as budget cuts eat their way in.

Bruce Murray, Director of JPL since 1976, has resigned. Nobody wants to go on public record as to the real reason, but we know what it is. Yes, he saved JPL by bringing in the Department of Defense (DOD) and agreeing to devote 30% of JPL's resources to them. But it will kill

the spirit of the lab that for so many years led the world in scientific achievements. The Golden Age of Planetary Exploration is dead. Stone dead. It will never happen again.

We will have Galileo, maybe. Still scheduled to be launched in 1985 to Jupiter, it is the ONLY planetary program of the 1980's. It may very well be the last. Nobody talks much now about future missions; at least not under Reagan's administration. It seems as if the White House wants to dismantle the Planetary Program and force JPL to do still more defense work. Why not? Have we not a track record unexcelled by any R&D institution of our size?

What they do not understand is that many people at JPL will quit rather than work for the DOD. 40 scientists and engineers wrote a letter to the LOS ANGELES TIMES on this subject. Last March my stepfather gave me hell for sticking at JPL at \$10/hour and turning down \$15/hour to work on the B1-B Long Range Combat Aircraft. (The Air Force does not like the term "bomber.")

Last September I had my annual checkup, and my doctor worried about the stress of my job and asked me to slow down, relax more, take it easy. I tried, but the stress kept building up. I had even more bouts of irrational temper tantrums, depression, and idleness than ever before. And the bad dreams started to return.

Once again I was living in October of 1957, with the Windscale Pile #1 again out of control, on fire, spewing out radioactivity on a helpless civilian population. 90 curies of radioactive strontium, 600 curies of radioactive cesium, and 30,000 curies of radioactive iodine. 200 square miles of dairyland placed under quarantine for one year as all

milk was dumped into the nearest ditch or river. The stench was awful.

We were told, in 1957, that none of us would suffer long-range harm, since all the radioactivity was within safe and acceptable limits. In those days the long-term effects, extending from 15 to 20 years, just were not known. The 20 August 1981 issue of NEW SCIENTIST gave me some figures: up to 200 extra cancers, mostly of the thyroid, in the 1970's and 1980's. Rate after 1990 is not known. Since the British Government refused to keep track of the people exposed, there are no real figures, just estimates.

At least last September my thyroid was still in good shape. And I'll continue to get those annual checkups, you can be sure.

This was the reason that by March of 1982 I was a shambles, as several fans at Norwescon V noted. I needed help, and returned to the doctor, who was worried enough to give another blood test. It showed dehydration. Questioning revealed that I had unexpected bouts of thirst, sweated with the slightest physical exertion, slept poorly, had alternate rages and depressions, was under severe stress, had a domestic life going downhill...yet blood pressure was normal.

"I am going to have you take a Glucose Tolerance Test."

"Every sixty seconds another American is diagnosed a diabetic. Each year the incidence of diabetes increases by 6%. At that rate the number of diabetics in America will double every 15 years. The average American newborn has a one-in-five chance of becoming a diabetic in his

or her lifetime."

DIABETES FORECAST

"One of the memorable dismal moments in diabetes diagnosis comes when, after revealing to you that you indeed HAVE IT, the doctor or dietician presses into your icy and trembling hand the official 'Exchange Lists for Meal Planning,' saying, in effect, 'You are condemned to this.'"

THE DIABETIC'S TOTAL HEALTH BOOK

One amusing thing has come out of all this; I am once again riding a bicycle. Instead of taking a car for trips up to three miles, I use Beverly Kenter's bike. This may not sound like much to you, but at age 37 it has been over 20 years since I used a bike. Yet although I wobbled and swerved from side to side on the sidewalk and struck fear and terror into pedestrians, motorists, and stray dog alike...I had not a single spill or fall. Even after 20 years the reflexes have not been forgotten. How about that? And it is good exercise, another thing I am doing.

Another good thing is that this 1500 calorie-a-day diet is bringing down my weight. A month ago I was 180 pounds, and today, Mother's Day, I am 168. The doctor wants me down to 150. I have had relapses, such as the pizza I ate yesterday, but by and large I am sticking to it.

And I AM more relaxed. The blood sugar is starting to balance again. I have mentioned my temper tantrums. Let me tell you how one almost got

me fired.

It was late March when I saw this guy with a visitor's pass trying to get into the SFOF. I let him in, as is standard courtesy for the

building. Nobody takes those security badge readers at all seriously. He asked me a few questions, especially on what I thought of the DOD moving on lab. In particular, to take over parts of SFOF.

He got it...both barrels. I left him with no doubt how I, and many others at JPL, resented the fucking assholes who wasted money while the planetary program starved. As I stomped off, he seemed a bit shaken. How was I to know he was a General from the United States Air Force Space Division assigned to see what the morale at SFOF was like, and how we were taking the idea of the DOD moving in?

I did know a week later, as the word passed of my gaffe. Oddly enough, though, no OFFICIAL action was taken against me. Perhaps too many at JPL DID agree with me.

The Air Force, by the way, is appalled at the lax security at JPL. They tried to get a few of their members on lab waving ID cards of other companies besides JPL...and the guards just waved them through. As I said, JPL has a very laid-back atmosphere. Obviously, that must be killed off. Too many classified projects moving in.

The first JPL assignment has been Project Management of Talon Gold. This is a system that will work with the proposed High Energy Laser in Space military program. To make room for them they have been assigned parts of Building 264 which used to

house Voyager scientists. Might as well do something with all that empty space, and the Air Force has to move in somewhere.

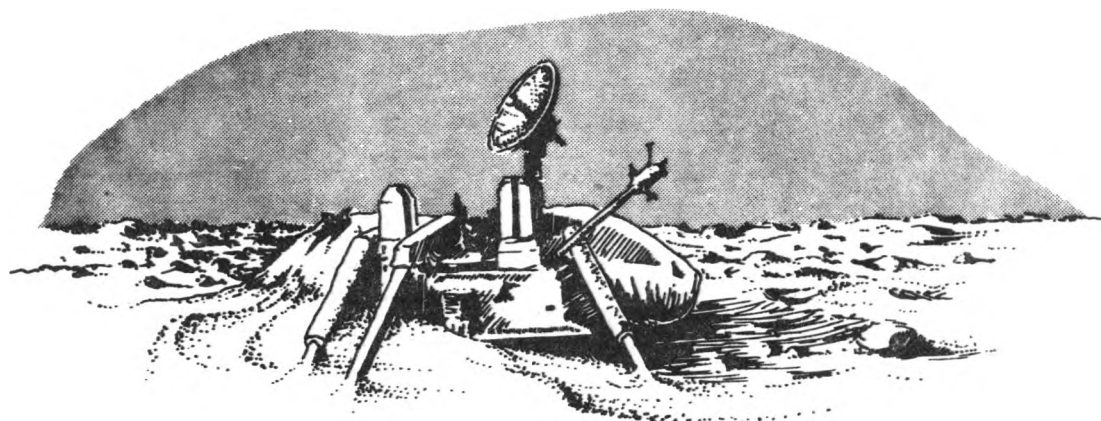
But I really resent the next proposal. It is to clear all computers off the third floor of SFOF and turn it over to the DOD. We do have plenty of room for the computers on floors one and two. But it angers me, and to hell with the stress. It is OUR building, the Planetary Exploration building. It is half empty, yes. It is decrepit, yes. Why not leave it that way? But the Air Force needs room. We have the room.

And so JPL enters the 1980's with the Proud Eagle of Defense roosting on the third floor, spreading its wings as it deposits its droppings on the remains of the civilian planetary program. It is an apt symbol of how the United States has restructured its priorities.

The Golden Age of Planetary Exploration is dead. The grand team effort that started with Mariner 9 in 1971 is finished. Somewhere along the line we lost the support and interest of the average U.S. taxpayer. They don't really seem to care that JPL is going downhill.

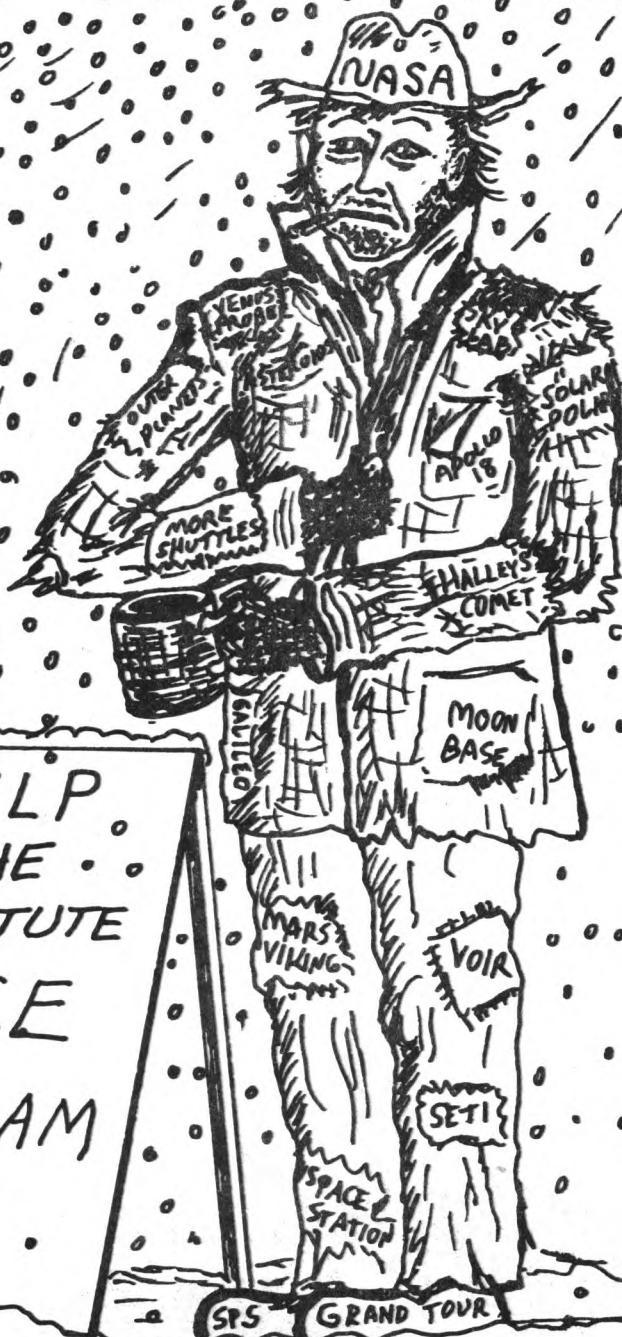
On 1 October, 1982, all Pioneer spacecraft will be turned off to save \$3 million a year. This includes the Pioneers 10 and 11, still heading out of the solar system, still returning data from regions never before explored. Still scheduled to last until 1992. There has been no real outcry at shutting down the spacecraft. The public has lost interest. Somehow we went wrong. But where? How? What should we have done?

What did we do wrong?



the National Fantasy Fan

FEBRUARY 1982





My war with the buttercups doesn't seem to be going awfully well, at least not for me. The buttercups are thriving, however. Even a brick wall falling on them doesn't seem to have done more than slow them down for a bit. I have a horrible feeling that if I left the garden alone, by the end of the summer the buttercups would have engulfed the bricks. However, Eddie and our next door neighbor are making a certain amount of progress at shifting the bricks and, if the weather is good this weekend, we'll have another try at chemical warfare with the aid of a second bottle of Tumbleweed.

I've been doing rather better in the front garden, where I've managed to reclaim about one third of the rose bushes from the combined assault of the wild strawberries and the anonymous persistent green crud. The lavender seems to be holding its own rather better than the roses against the encroachings of the miscellaneous weeds so I figure I can safely leave that corner of the front garden till last.

Eighteen years of tradition came to an end at the beginning of this year when DOCTOR WHO was moved from the Sunday late afternoon TV slot it has always held to a new spot at about 7PM on Monday and Tuesday nights. This change seems to be a result of the BBC's admitting at long last that DR. WHO has at least as many adult viewers as child viewers. The old slot was definitely in the children's time bracket while the new slot is definitely prime family time. Judging by the stories in the first series in the new time slot, they have decided to make the stories more complex and aim them at the older audience that they've suddenly discovered they've had all these years. Although it

seems a bit of a shame to break a successful TV tradition of this length, I can't really quibble too much with it. There are definite advantages to a twice-a-week time slot and to moving the show from Saturday. The one thing I would quarrel with is the decision to make the change just as they were in the process of switching over from DR. WHO Mark 4 (Tom Baker) to DR. WHO Mark 5 (Peter Davison). The changeover from one DR. WHO to another is always a tricky time, and it says a good deal for the series that it's always been managed successfully. But it was distinctly more disconcerting this time, coming on top of the other changes.

Despite having enjoyed this series of DR. WHO, I'm not really sure how I feel about Peter Davison in the role of the Doctor. One thing that may have helped confuse the transition for me is that for the first time since I started watching the show nearly 10 years ago, the Doctor has been travelling with three assistants, all of whom are very definite characters in their own right. The normal pattern has been one assistant, with an occasional overlap of one adventure or so when one assistant was entering and one leaving the series. This time, while the Doctor was travelling with Adric (the young Alizarian who stowed away while the Doctor was in E space, shortly before Romana left the series), he acquired a second, accidental stowaway, in the form of Tigan, an Australian air line hostess who believed in the Tardis' phone box camouflage and wandered in, trying to call the police for help. The third assistant, Nissa, got on at the Tardis' next port of call. She already knew Adric and the Doctor from a story in the previous series

and wanted their help in finding her father.

I'm not really sure whether the idea of having three strong assistants was intended to help cushion the transition from Tom Baker to Peter Davison or it just seemed like a good idea to the script writers. If the idea was to ease the transition from a strong Doctor Who to one who might not be as strong a character, I think one could say that it has worked. However, since it looks like the Doctor is down to one assistant for the start of the next series (Adric having gotten killed in the next to last adventure of this series and Tigan being accidentally left behind at Heathrow Airport), it will be interesting to see how Peter Davison copes with his role when there are fewer ongoing characters who may act as distractions. All I have to do is wait several months for the next series.

Science fiction on TV is a bit thin at the moment. Since the new series of DR. WHO finished, the only thing BBC has had to offer us is a series of original Plays for Tomorrow, mostly set between 1990 and 2016. They've all been fascinating and all totally different from one another. The first one concerned a war, undeclared variety, between farming and forestry people, using cricket and computers as cover. The second was about a family of four, in which the parents had been unemployed for over twenty years, going on a two week holiday to actually work. I think this one was my favorite so far. And the latest concerned an attempted military takeover of an integrated (Catholic and Protestant) university in Northern Ireland.

Radio 4 is currently giving us EARTH

SEARCH 2, a sequel to the rather pleasant space opera EARTH SEARCH which ran nearly a year ago. The second series, like the first one, runs ten episodes and so far (the halfway point) I think it is actually better than the first series.

Oh yes, one rather amusing note about SF on TV, THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY is being run for the third time. This is a rather remarkable break with custom. The only thing that I know of that has ever run three times other than this was THE SIX WIVES OF HENRY THE EIGHTH, and those reruns were years apart. We're hoping that this will be a run-in to the second series but we haven't heard anything about a second series actually being made so we're a bit bewildered.

About a month ago, Eddie got a phone call from someone at our local TV station, wanting to know about science fiction clubs in the area and incidentally inviting us to be part of the audience in a lunchtime talk show a few days later on which the topic was science fiction. Happily, I was able to arrange to have the day off despite it being rather short notice and Eddie and I and Colin Langeveld turned up as requested, about an hour before show time, for lunch and a chat with the presenters. I think they wanted to make sure that their informed audience members were likely to be reasonable types who wouldn't do or say anything appalling.

They had mentioned that there would be two science fiction authors appearing on the show but hadn't given any names and we'd spent a certain amount of time speculating about who they would be. Half the question was answered when we arrived and found Chris Priest already there and the other half when Bob Shaw showed up about twenty minutes later. We sat around, talking and eating the Lancashire hotpot provided (a casserole of liver, onions, bacon, and gravy with a layer of thinly sliced potatoes on top, in case anyone is seriously interested) and drinking Granada TV's wine while we caught up on what had been happening since we'd last seen each other. The presenter who was handling the show that day (two of them alternate), her assistant, and the producer asked us, collectively and individually, questions about science fiction and how we saw its relationship with the world around us, to try and get some idea of what sort of direction the show should be taking and how we'd be likely to react.

The thing that seemed to surprise them most was that we all knew each

other already and had been acquainted for years. We tried to explain that there were really no strong lines of demarcation between the science fiction professionals and the readers since in large numbers of cases the professionals had started out as readers themselves, and that lots of the professionals liked the feedback they got from the fans and found it helpful. They seemed to accept the idea intellectually but obviously found it pretty hard to accept emotionally. It didn't really accord with their view of how things were.

The one thing that really did impress me, particularly after some of the really awful media coverage that science fiction has gotten in the past, was that they were handling the subject perfectly seriously and not trying to make us look like a group of raving loonies or flying saucer freaks. They had done a certain amount of research on the subject beforehand and were taking the trouble to prepare before the show rather than simply having people turn up and throwing a list of questions at them. They wanted an interesting program which would be comprehensible to people who weren't interested in science fiction (or who'd simply never tried it) and they pretty much got it.

The only thing which I found a bit regrettable was the fact that some of the SF media fans who turned up did so in costumes of various sorts. However, despite the fact that this made for easy and obvious diversions from the topic of science fiction to that of people dressing up in funny clothes, the presenter was careful not to let the program get too far off course. After the authors had had their say, the discussion moved out to the audience, starting with the costume fans since they were the most conspicuous and getting several very interesting and surprisingly articulate statements about what they enjoyed about science fiction (media oriented) and science fiction costuming. Then the presenter moved the talk to us rather more conventional-looking members of the audience and I got handed the question of what did I get out of reading science fiction (not quite the same as simply asking why did I read the stuff). My answer was that one of the reasons I enjoyed reading it was that it expanded my mental horizons by suggesting lines of thought that might never have occurred to me otherwise, a true if incomplete answer.

After the program finished we wandered back to the lounge where we'd had lunch for more drinks and sandwiches and a bit more conversation. I think that the thing

that pleased me most about the whole thing was that the people at Granada were genuinely interested in putting on an interesting, well-balanced, and accurate program about a subject none of them had really known anything about to begin with and their fascination with the fact that the more they found out about the field, the more they discovered there was to find out. I got a very strong impression that if they could find some reason to bring the subject back, they'd be doing so since they were convinced that there really was a lot more to the subject than they'd realized or been able to cover on the show. Perhaps if Ken Campbell stages another science fiction opus at Everyman Theatre we'll be invited back to be informed audience members again. I'd enjoy having another chance to watch a talk show being put together.

In just over a month, Fantasycon will be happening, although according to the latest information we've received, it is being renamed Mythcon and the organizers of this year's con have just declared their independence from the British Fantasy Society. The people who are organizing the con are trying to get away from the horror-oriented program of previous years and appeal to a wider audience, which seems like an excellent idea to me. From what I've heard about the con in previous years, non-horror type fantasy didn't really get much of a look in.

Tanith Lee will be guest of honor at this year's convention and Eddie will be art guest of audience. Since Eddie mentioned that I was something of an expert on children's fantasy and they were looking for new program items, I've been asked to give a talk on the subject. At the moment I'm alternating between being pleased and appalled. It's been years since anyone has accused me of being inarticulate but, although I've participated in panel discussions on convention programs a couple of times over the years, this will be the first time I've ever gone solo. And I'm somewhat handicapped by not knowing whether I'll be talking to people who already have an interest in juvenile fantasy and would like to know more or people who know nothing at all about the field and are just turning up to find out why anyone would want to talk about children's books. I think I'll have to prepare for both eventualities and hope I can get some idea of which condition applies to most of the audience (always assuming that anyone bothers to attend this program item). I'll also have to hope I don't freeze up with a bad case of stage fright on the day. Tune in next issue to find out how or if I survive the ordeal.



Piers' Cantina

by Piers Anthony

Gordon Dickson, in the old days, was one of the genre's most prolific writers. In general, to my taste, his work was competent but not outstanding. I remember him winning a Nebula for a story titled "Call Him Lord" that had a gross flaw of logic. In the name of preserving the superior qualities of the aristocratic line, especially bravery, a prince was treacherously murdered. Some example there! But awards, especially the Nebula, are based on other things than logic, and Dickson is a most convivial character in person.

But there was one piece of his that scored on me. It was serialized in three parts in ASF, with an illustration I thought was repeating itself, but was in fact showing the aging of the protagonist by experience. It was one of the finest novels I have read. It was called DORSAL!

I met the author at the Milford Conference in 1966. I don't like to travel, so have attended no conventions, but this once I thought it worthwhile to make the effort to meet and interact with some of the figures of the field. I met the Knights, the Andersons, Spinrad, Delany, Zelazny, Blish, Brunner, Russ, Ellison, Papshin, several editors, and I forget who else - oh yes, Dickson.

At Milford we all put in our sample manuscripts, and all suffered the group's censure on same. My remarks

were of similar tenor to those I make now, so I befriended some and alienated others, according to my judgement of their pieces. So it goes; my opinion has never been for sale for friendship. I believe criticism should be reasonably objective; for all that, fiction is mostly subjective. It would be nice if all critics practiced this, and all recipients accepted it. Unfortunately both are notoriously biased, and so am I. But I try to ameliorate this somewhat by honestly setting forth my biases so that the reader can allow for them. I do try to avoid the hypocrisy of pretending an objectivity I lack.

I had a fantasy in the Milford pot, and of course I have fond memories of those who praised it and evil memories of those who did not. The piece was "Tappuah," about the romance of a disabled girl who had the talent to bring rare, even extinct creatures to her. I regard it as one of my best early pieces of writing, so naturally it never did get published. I brought it to Milford because it was a problem piece. I came to participate and to learn, and I believe my subsequent progress, despite the blacklisting I suffered, is evidence that I did profit by the experience. You don't learn by being a sponge; you learn by plunging into the arena and giving and taking knocks. Some writers there did not understand that, as I think their subsequent careers illustrate. They were there for social purposes, and for the enormous impetus Milford

could give to award contenders. I believe four of the items I saw at Milford later won awards, and I doubt they would have without the extra push of the Milford participants. (So do I alienate people by naming them? Well, I've been alienating people this way all my career, so I might as well continue. The ones I remember are Carr's "The Dance of the Changer and the Three," Ellison's "Pretty Maggie Moneyeyes", and Ellison's "I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream." I don't remember the fourth; did Spinrad's "The Weed of Time" ever win anything? ((Not according to A HISTORY OF THE HUGO, NEBULA, AND INTERNATIONAL FANTASY AWARDS by Franson and DeVore. editors.)) I called out one critical flaw in that, and if the author then corrected that flaw, he well might have had a winner.]

I remember especially Gordon Dickson's reaction to my piece. Not his actual comment on the story, but the fact that he withheld his remarks, left the group, walked around for several minutes, then returned to speak his piece. What had been so difficult for him? Not the comment itself, but the proper phrasing of it. You see, to put this with decent delicacy, sometimes I come across to people like a rabid werewolf. Werewolves, as anyone who reads my fantasy will know, are perfectly decent folk, but strangers are prone to misunderstand them, especially when they have blood on their teeth. I think Dickson was afraid I would spew poisonous spittle

and burn holes in the carpet if he needed me with too cogent a truth. So he took the trouble to work out exactly the presentation that would smooth down my hackles and make me want to comprehend. He was the soul of diplomacy, and I appreciate his effort to this day - not because I'm really rabid (but don't push your luck--) but because he cared enough to do what he had to do properly. A good critical comment is no good if the recipient is unable to accept it. I understand Dickson has helped a number of other writers with his advice; I believe it. Dickson is a fine person in this respect, and I'm sorry about the chunks I'm about to chop from his tender flesh now.

Dickson's entry at Milford was a segment of the Dorsai series. That was when I learned that there was more than the one novel. I was delighted; I had the pleasure of telling the author to his face, in public, that I was a Dorsai fan, and that whatever was in the offing, I wanted it. Naturally Dickson and I got along great; I had managed to find the proper phrasing. In later years that changed, when he was president of SFWA and I had trouble with a publisher, and he offered to have SFWA arbitrate and I agreed instead of going immediately to court, but he never got around to setting it up - while my reputation was being savaged by other parties inside and outside of SFWA, and the program of blacklisting was instituted against me. This inaction on Dickson's part struck me as like a policeman who dawdles over his second cup of coffee while a man on his beat is getting mugged. You can't accuse the policeman of the crime, but you aren't exactly pleased by his performance. I finally got a lawyer, backed off the publisher (because I did have the right of it) and quit SFWA in disgust. That of course took all of my subsequent work out of consideration for the Nebula, but I was already disgusted with that system of awards too.

Gordon Dickson, you see, is like Bacchus, the Greek/Roman god of wine and revelry. Bacchus has been widely misrepresented in the press as a fat drunkard, when in fact he was classically a handsome and powerful entity. Bacchus is a great guy to know socially, full of cheer, a gourmet, portly and intelligent and possessed of a social conscience. But Bacchus is not the ideal person for a position of responsibility. He tends to let the hard work slide until it is really too late, then to try to patch it up by phone. This, I believe, is Dickson's fundamental failing, and it shows in both his SFWA performance and in his writing.

My attention has returned to Dickson at this time because I am doing a series of my own, part of which may resemble DORSAI. I'm an ornery cuss, and I don't like to copy anybody, so I had to go back to the Dorsai series to make sure I was not duplicating any part of it. The vagaries of republication and distribution made it difficult to obtain the volumes, and I had trouble even figuring out which ones were in the series. You might suppose that a title like THE SPIRIT OF THE DORSAI would be in the series, while one like NECROMANCER would be unrelated fantasy. You would be mistaken. Nowhere on the covers are such things made clear, and the master list of Dorsai-series novels, also known as a segment of the Childe Cycle, is not given. You have to figure it out piecemeal. Bacchus, it seems, isn't good at organizing things, and the publisher, Ace, only further muddies the puddle.

For the record, here is what I have been able to ascertain about the Childe Cycle: There are six SF novels, titled DORSAI, NECROMANCER, SOLDIER ASK NOT, TACTICS OF MISTAKE, THE FINAL ENCYCLOPEDIA, and CHILDE. Associated volumes are LOST DORSAI and THE SPIRIT OF THE DORSAI. There are also supposed to be three historical and three contemporary novels. As far as I know, two of the SF novels and all six of the non-SF

novels have not yet been published. In this column I'll tackle the six I have in neither their order of publication nor their internal chronology, but in the order of my reading.

DORSAI! is a beautiful novel. I found it just as enthralling in the rereading as I had when I first read it in serial form. Dickson can certainly write! But the packaging of this and some of the others is atrocious. One would think, considering the six-figure sum Ace supposedly paid for this package, that a more orderly and attractive and accurate presentation could have been arranged. DORSAI!, for example, was once retitled THE GENETIC GENERAL; at least that damage has been undone. This time it has a junky space-opera cover that will hardly attract the discerning reader who really ought to get into this series. I submit it is high time to give authors input on the packaging of their works, including cover art and blurb material, and especially the titling; presentation would surely improve, and sales should follow. There is also a problem with the text. Magazine editors tend to insert little one-line breaks periodically, sort of subdividing the chapters, structuring the prose. They mean well, but they have almost no sense of the continuity or appropriateness;



they just hack the text into convenient bite-size chunks without regard to its flow. This has defaced the prose of DORSAL!, and I can't think why neither author nor paperback editor had these excrescences removed. (Well, yes I can: the publisher left it to the author, and the author left it undone until too late, as explained above.) It annoyed me throughout the novel, but one example will suffice: On page 42 of the Ace edition we have (I'll render it in half-quotes, so you can tell my quote from the speech in the text) "'I will not, of course, turn and run," said Donal. "After all, I'm a Dorsai. As for how I feel--all I can say is, I've never felt the way you describe. And even if I did--'" Here we have a break in the text, and because it occurs at the top of p. 43 the copyeditor has inserted a triple asterisk to mark it. Otherwise, horrors!, the break would be overlooked by the reader. Copyeds are thoughtful that way. After this so-carefully delineated break, we resume the text: 'Above their heads a single mellow chime sounded, interrupting.' Now this is literarily and maybe literally disastrous, since a triple-asterisk break normally signals the passage of time. Thus, technically, Donal broke off his speech, waited for an hour or a day as he watched those asterisks parade by, and THEN was interrupted by the single mellow chime. This is of course idiocy, and I'm sure Dickson didn't write it that way. It has long been a festering question in my mind whether copyeditors don't do more harm than good. I, for one, would be happy to have my prose set in print THE WAY I WRITE IT, and take my lumps for such errors as I make, and I

think Dickson would too. Maybe authors do make typos and suffer minor lapses of clarity - but at least grant us the right to make our own errors, instead of suffering the slings and errors of outrageous idiots. Perhaps I should say, allow us the tactics of our own mistakes.

But apart from these mosquito-like nuisances, DORSAL! is one of the finest adventures extant. It concerns Donal, a professional soldier from a soldier caste, who comes on the scene young and nifty and strange, and advances by giant steps to prominence, winning the reluctant girl along the way. Formula, yes - but well-done formula can be very nice reading, and this is the best. Dickson here shows himself to be a fine entertainment writer. Later in the series he shows he is more than that, but it is generally necessary for a given writer to establish his credits as an entertainer before he can gather a following for more serious material.

The volume ends with an appreciation by Sandra Miesel, who clarifies the larger framework. But she discusses all the novels, published and unpublished, and I found her essay confusing because of all the references to things I had not yet read. I think a person commencing his reading with DORSAL! should skip the essay, and return to it when he has completed his reading of the other volumes; and it will make more sense.

TACTICS OF MISTAKE has similarly bungled packaging, with irrelevant blurbings. 'One man could win, against worlds!' it proclaims. 'If that man was Donal Graeme, iconoclastic ex-Terran military officer...' Donal Graeme? HE NEVER APPEARS IN THIS NOVEL, not yet having been born! The protagonist of MISTAKE is Cletus Grahame, Donal's ancestor. True, as Sandra Miesel points out, the basic character is the same, manifesting in different guises (how cleverly she makes a virtue of unoriginal characterization!) - but we can be sure the blurbist was not operating on that symbolic level. Who the hell is minding the shop at Ace? Norm Spinrad talks of giving "C" treatment to "A" or "B" novels; he is dead on target. This is bordering on "F" treatment. The quoted reviews aren't much better. ANALOG refers to Asimov's Foundations and Heinlein's Future History, and says 'Gordon Dickson has been building a future of his own that is far more logical, more humanly real, and with stronger philosophical foundation than either of those classics....' Actually, this just may be true, but it may be a disservice to Dickson to invoke those other names. At first glance, Dorsai seems like a jumbled hodgepodge, compared to the tightly organized universes of the others; only when enough of the fragments are assimilated does the more subtle unity show through. Taken a single novel at a time, there are problems.

The fact is, MISTAKE reads like a carbon copy of DORSAL!, with inappropriate chapter breaks and bad copyediting. It starts with the nifty, inexperienced protagonist aboard a spaceship, crashing the dining table of a powerful Antagonist-figure, where he meets the Girl. The Girl in these novels is primarily decorative; this is, in the early volumes, a male series, with only token sexual integration. The protagonist goes on to fence with the antagonist, always dramatically outsmarting him just as Donal did (will do), and finally getting the girl. Dickson has done the same novel in outline twice. However, the details differ, and they are excellent details; this is a good, not a bad novel. But it remains formula. Read it for its intriguing

puzzle-variants and its insights into the formation of the modern Dorsai, not for any freshness of story.

LOST DORSAL! is a picture book, profusely illustrated by Fernando Fernandez. I am uncertain whether such graphics help the book. They are competent enough, but my mental picture is good enough for most purposes. I understand literacy is declining, so maybe picture books are the wave of the future, but again I wonder whether the type of person who needs a lot of pictures is the type to properly appreciate the nuances of the Childe Cycle. I tended to skip over the pictures so I could get on with the story. But I don't really object; I just wonder. The cover is less junky than the prior two and the internal breaks have been cleared up. The jacket copy mentions the inclusion of "Warriors" though the correct story title is "Warrior"; this is par for the Ace copyediting. In front it says, 'A 1980 Nebula Nominee!' which is more sloppiness. This book is actually a collection, containing a novella of the same title that was a nominee, and that won the Hugo, but the book itself was not a nominee. There is another appreciation by Sandra (why do I keep wanting to call her Amanda?) Miesel, and a fragment from THE FINAL ENCYCLOPEDIA, the whole of which we should be seeing Real Soon Now. It's a decent package, worth buying and reading.

The novella is excellent. I was raised as a Quaker, and the Quakers (Society of Friends) generally endorse pacifism and oppose war. Many of them have been imprisoned during wartime as conscientious objectors, and this was a problem of conscience I faced myself when I came of draft age. Options were more restricted in those days; my choice was Army or Prison. I decided I was not a pacifist, though I am a vegetarian because I don't like killing, and I did serve in the U.S. Army; in fact I was naturalized American there. But it was no easy thing, and I well understand this type of conflict of conscience. But it was not me, but Dickson, who put it into fiction, in the form of a pacifist Dorsai, a committed warrior who would not fight. What DOES a pacifist do in a battle situation? Dickson shapes this story to show there is no solution by simply declining to fight; honor requires that the commitment be met. The situation is worked through to its resolution, and I find it consistent. I don't participate in Awards processes, and haven't read the competing entries, but yes, I would call this piece Award stature. The short story in the volume is a lesser item, to my mind flawed by

coincidence, but still interesting and worthwhile.

I had more trouble with NECROMANCER. The packaging is better, but the science fiction seems to shift to fantasy, and the wheels become Van Vogtian. There is the usual byplay with the decorative Girl, but this story is not a carbon of any other. Soon after reading it, I find myself unable to recreate it with any clarity, yet I did enjoy it. Dickson continues to have nice touches of insight. I don't consider this a great book, but it is a good one. It does fill in some of the early material, but I think the Cycle could survive well enough without it.

THE SPIRIT OF DORSAI is another picture book collection with the blurred legend of the author as 'Winner of virtually every award science fiction has to offer,' as if the blurbist was too busy to bother itemizing. Actually, it is hard to find a genre writer who has been around long who has not picked up an award or so somewhere. I've been remarking on the way these books seem to touch me personally; this one had a character named Piers. That kept startling me; it's not a common name. The major item in this volume is "Amanda Morgan," and this is where Dickson finally tackles a woman on more than a decorative basis. But Amanda is old and physically feeble, so her sex is merely a matter of

formality. An old man could have handled the part about as well. I am forced to the conclusion that Dickson, a bachelor, is unable to come to grips with the female of the species, and does not feel at home with romance, and hardly knows sexuality exists. He is at his best when describing a protagonist's bafflement at the ways of women. He prefers to let the stork handle reproduction, discreetly offstage. This really is too bad, because his handling of the deep abiding passions of the male - integrity, conscience, loyalty, pride, faith - is at times so penetrating as to be outstanding. If he ever tackled a male-female situation seriously, it could be a phenomenal experience. I understand from the Miesel essays that he does plan to do this in the next two novels of the series; if so, they may indeed be his best work to date.

SPIRIT is a collection of two pieces, "Amanda Morgan" and "Brothers." Both explore details glossed over in prior novels, and do a decent job of it. "Amanda" shows how the final battle in TACTICS OF MISTAKE was won, and "Brothers" covers the assassination of Kensie Graeme in SOLDIER, ASK NOT. Here, yet again, Dickson scores on me, describing the impact on a man

when his twin brother is killed. I had no twin, but my closest cousin died when we were in the same high school, and yes, he was the happy one (like Kensie), while I the unhappy one (like Ian) survived. Oh, yes, I understand! For thirty years I have carried with me the burden of the death that caught the wrong person.

Which brings us to SOLDIER, ASK NOT. I was unable to obtain this one, so the kindly editorial staff of NIEKAS lent me a copy of the British edition. SPHERE presents it with more taste than Ace, though it lists this as 'The second in the Dorsai trilogy.' The story line seems somewhat disjointed, as the protagonist Tam Olyn struggles

through the labyrinth of his own passion for power and revenge. The main purpose seems to be to illuminate aspects of the society, and this is accomplished quite well. Perhaps I was influenced by the presence of another "Piers" character, but there are other aspects of this novel that touched me, such as the death of the protagonist's brother-in-law. "Eileen?" he asks faintly as he dies, hoping for the comforting presence of his wife, the protagonist's sister, who is far away on another planet. By that small token he shows his love, and it hurts. As I typed this review, my own mother-in-law died abruptly, and I must watch my own wife suffer.

SOLDIER seems especially rich in insightful comments. "...people betray themselves by their choice of the accusations they bring to bear on others." I've kept that in mind for years, noting those who accuse me of dishonesty, rashness, sexism and such. It's instructive. "Deep in every intelligent, living individual are things too great, too secret, or too fearful for questioning. Faiths or loves or hates or fears or guilts. All I needed was to discover these things, and then anchor my arguments for the answer I wanted in one of those deep, unself-questionable areas of the individual psyche." Yes, indeed! "Anger is a luxury." "Neither man nor devil has ever challenged me in vain." "There is magic in words when they are handled..." "They are fools that think that wealth, or women, or strong drink or even drugs can buy the most in effort of the soul of a man." It is suggested that an ultimate task, and the wielding of oneself as a tool to accomplish it, is the greatest pleasure known to man. It is a good thesis.

Taken as a whole, for all that it is as yet incomplete, this Dorsai series does strike me as a major accomplishment in the genre. Dickson is a fine writer, and he does have

more on his mind than simple action-adventure, though he is good at that too. He evidently has the potential to be one of the half-dozen or so top artisans in the field. He can do SF or fantasy, light or dark, and he is literate and motivated. Yet it seems to me that he has not achieved that potential. A number of other writers are out-producing and outselling him, and I believe I am one of them. What is holding him back?

I think writers have had their fill of ignoramuses who try to tell them how they should have written, instead of trying to perceive why they wrote as they did. Critics seem to imply that they could have done it better than the author. I am walking into a quagmire here, criticizing the person who can surely do his thing better than I could do his thing. But I take this liberty because I am indeed going to try my hand at something similar, and I do really want to know how it is done. I come, again, to learn, and I do it in my special fashion.

The fact is, my personal life has much of Dorsai in it, and I identify strongly with this type of characterization, though I have not hitherto done it in my own work. I am one of the most disciplined and dedicated writers extant. I drive hard, always extending myself, always trying for a more significant mark, whether this is in the lightest entertainment fantasy or in physical effort. I understand Cletus' exercise program in TACTICS exactly, for I do it myself, albeit on a lesser scale; I set my personal three-mile running record while working on this column, and I do check my own heartbeat and temperature change and fluid loss after such efforts. I do fight for what I believe in; the genre is figuratively strewn with the corpses of those who have misjudged me. (Of course, some of those corpses don't seem to know they're dead.) Thus, to understand the strangeness of Anthony, one must read Dickson. Dickson has never stopped finding the proper phrasing to reach me.

But you see, Dickson himself is not Dorsai. He has the mind and the talent, but not really the will. If he had the discipline to skip parties and conventions and anything else that interferes with his writing, as I do, he would accomplish a lot more of that writing. But it is said that swinehood has no remedy, and I doubt Bacchus will change his nature. So we shall be seeing only a fraction of the great work Dickson might have done. That, I think, is his tragedy - and ours.

HERE COME
THE
BARBARIANS



THERE GOES
THE
NEIGHBORHOOD



MATHOMS



by Anne Braude

Here Come the Barbarians . . .
There Goes the Neighborhood

When I was about fifteen years old and steadily reading my way through almost the entire collection of the post library at Fort Monroe, Virginia, I came across a copy of CONAN THE CONQUEROR. As my favorite reading had always been myth, legend, and fairytale, it was just my meat; and I promptly devoured it. Some ten years later, when the Conan stories started coming out in paperback, I hastened to acquire them. Alas, the magic was no longer there. For one thing, I was now a graduate student in English and my tastes in heroic fantasy were somewhat more sophisticated. For another, stories originally published one at a time tended to a certain monotony when read one after another; after all, one undead wizard/giant slug/carnivorous ape is very like another. Now, having reread some of the material in preparation for this column, I find myself having philosophical twinges. Not only do I take a dim view of barbarians, I have become rather dubious about heroes.

"Barbarian" is derived from the Greek "hoi barbaroi", literally "the Unintelligibles" (i.e., those who do not speak Greek). It reflects the notion of "civilized" Greeks that any foreign language was not "real" language at all, a view which survives in the term "barbarism" for a misuse of language. (The folk etymology deriving the word from

"barba", beard, since barbarians let their hair and beards grow long, is not accepted by Eric Partridge, the definitive authority on this sort of thing.) By extension, "barbarian" became the opposite of "civilized," implying inferiority or debasement of culture, religion, ethics, and what have you. This is of course sheer snobbery: Alexander the Great, a Macedonian - one of the original tribes for which the Greeks coined the term "barbarian" - was sharply criticized by the Greeks in his army for his practice of sparing captured Persian cities; they preferred the traditional civilized Greek methods of wholesale slaughter and enslavement.

In later centuries, the barbarians were the Celtic, Slav, and Teutonic tribes of Europe as seen through the eyes of classical and then Christian Rome. Like "barbarian" itself, the names of some of these tribes have become synonymous with brutality and hostility to culture - Hun, Vandal, and (except in specific literary and architectural usage) Goth. There was now some validity to this usage, as it was the incursions of these tribes that were destroying surviving civilization and bringing in the Dark Ages through constant warfare and looting which led to the decay of what order, prosperity, and learning remained. The ultimate barbaric act was sacking a church or monastery, not only because monks and priests were peaceful, harmless, and unable to defend themselves but also because they preserved what learning there was by copying manuscripts which the raiders either carried off for the gold leaf in their illuminations or simply burned. Although the Latin and later the Christian West could be as ruthless and bloody in waging war as any horde of spear-carrying warriors from the wrong side of the Danube, they did stand for certain values - law and order, charity and mercy - which made life a little better in those grim times and were well worth preserving. Barbarians tended to see those outside their own kin-group strictly as prey. The "barbarian code of honor" which motivates Conan to help damsels in distress and old ladies about to be burned as witches is as mythical as that of the Chivalrous Man-eating Shark, which never touched women or child.

In the Conan corpus, the barbarian and the civilized man are seen in quite different - and historically indefensible - terms. As a barbarian, Conan is physically larger, stronger, and capable of greater feats of endurance than his civilized opponents. And he is depicted as ethically superior: a keeper of oaths, a defender of the helpless, a

just and merciful king. How he squares this with being a mercenary soldier, a thief, and a pirate is never explained. The men of the civilized Hyborian realms are with few exceptions corrupt. Priests are greedy for power and wealth and serve beings of supernatural evil. Aristocrats are greedy for power and wealth, effete, treacherous, and inclined to all sorts of depravity. Merchants are greedy, cowardly, treacherous, and usually fat. Peasants are foolish, fickle, cowardly, and presumably greedy when they get the chance. (It is not on record that Conan himself ever turned down a chance for loot.) Perhaps I am being too hard on what is, after all, escapist fantasy with no higher pretensions; but I can't help wondering how Conan would have fared if he were up against the Roman legions of the quality that manned Hadrian's Wall, or a Macedonian phalanx of Alexander's day.

In the context of his own fictive universe, Conan is undoubtedly a hero; and this is another thing I have against him. In my opinion, the Hero is an intrinsically less admirable and attractive figure than the Champion - i.e., someone who is putting himself on the line for something more than self-interest. The Champion is a defender of his faith, his people, truth and righteousness, or simply his imperilled hearth and home, a most of our most beloved heroes of legend have been Champions: Hector of Troy, who became the preferred mythic ancestor of most European nations, while Homer's heroes, the Conan-like Achilles and Ajax, were seen as villains; Roland and the Twelve

Peers, fighting for Charlemagne and Christendom against the pagans; Arthur and his knights, who upheld Christian chivalry against barbarian invasions and domestic anarchy; El Cid, the Spanish defender of the Faith; and even Beowulf who, although a barbarian by Latin/Christian cultural standards, protects his people and the royal court of Hrothgar against the ultimate Outsider, the inhuman Grendel. A professor of mine once remarked that Beowulf is a Champion when he fights the dragon preying on his kingdom in the second part of the poem, but a Hero when he goes off to a foreign land to tackle Grendel simply for the glory of it in the first part; but I don't think this distinction will hold up. Part of the reason Beowulf undertakes the defense of Heorot is a bond of obligation, since Hrothgar had aided his father; and Grendel is definitely portrayed as a foe of all civilized and even human values, while Heorot is depicted as a center of high civilization.

Another point worth making is that while the hero always wins - that's what makes him a hero - the Champion may be defeated or sacrifice himself to win. Hector is slain and his corpse dishonored, and his city falls; Roland and the Old die in battle before their cause is won; and Arthur is defeated and his Round Table disbanded. While Conan's antagonists are generally evil sorcerers, corrupt tyrants, or cruel outlaws, he is ultimately out only for himself; the overthrow of Evil is merely a byproduct of his adventures. Even after becoming a king, he remains essentially a one-man operation; his kingdom therefore falls into immediate disarray every time he gets abducted by one of those undead wizards (which seems to happen every other Thursday). And of course his eventual success is never in doubt; there is no force in his fictive universe that can ultimately defeat him, and the reader is fully aware of this. The Conan saga is thus barren of tragic possibilities. His heroic qualities, moreover, are defined in terms of might rather than right: it is the superior prowess of the barbarian warrior that pulls him through, not intelligence, insight, nobility of character, or wisdom, let alone being on the side of justice.

At this point you may well ask who MY candidate for Champion of the Dark Ages is; and you many not be too surprised to learn that he is the antithesis of Conan. I'm not choosing one of the heroes of legend like Roland or Arthur, but a fellow who was about as far from being a mighty warrior as you can get. His name was Flavius Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus, and he was born sometime between 477 and 490 A.D. and died anywhere between 565 and 585, depending on whose chronology you accept. He was a Christian Roman statesman and author, senator and chief minister to all the Ostrogothic kings of Italy, principally to Theodoric the Great.

(Theodoric, an Dietrich of Bern, was himself a hero of many sword-and-sorcery-type Germanic legends and has a prominent role in the NIBELUNGENLIED.) When he retired from the civil service, around 540, Cassiodorus founded two monasteries, in one of which, at Vivarium, he added to the monks' usual duties the collecting, correcting, and copying of manuscripts of classical Latin works as well as of sacred books. He also laid out, in his writings on the liberal arts, the Trivium and Quadrivium which became the basic pattern of all medieval education. It is to Cassiodorus that we owe the survival of classical literature in Western Europe from the sixth century until the fifteenth. Without him there would have been no epic, no philosophy, no secular writings at all to provide patterns for medieval secular literature. The Aristotelian tradition that shaped medieval Scholasticism was based on the Latin translations Cassiodorus preserved; Greek literature not translated into Latin, like Aristotle's POETICS and all of the drama, were totally lost to the West until the influx of Byzantine scholars after Constantinople fell to the Turks.

Nobody would ever think of writing pulp fiction about Cassiodorus, or using him for a role model in a wish-fulfillment fantasy; he is not the stuff of which Heroes are made. But if ever any one man can be said to have saved civilization, he is that man.

Thus my ideal fantasy hero is no sword-swinging manslayer but a quiet type, one who would rather stay at home and get on with his work than have adventures, but one who holds fast to his commitment to certain values and is willing to give his all for them, even if it means giving up everything else he holds dear and the task seems hopeless, even if the task must be accomplished by arduous struggle and the endurance of

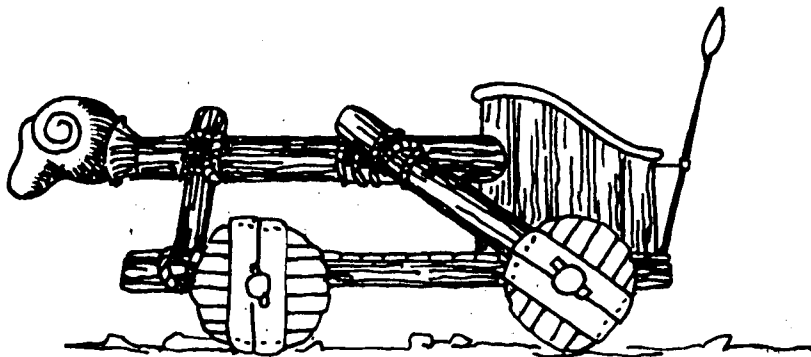
privation and terror rather than by glorious battle. This hero (who is, of course, really a Champion) will do it; and when the tumult and the shouting have died and the dust has settled, he won't go off looking for more adventures or spend the rest of his life capitalizing on his glory: he will go home, prop his furry feet on the fireplace fender, and write a book. Hobbits, you see, are civilized.

FRESH CLUES: Several of the mystery authors mentioned in my last column have new books out; here are some thumbnail reviews. Jane Langton's NATURAL ENEMY has an ecology theme, an offbeat romance, and a great deal of information on spiders. The protagonist is Homer and Mary Kelly's oldest nephew, working as a live-in handyman to earn money for college (where he plans to study entomology). The Kellys make only brief

appearances, and Homer demonstrates more incompetence than usual, but I still recommend the book as an enjoyable read.

The latest Peter Shandy novel by Charlotte MacLeod, WRACK AND RUNE, is another riotous extravaganza, involving an old couple trying to hang on to the family farm despite financial problems, the murder of their hired hand, and the discovery of an apparently genuine Viking runestone amid the poison ivy. Favorite characters from the previous books are on hand again, along with some attractive new ones. Connoisseurs will appreciate the Ride of the Valkyries as performed by Mesdames Shandy and Svenson. MacLeod has also written three mysteries with Canadian backgrounds under the name of Alisa Craig: A PINT OF MURDER and MURDER GOES MUMMING, featuring Inspector Madoc Rhys of the RCMP, and THE GRUB-AND-STAKERS MOVE A MOUNTAIN, easily the best of the lot.

Emma Lathen's newest, GREEN GROW THE DOLLARS, is one of her better ones, involving a patent infringement suit over a miraculous new variety of tomato plant (which ought to be of interest to Ed if he ever manages to conclude a non-aggression pact with the moles). One objection I have to the more recent Lathens is that all too often the villain turns out to be one of the more likeable characters, which of course is not a proper objection but a subjective bias. Lathen does deserve the title of "America's Agatha Christie" for her marvelously deceptive plots and skillfully planted clues; unlike Christie, she also has a gift for characterization.





The black moonless night of Krantor was falling fast as Kornan breasted the ridge and reined in his vroth to look down on the village. His keen eyes strove vainly to pierce the deepening murk. With a swift, easy motion, he drew a scrap of cloth from the bag at his throat and wiped his bifocals. He peered vainly once again and, with a muttered oath, urged his sleepy vroth into a steady trot down the rocky trail.

Kornan's adventurous spirit rose within him as unfamiliar scents and smells assailed his nostrils. Here would be found robbers, cutpurses, thieves, and naughtymen, each ready to take their sport with a stranger. The thought played around in Kornan's brain, enjoying the vastness of its emptiness. Then those delicate nostrils twitched and an age-old reflex took over. Kornan let it guide him through a maze of dirty streets, past row after row of dingy hovels until at last his hunter's keen sense told him he had found what he sought.

With one athletic bound, he left the saddle. Untangling his mighty sword, Bumstinger, from his ankles, Kornan scrambled to his feet and threw open the door of the shack before which he had stopped. His darting eyes took in the steaming vats, bottles of ruby liquid, piles of old parchment, and finally came to rest on the proprietor.

"Ho there," boomed Kornan. "Hast got three thrullworth of blesh and a snish?"

The ancient snishshopkeeper hastened to serve him, whining as he shoveled the succulent blesh onto a fragment of parchment and topped it off with a breadcrumb-covered snish.

"Just in time, stranger. Had you been but one arfar later, the crowd would have been here from the dubleder."

Kornan smiled a wolfish smile, threw

a handful of coins on the counter, scooped up his purchase, and turned away. His heel skidded on a discarded scrap of blesh causing him to fall heavily against a thick-set, bearded character who had just entered. With an oath, the stranger drew back and a bloodthirsty knife.

The snishshopkeeper screamed, "Beware O Traveller, tis Druschack the Slayer."

Kornan paid him no heed. He was busily engaged in parrying Druschack's thrust with one hand whilst, with the other, he struggled to draw Bumstinger. Having accomplished this incredibly superhuman feat, Kornan was able to fight on more even terms. With Bumstinger weaving a flashing cage of steel before him, Kornan could now use his free hand to transfer pieces of blesh and snish to his mouth.

Druschack pressed him hard, almost creasing Kornan's baggy trousers. But Kornan had his measure. As the last morsel of snish passed his lips, Kornan parried a foil en carte, feinted with a pas de seul, and executed a cunning pince nez. It was enough.

Druschack's sword (his knife had grown considerably during the fight) went sailing through the air, coming safely to rest in the shopkeeper's skull. Ignoring petty details, Kornan herded his opponent against the wall and grunted, "Now sercif, we shall see what thou hast to say..." He broke off...Druschack was gazing in amazed startlement at the scrap of parchment Kornan had dashed to the floor.

Kornan followed his gaze and saw that the acrid fumes of the gar which he had sprinkled on his blesh had produced a chemical effect on the paper. Even as he looked, a mysterious map was appearing. Quick as a flash, he scooped up the

parchment and marched Druschack out into the night.

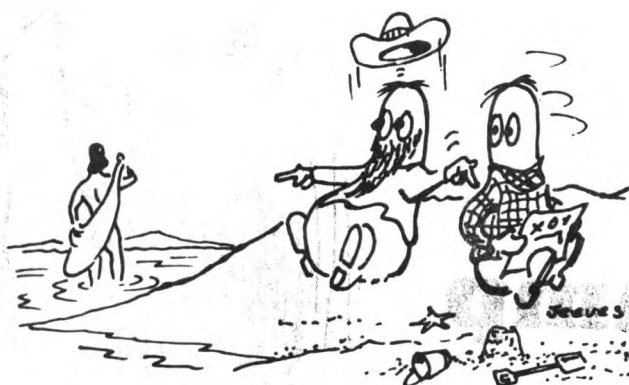
They were still marching when dawn broke. At the sight of the sun, Druschack gladly handed Bumstinger back to Kornan who had insisted that Druschack take his share of carrying the heavy thing.

On they marched. Food ran out, water ran out, patience ran out. Valchers wheeled above them, coyotes crawled in the cactus. This couldn't go on much longer, not even if Robert E. Howard were writing it. Luckily, it didn't because he wasn't.

They reached the oasis of O-Key Fen-O-Key and slumped wearily down against a strangely shaped log on the grassy bank by the still waters. There was a sudden movement from the log as one end split open and came at them.

A brief fight ensued. Jaws ravened and tore at reluctant flesh: even the hotly-spurting blood was eagerly gulped. Finally, Druschack and Kornan had eaten their fill of the creature and were able to relax. Druschack removed his boots to cool his feet (a procedure which helped keep away more of the tree-like creatures). Kornan ordered two flagons of buuz from a comely handmaiden who had just come up. More refreshed, the two warriors settled down to study the map.

Two hours later, they had still not managed to decypher the strange runes and were about to give up when Kornan's quick brain perceived that they had been holding the map upside down. No sooner had this been rectified than both drew mighty breaths. Their eyes bulged and for long moments they gazed in delight. Finally, the comely handmaiden completed her bathing, donned her clothes, and returned to the pavilion. The warriors bent back to the map.



Now the right way up, the message was immediately obvious. Immediately (if not sooner) (and without wasting a further moment) they jumped to their feet and set off into the desert.

For many moments there was a silence at the oasis. It was broken by the stealthy sound of bare feet treading carefully on the sand. It was Drushack returning for his boots.

The days that followed were hard. With water long gone, their only sustenance was an occasional snack at a wayside cafe. Finally, the mountains of Ekbug loomed in the distance. Kornan pointed them out to Drushack.

"There is our goal, let us not tarry, Harry."

Night had fallen when they entered a rocky delfile, the soft tinkling of rock cooling could be heard all around. Drushack grunted in annoyance, "Rock...I hate it; much prefer zwingy-punk."

Picking their way over the rubble, they pressed deeper into the pass.

Flowers grew everywhere and a gentle stream rippled between verdant green banks. They had come to a very pretty pass indeed. Then the sides pressed in more and more closely until Kornan was forced to remove the padding from his jacket - Drushack, being narrow-minded, had less trouble.

They were rounding a particularly narrow corner when a rumbling crash caused Kornan to leap for safety, Bumstinger whining from its scabbard. Looking behind, he saw Drushack stretched flat upon the rocky floor. Even as he watched; the warrior freed his entangled bootlaces and rejoined Kornan.

On they strode until their way was barred by an iron-bound door studded with spikes and bearing the sign, "NO CALLERS." Ignoring the sign, the two warriors heaved open the door, mighty thews straining against the rusted hinges. They entered and the door slammed shut behind them.

The fight that followed was long and gory. Back to back, Drushack and Kornan parried, cut, and slashed at the horde which had pounced upon

them. Kornan's sword was worn down to a dagger. Drushack's cloak was pierced in a hundred places as it swung on a clothes peg where he had placed it for safety. Human flesh could only stand so much. Finally it was over.

Kornan hoisted the last of the attackers above his head and stacked the body neatly among the other 250 packed against the wall. Kornan had a tidy mind. Together, he and Drushack approached the treasure for which they had dared so much: two tickets for the next Worldcon, a bottle of that rare perfume, "Sens of Wonder," and a life subscription to NIEKAS.

Darkness fell (again) as the second sun set over Krantor. The only sound to be heard came from two shapeless masses gently beating their heads against the ground. From them came a strange, muffled sound having a mystic power to cloud men's minds.

It was THE END.

((A slightly different version of this yarn appeared in ERG 1, April 1959.))



UNCOVERING HOWARD

Catherine Crook de Camp



Well, if writing a novelization of a movie is beset by problems, writing a biography presents five times as many problems and ten times as many working hours. For the past five years, as some of you know, Sprague and I have been working on DARK VALLEY DESTINY, the Life of Robert E. Howard.

Writing a biography is like trying to put together a jigsaw puzzle where half the pieces are lost forever and there is no picture on the box top. The job involved an amount of work that exceeds anyone's wildest imagining. If we had realised this five years ago, probably Robert E. Howard's life story would never have been written, at least not by us. We have collected a pile of notes almost as tall as I am, literally as tall as my shoulders. We've made hundreds of long-distance calls and taken five trips to Texas to do research. We've poured over old genealogies to unearth Howard's family background and studied charts about weather conditions in Cross Plains as well as the fauna and flora of the area to try to understand the climate in which Robert Howard lived. We've

read Howard's letters to Lovecraft and all Howard's poetry. Unfortunately the replies from Lovecraft to Howard are in the charge of a man out in Baraboo, Michigan...oh, Sauk City is where he lives and Baraboo is where he has them kept in a vault and he won't let them out. I don't know what he thinks he is going to do with them. Of course they might throw more light on Howard but we couldn't get them. Other than that, we have been very lucky.

We interviewed almost everyone who is still alive and who remembers Robert E. Howard. We realised we had to move rather fast to gather up the pieces of the puzzle rattling around in the fading memories of oldsters who have long considered these memories unmemorable trifles. The memories themselves are 50 to 75 years old and the people are in their 80s and even 90s.

Two of Howard's boyhood friends refused to talk about him lest they divulge some nugget of information that might go into their own memoirs of the man. Since these works haven't been forthcoming in 45

years, we suggest you do not file advance orders for either of those books.

When squeamish souls refused to allow us to take notes or turn on a tape recorder during the interview we had to sit up into the wee hours of the night (writing down) our memories and impressions of what was said. We even resorted to hiding a tape recorder in a knitting bag but we found that the resultant interview was muffled, so muffled as to be practically useless. So for us, at least, crime doesn't seem to pay.

At last, I am happy to report, the job is all but done. The manuscript is now being rewritten, the first few chapters are done. Five of the first six chapters that have to be cut a bit and tightened up are also being done. But otherwise it's ready and at an agent's now and we are waiting like spiders in their webs to see who's going to be the publisher of the book.

Hard and time-consuming as the job has been, it certainly has been

interesting. We've had some amazing experiences in the course of our labors. In fact, five years ago we had our first of several astonishing pieces of luck, which made us feel that DARK VALLEY wanted itself to be written and the book chose us as its instrument.

Simply amazing things have happened; at least we think so. A friend of mine, Dr. Jane W. Griffin, who was a child development specialist connected with the University of Pennsylvania, was at our house for dinner. So was Lin Carter, with whom Sprague had been collaborating (I think it was on CONAN THE LIBERATOR). This was before I lent a hand with the stories. I've been working on the last few, so if you don't like them blame me not Sprague.

After the meal, Sprague and Lin retired to the study to plot a new story. To explain their rather too hasty departure I mentioned to my friend that they were working on another Conan story and that the Howard heirs were also involved, a Mrs. Kuykendall and her daughter. At that point, Jane said, "Funny, I went to college with a girl named All a Ray Kuykendall...that's the way the name is pronounced in Texas."

Well, I hollered for Sprague and Lin; they came running down. We spent the evening learning that Jane came from East Randy, Texas, which was a town less than a hundred miles from Cross Plains where Robert Howard grew up, and six miles from where the Kuykendalls lived. She is also the same age as Howard.

Knowing the region and many of the families of central Texas made her an ideal collaborator for those early chapters. Although she died two years ago, her ideas on child development and her knowledge of the flora and fauna and the ways of Texas in the 1920s and 30s helped us with the early chapters.

Jane was a marvelous help on our second research trip to Texas. Although she had emphysema and had to have a constant supply of oxygen, that didn't stop her from going with us, or the de Camps being foolhardy enough to take her. We could not bring our own oxygen so we arranged to have canisters available on the plane to Texas. We kept the flight attendants busy all the way.

Once on terra, we got two five foot long cylinders of oxygen from a welders' supply house and carried them in a borrowed van in which we toured over a thousand miles of central Texas. Sprague did all the driving. He had broken his coccyx in

a fall, so he had to sit on a rubber doughnut the whole way. He had also broken a rib that hadn't been diagnosed at the time. How he lifted those heavy oxygen tanks in and out of the car each night I'll never understand; I don't think he will either.

Jane opened doors for us that would not have opened so wide without her. With her Texas drawl and her knowledge of local family names, she would say things that would relieve the tension when we first met people. For example, on one occasion we met some people whose name was Breckinridge (not their real name). Jane exclaimed, "My great aunt was a Breckinridge, we must be kinfolk from way back." They loved her, oxygen mask and all. And we were welcomed along with our tape recorder to some very nice interviews.

Once when we stopped at a liquor store to buy a bottle before going into a dry county (they have wet and dry counties adjacent to each other in Texas) we had another piece of luck. We were searching for Dark Valley where Howard spent the first two years of his life. (The book, by the way, is going to be called DARK VALLEY DESTINY, THE LIFE OF ROBERT E. HOWARD, because of this valley.)

The storekeeper said "Dark Valley runs right by this store. Let me call my father; he's the local historian." Presently a Mr. McClure, with a handsome western shirt, slacks, tie, fine boots, and a diamond ring that would knock your eye out, rolled in. Down there they all have pick-ups to ride around in, but his was pretty nifty.

He drove us down an old dirt road across a field he owned - he owned all the land around - and showed us what he called the old Kyle Place. This was a tiny house in which a family named Green had lived in the days when Dr. and Mrs. Howard were bride and groom. They had moved in with the Greens in this little bitty house for a few months before their own house of the same small kind was built.

It was a thrill to see the very home in which Howard's parents had slept and to which they brought their infant son when they got back from where he was born in Peaster some 20 miles away. The old root and storm cellar was still there. In it, Howard speaks of seeking refuge, as a child, along with his parents during cyclones, which we call hurricanes. So was the tiny winding creek which Howard later remembered as steep-banked, forbidding, and ghoulish. In size, I would say

it was no deeper than I am tall and it was maybe...well, it was 6 or 8 feet wide. It was very narrow, but as a child of one or two, Robert Howard remembered it quite differently.

Then Mr. McClure drove us over to see old Mrs. Green who at 90 still recalled many things about that little bride who came there. She was not a little woman, she was a big woman, as was her dashing doctor husband who used to ride the rough trails into Indian territory to visit patients with his medicines in his saddle bags. That's how primitive it was, some roads you couldn't even take a buggy over.

Luck, or those "cosmic gear wheels" about which Howard liked to talk, did not abandon us then. On another trip to Texas we drove over to Cross Plains to interview Jack Scott, now a distinguished newspaperman internationally known, but he'd been a young reporter when the Howards

lived in Cross Plains. We had no sooner arrived in the Scott home when he received a telephone call from a young professor, a Dr. Charlotte Laughlin. She had just learned that we had spent the day in the Howard Payne University Library in Brownwood looking over Howard's book collection.

All that day, Sprague had been looking for books from the Howard collection on dusty shelves of an upstairs room that was not air conditioned and very unpleasant to sit in. I was going through every page of every book that had been in Howard's library, trying to see if there was anything Howard had marked or underlined. This will show you how you can go astray. The underlinings that we did find were all about women being snatched by Indians. We thought, "Aha," he must have had a fixation on that...we knew his mother did.

Actually, the reason the underlinings were there, we learned later, was that his then girl friend was doing a paper on women being snatched by Indians, and he was doing research for her. So you can't always say you get the right ideas by just looking at the evidence.

Well, this young professor asked Mr. Scott if he knew where the de Camps were. Since they were due to go down to Cross Plains. "Sure," Mr. Scott said, "they're sitting in my livingroom." So Charlotte, her husband, and the head of the English department of the Howard Payne University...they were all science fiction fans...met us at a restaurant half way between

Brownwood and Cross Plains for dinner. We were very lucky, Charlotte had just come back from Baird, the county seat, a hundred miles away. She had been photocopying the deed to the Howard house in Cross Plains and the doctor's references when he moved and took out his papers.

Our good luck seemed to persist. On our last Texas trip we paid another visit to the old housekeeper-nurse who had taken care of Mrs. Howard in her last illness. This dear lady, who is now 85, mentioned an old friend, a Mrs. Martin, who lives six hours away from Cross Plains. Off we went again.

We found that Mrs. Martin and her husband had spent the last night of Robert Howard's life with Dr. Howard. The doctor, you see, had invited several of his best friends to sit with him.

I suppose you would call it a vigil of farewell, not that everyone did that in Texas. But the Howard's friends were a little worried about Howard and the doctor. And so they gathered and sat the whole night with the disturbed family. We found Mrs. Martin a very intelligent school teacher, now retired of course, and a very great talker. She remembered everything. After the doctor had broken up his home, she had bought some of his furniture. At that time Dr. Howard went to live with Dr. Kuykendall and worked in his clinic. Mrs. Martin showed us pictures that had been in the house and (believe it or not) we saw the very mahogany writing table at which Robert Howard used to sit to write his stories. It was a good-looking library-type table; the only difference in it from Howard's day was that the legs had been cut down to cocktail-table height. We were extremely thrilled. We took pictures of it and begged to either buy it or give Mrs. Martin another table for it. Alas, she was not about to part with it for anything.

She did give us something that has become the piece-de-resistance in the deCamp family. It's a plaster bust 16 inches high of a brown skinned classical beauty with dark hair put up in a French twist bound up by a headdress. An asp is wriggling up between her breasts, its red tongue darting out at her throat. She was obviously made in France because the word "Cleopatre" instead of "Cleopatera" was swirled across the base on which she rests. We were told that she was Howard's favorite work of art.

Well, we got Cleo. Her top knot was broken off, her nose was badly

chipped, and she was caked with 45 years worth of glued-on Texas dust. (If you know Texas, you know that that is a lot of dust). Now repaired and repainted...I scrubbed her at least 3 or 4 times in the tub, patched up the spots that were missing, and repainted the whole thing...she presides over our family room. We wouldn't be without her; we are proud to have her.

DARK VALLEY DESTINY will, as you have guessed, be heavily footnoted. We want all of our readers to be able to look up the sources of our information and so to convince themselves of their validity. We don't novelize, that is, we don't make up possible conversations between Howard and his parents or friends. All direct quotations were either written by Howard or quoted by people who knew him; and we use them as they were told to us.

In getting the material for Howard's childhood, we had to lean on what various people remembered about his family. His family moved once every year, practically, for the first 9 years of his life. So we have material from people all over Texas plus his own childhood memories, and you and I know that childhood memories tend to be faulty. So we have tried to cross-check whenever we could.

For Howard's adult life we relied on recollection and letters, mainly the correspondence he had with Lovecraft. To round out the picture we looked up in old Texas histories descriptions of such gatherings as revival meetings and carnivals because we know that Howard, as a child, attended both. Then we added domestic touches such as visits by icemen and water wagons...those huge barrels on wheels that were driven around town on hot summer days to lay water on the dusty dirt streets, because, of course, they didn't have paved streets in those days.

If we succeed in getting 90 percent of everything right we will be very happy. New pieces of the jigsaw puzzle may come to light in future years, pieces that will either support our conclusions or contradict them. But the weight of the evidence is so compelling we feel sure we've presented Howard accurately as well as affectionately. I say affectionately because, when a writer breathes life, or tries to, into his subject's biography, he relives his subject's days and shares his innermost thoughts.

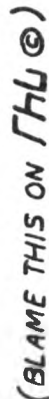
I caught myself one day saying something to Sprague, "If Robert

were standing here now he would..." Sprague looked at me and started laughing. I was in my underwear as it was very hot that day. Robert was a very proper young man who probably would have been horrified to see me dressed like that.

Recently a young friend said, "Oh, everybody is interested in Conan; but nobody would be interested in Robert Howard. Probably most people have never heard of Robert Howard and figure the character was created by Roy Thomas." We both believe that, if you read fantasy, you should want to know about the American creator of the genre we call heroic fantasy. Howard is to literature in America what Professor Tolkien is to literature in England. If you are interested in writing you should be aware of the fine qualities in the writing of this self-taught young man whose life was haunted. He was considered odd by the people of the town in which he lived. He never lived to see the publication of a single book of his stories although he did magazine stories of course. He was ignored for a generation after his death. If you are interested in psychology, Howard's life is a study of what can drive a man to suicide, a man about whom a whole cult has grown up in the last quarter century. The motion picture is bound to spread the cult...a success story seldom equalled by any writer who was so little known in his own time.



THAT MADE A
— CIMM
OUT OF "SLIM"!!!



IF YOU'RE LIKE I WAS, YOU WANT THE POWERFUL
'HYBORIAN GOD' PHYSIQUE THAT MAKES YOU THE
ENVY OF HACK WRITERS EVERYWHERE! ACT NOW!

I CAN'T WAIT! SEND THE BOOK AT ONCE!!

AGE

PREFERRED WEAPONRY

AWARDED THE TITLE 'WORLD'S
MOST PERFECTLY BARBARIC
BARBARIAN (SIC)'

the ghost of cimmericians past



RANDY TOWNSEND
DAVID HEATH JR. INKS

BY L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP

I live in a haunted house. The ghost is that of Robert Ervin Howard of Cross Plains, Texas, with whom I have been involved, now, for thirty years. This ghost doesn't clank chains or go woo-woo while drifting about in a winding sheet. But Robert does occupy an inordinate amount of space on my desk, in my filing cabinets, and in my mind. I suppose that anyone who undertakes a book-length biography becomes haunted in this sense by his biographee.

I first met Howard when CONAN THE CONQUEROR appeared in 1950 in the Gnome Press hardbacked edition. Hooked, I hunted up all the Howard I could find. Next year I learned of unpublished manuscripts in the custody of the literary agent Oscar J. Friend. When I called Oscar, he said: "Why yes, I've got a whole carton-full of Howard manuscripts. Might even be some Conan stories among 'em. Would you like to look through 'em?"

I found three Conan manuscripts and edited them for publication in the Gnome Press series of five Conan volumes. Unknown to me, Oscar was discussing with Martin Greenberg, owner of Gnome Press, and Dr. P.M. Kuykendall, Howard's heir, the possibility of finding a writer to carry on the Conan series, as Ruth Plumly Thompson did with the Oz books after L. Frank Baum died. Leigh Brackett was approached but turned the proposal down, although she might have done better at it than I).

Eventually, I was asked to rewrite some of the other unpublished Howard stories and make them into Conan stories. I chose four tales with medieval or modern settings and changed the hero to Conan. I deleted anachronisms like guns and put in a supernatural element, and the four were published by Gnome as TALES OF CONAN.

I thought I was through with the mighty Cimmerian. But then a foreign fan, Lt. Bjorn Nyberg of the Swedish Air Force, wrote a novel, THE RETURN OF CONAN, to practice his English. I was asked to rewrite it for another Gnome Press volume. I had become

Howard's posthumous ghost writer - the ghost of a ghost, or a ghost squared.

Things were quiet until 1964, when I undertook to sell paperbacked rights to Conan under an agreement with the Howard heirs. After several publishers turned the proposal down, Lancer Books took it up. One rejecting editor later told me his refusal had been the ghastliest mistake of his life.

Legal complications delayed production and required issuing the books in irregular order. Meanwhile Glenn Lord, who on my recommendation was appointed agent for the Howards heirs when Oscar Friend's daughter quit the business, found manuscripts for six more Conan stories, one complete and the rest unfinished, fragments, or synopses. Lin Carter and I completed the fragments, which appeared in the Lancer paperbacks.

My lawyer advised me, to strengthen out legal position, to write original Conan stories, to expand the originally planned three first volumes to four. When the series did well, Lin Carter and I were persuaded to write three original Conan books.

I never imagined, when I first read CONAN THE CONQUEROR that I would ever become so involved with Robert Howard and his super-hero. I never planned to "take over" this literary property; it came about little by little, by a series of coincidences. I daresay others could have done better than I at rounding out and promoting the Conan saga; but I happened to be the man on the spot.

Conan has competed with my own writings and has brought me loud criticism from fans who venerate Howard's writings as a kind of holy writ. In the 1970s, litigation about Conan consumed stupendous amounts of Catherine's and my working time. I was cross-examined on the witness stand for three and a half hours, and the attorney bellowed until even the judge called him down, saying: "Mr. Weinberger, couldn't you address the witness in an ordinary tone of voice? I don't believe he's deaf." Sometimes I felt as if I had

blundered into a quicksand. But the experience has also brought me some fun, some profit, and some friends, so I shan't complain.

The Conan series forms less than ten percent of Robert E. Howard's output. Half a century ago, Howard was making a fair but not fancy living as a mass-production pulp writer. No one would be more surprised than he to learn that today his books are selling in the millions and have been translated into at least six languages. In fantasy they have been outsold only by those of J.R.R. Tolkien. Conan appears in many paperbacks and in comic books and, as you know, the Conan movie was released this spring.

During the dozen years of his literary life, Howard was very productive. He saw over 160 stories published and left 80-100 others unsold. But he was more than simply a voluminous writer of popular adventure fiction. His work has shown a staying power beyond that, and a capacity for arousing enthusiasm far beyond any of his colleagues', save only Edgar Rice Burroughs.

There must be a reason. As I see it, the main factors behind the Howard boom are three. One is the rise in the public's taste for fantasy. The second is the quality of Howard's fiction. And the third is his appeal to the sentiment of romantic primitivism.

As for changes in the public taste, Howard's stories came at the height of the pulp era between the two World Wars. Then there were hundreds of magazines printed on cheap wood-pulp paper: Western stories, adventure stories, war stories, sea stories, flying stories, detective stories, horror stories, science-fiction stories, and so on.

The pulp magazines had certain requirements. Save for the love and confession pulps, they catered to a heavily male readership. They featured fast action; simple, two-dimensional characters; and a plain, straightforward narrative style. Above all, they were meant to entertain, not to express the writer's soul, to show off his brilliance, to educate, convert, or uplift the reader, or to expose shameful conditions in (say) the alarm-clock industry.

Some critics deplore the violence of Howard's stories and the emotional immaturity of his characters. But violent and immature characters were



standard pulp-magazine fare, to which none then objected. While drenched in gore, the magazines were extremely wary of profanity, let alone obscenity. ADVENTURE MAGAZINE, an aristocrat of the pulps, even printed "My God!" as "My ---!"

As for sex, the pulps were as prissy as anything your maiden great-aunt would desire. One could read them for years without even suspecting that babies were not, after all, brought by the stork.

Howard's markets were formula-ridden. For instance, most magazine stories of the time were what we would call "fascist." Writers used ethnic stereotypes as their stock in trade. They and their readers assumed that all Scots were thrifty, Irishmen funny, Germans arrogant, Jews avaricious, Negroes childish, Latins lecherous, and orientals sinister.

Howard got many of ideas from the adventure pulps of the time, notably ADVENTURE MAGAZINE itself. There he was influenced by such regulars as Harold Lamb, Talbot Mundy, Arthur D. Howden Smith, and H. Bedford-Jones. He also borrowed ideas from Edgar Rice Burroughs, Rudyard Kipling, and Jack London.

In the Second World War, the paper shortage killed most of the pulps, and the few survivors copied the READER'S DIGEST format with smaller pages and better paper. After the war, the place of the pulps in popular writing was taken by the paperbacked book.

At this time it seemed as if fantasy

had become a casualty of the Machine Age. The revival of fantasy began in the 1950s and 60s with the publication of Tolkien's THE LORD OF THE RINGS and Howard's Conan stories. Then much of the public had become tired of the anti-heroes, of sociological tracts thinly disguised as fiction, and of experimental narrative forms that leave the reader wondering who did what with what to whom.

The Conan stories added to the rising wave of interest in fantasy and benefited from it. For one thing, the Conan tales took the place of the old lost-city stories, which had been a staple of adventure fiction for nearly a century. In most of the Tarzan novels, for example, the hero discovers a lost city inhabited by ancient Romans, or Atlanteans, or ape-men left over from the Pleistocene.

The airplane, alas, has ruined the traditional lost-city story, because almost every square kilometer of the earth's surface has been, if not explored on foot, at least flown over and photographed, so there is no place left where such a lost city could plausibly hide. So to recapture the glamor of such a fictive metropolis, we must put it in the prehistoric past, as Howard did, or on another world.

The second reason for the Howard boom is the quality of Howard's storytelling. His tales fall roughly into three periods: his boxing period in the late 1920s, his fantasy period in the early 1930s, and his Western period in the middle 30s. Although his production of stories of these kinds peaked during these periods, he wrote in all genres throughout his career. He also wrote detective stories, horror stories, and tales of historical and oriental adventure.

He often tried to break into the high-class pulps like SHORT STORIES, ADVENTURE, and BLUE BOOK. He succeeded only with ARGOSY, to which he sold a half-dozen stories. In these magazines he competed with such finished writers as Lamb and Mundy. Lacking their experience and polish, his work was not up to their standard. Had he lived longer and matured further, both as a writer and as a man, Howard might well have achieved his aim.

Howard's fantasy output, including a couple of tries at science fiction, formed the largest single part of his writings. Although he sold fantasies every year from 1925 on, his biggest production in the field began in 1931 and 32, when his

boxing stories tapered off. At this time, most of the Solomon Kane and King Kull stories were behind him, while Conan lay just ahead.

The Kull stories showed the direction his imagination was taking him. They revealed the possibilities of a completely fictive milieu, which the writer can make as dramatic as he likes without worrying about the correctness of geography, climate, flora, fauna, custom, costume, language, and technology. In his historical stories, Howard often tripped over such details, as by equipping a horseman of the Roman Empire with stirrups. These errors can be blamed on Howard's extreme isolation, lack of wide travel and professional contacts, or access to big-city or university libraries.

In 1932, Howard rewrote an unsold Kull story, "By This Axe I Rule!" For background, he thought out a detailed pseudo-geography and pseudo-history of an imagined era, the Hyborian Age, between the sinking of Atlantis, and the start of recorded history. For his hero he chose a familiar Celtic name, Conan, which he had used before. He added a supernatural element, which the original story had lacked. The result was "The Phoenix on the Sword," and Howard was off to the races.

Conan is a development of Kull but a more completely realized character. Actually Howard said that Conan was a combination of people he had known, and that Conan had stalked into his mind and took over his career. We also think that Robert's father, Dr. Isaac Howard, a tall, strong man with piercing blue eyes and a gruff, domineering manner, also entered into the composite.

Conan is an obvious idealization of what Howard thought he would have liked to have been: a wandering irresponsible hell-raising adventurer, devoted to wine, women, and strife. For all his mighty thews, Robert Howard was nothing like that. Save for a hot temper and chivalry to women, Howard and Conan differed as black and white. Howard was upright, moral, conscientious, law-abiding, courteous, sensitive, introverted, bookish, and (though he denied it) intellectual. He did not attribute these qualities to Conan.

From 1932 to 35, fantasy, mainly about Conan, took most of Howard's time. From 1934 to his death, however, his production of Westerns rose until they became his main product. As with his boxing stories,

his westerns fall into two classes, serious and humorous. The serious ones are merely competent hack work - undistinguished standard pulp fare. But his burlesque Westerns, like his burlesque boxing stories, showed that Howard had a lively sense of humor of a broad, slapstick kind. Though lightweight, they are fun to read.

During his last months, Howard spoke of giving up all fantasy in favor of Westerns. He hoped to write "serious" Westerns like those of A.B. Guthrie. To succeed, Howard would have had to learn much more about human character and personality. But his girlfriend urged him to study people for this purpose. He scoffed, saying most people were only damned fools anyway.

Like the rest of us, Howard had his limitations. His stories contained many errors of fact, resulting from inadequate research; inconsistencies caused by haste; unconvincing atmosphere, due to writing about places he had never seen; weakness in languages, since he knew no modern foreign tongue beyond a few words of Spanish; crude use of dialect; repetition of certain plot elements, like the battle with the giant snake; and over-use of coincidence. He was at his best when he followed his original ideas, as in Conan, and at his worst when he consciously imitated others, as Sax Rohmer in SKULL-FACE, Burroughs and London in ALMURIC, and Lovecraft in "The Children of the Night."

Despite his shortcomings, Howard's work has enjoyed a stunning revival, when the tales of many of his contemporaries, some of them more skillful writers and more traveled and experienced men than Howard, molder forgotten in the crumbling files of old magazines. Why?

This popularity really stems from one group of stories: Conan. Their publication started the Howard boom and their sales have far exceeded those of all the other Howard collections together. We can be sure that Howard's non-Conan stories, with a few possible exceptions, would never have been reprinted had not Conan touched off the Howard vogue.

The main reasons for the appeal of Howard's fiction are, I think, his vivid sense of pace and action and the strong feeling of personal involvement in his plots. As Lovecraft said, he put himself into all his stories. A sense of fast-moving action is perhaps the

greatest talent accorded the born storyteller. Howard achieved this quality by using very active verbs and by starting his story off with a bang, in accordance with the pulp maxim, "Shoot the sheriff in the first paragraph." Thus he began a story: "Hoofs drummed down the street that sloped to the wharfs. The folk that yelled and scattered had only a fleeting glimpse of a mailed figure on a black stallion, a wide scarlet cloak floating out in the wind."

He also developed a highly individual style. About 1928 he began to evolve a cadenced prose, using elements of verse, including rhythm, alliteration, and many color words, as in the sentence: "Palm

trees and orange groves smiled in the sun, and the gorgeous purple and golden and crimson towers of castles and cities reflected the golden light."

On the whole, Howard was sparing of adjectives. The vividness of his narrative depended less on descriptive modifiers than on personification; that is, treating inanimate things and impersonal forces as if they were living beings, as when he wrote: "the slim boat leaped and staggered." By 1932 or '33, Howard had fully developed the style that makes so much of his later work hypnotically vivid.

Howard was early seized by certain interests, which appear again and again in his fiction and verse. One was reincarnation. This concept he probably got from his father who despite his Protestant fundamentalism background also dabbled in oriental religious philosophy.

Being of partly Irish ancestry (though much less than he liked to boast) Howard had a burning interest in the Celts, as well as a general fascination with the races of man. The theories on which he based his racial speculations, I need hardly say, are no longer considered valid.

Still another thread in Howard's skein of thought was that of the Little People - the belief that the Picts were dark, dwarfish aboriginals in Britain before the Celts arrived. This idea, no longer taken seriously in anthropology, started with a medieval history of Norway, which described the Picts as small folk living in holes in the ground like Tolkien's Hobbits.

Most of Howard's heroes are notably sexless. King Kull, we are repeatedly told, was not interested in women. Some of this attitude reflects the conventions of the

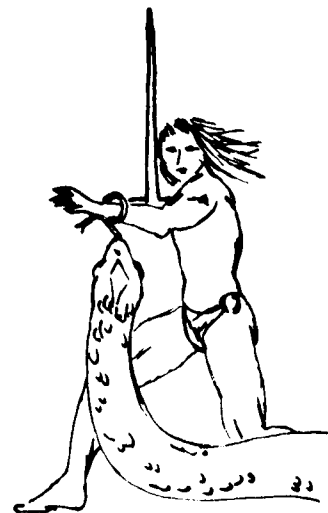
time, but there may be more to the story than that. Around 1933, Howard's characters began to show a more normal interest in the other sex. It may not be a coincidence that next year he began regularly dating a young lady.

Another common Howard theme is the man motivated by pure hatred - not Conan so much as some of his lesser heroes like Turlogh O'Brien and Cormac FitzGeoffrey. They hate almost everybody. Howard himself was obsessed by hatreds of people who had once offended him, such as his employers who had fired him. He thought he had an enemy lurking everywhere.

Along with the theme of implacable hatred goes that of universal destruction. Many of the stories ended with all of the characters but one or two dead. In one of his last stories he killed off absolutely everybody, leaving no person to tell the tale.

Howard also embraced romantic primitivism: the doctrine that primitives are noble savages, whereas civilized men are decadent or degenerate. As one of Howard's characters puts it: "Barbarism is the natural state of mankind.... Civilization is unnatural. It is a whim of circumstance. And Barbarism must always ultimately triumph."

Note, however, that although Howard's heroes Kull and Conan are barbarians, of the approximately thirty stories about them that Howard completed, all but a very few are laid in or on the borders of some civilized land. You see, civilization provides so many more threads to be woven into interesting stories than the monotonous, limited



life of a true, unspoiled primitive.

Considering Howard's difficulties, his achievement is amazing. His foremost obstacle was his extreme isolation. He was even more of an isolate and bookworm than Lovecraft. This was partly a matter of where he lived, in rural Texas at the center of the state, and partly his own unsocial nature, which outside of sporting events urged him to flee any gathering of more than three or four people.

Howard worked under severe - in fact fatal - psychological handicaps, some of which I have hinted at, and which stemmed from the family situation. Lastly we must remember his youth. He was already dead at an age when many writers were just getting into their stride.

I mentioned Howard's romantic primitivism which brings us to the third factor in Howard's popularity. This stems essentially from the Conan stories which exploit the theme of the virile child of nature. He made his hero a stalwart barbarian, who strides through the civilized world, knocking over decadent cultured weaklings like bowling pins. Now, why make heroes of barbarians?

Some of our present idolization of barbarians comes from the "noble savage" concept of the Romantic Era, which flourished roughly from 1790 to 1840 and isn't quite dead yet. In 1669, John Dryden coined the term "noble savage." In the next century that weepy Swiss philosopher, Jean Jacques Rousseau, popularized the concept, although he had never known any savages, noble or otherwise.

In 1791 a disciple of Rousseau, the French novelist Francois de Chateaubriand, came as a youth to America to see the noble savage in his native haunts. In the Mohawk Valley of upstate New York, he was enchanted by the forest primeval until he heard music coming from a shed. Inside he found a score of Iriquois men and women solemnly dancing a popular French dance to the tune of a violin in the hands of a small, powder-wigged Frenchman. This Monsieur Violet had come to America as a soldier in Rochambeau's army in the Revolutionary War and, after his discharge, stayed on and set himself up as a dancing teacher to the Amerinds or Native Americans.

In the nineteenth century, the windy German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, talked likewise of the Superman, the "great blond beast," who would appear to smash the

Judaean-Christian "slave morality" and impose proper discipline on Europe. Nietzsche was vague as to how this hero was to be created, save for the interesting suggestion that the mating of German army officers with Jewish women might produce him.

Rudyard Kipling, Jack London, and Edgar Rice Burroughs embellished the theme with noble barbarians like Mowgli and Tarzan. Robert Howard greatly admired these writers and so their romantic primitivism.

Now, the dictionary defines barbarism as the state between savagery - that is, hunting, fishing, and food-gathering for a living - and civilization, with its cities and metals and writing. "Barbarism" denotes a culture in which men have learned farming and stock-raising but have not yet practiced them efficiently enough to provide a surplus of food to support the growth of cities. Such societies are usually illiterate, although they may have metallurgy.

This meaning has nothing to do with such virtues as honesty, kindness, or politeness. In these respects, civilized men appear on the whole neither better nor worse than barbarians and savages. Civilized men simply know more than barbarians and savages and so have the power that knowledge confers.

In general, real barbarian society was much more conventional and tabu-ridden than civilization. Most barbarian societies were rigid, conformist, and resistant to change, because they did not have our elaborate system of laws, police, and courts to keep evildoers in order. Therefore the force of custom had to be greater to make any sort of communal life possible. Moreover they had little or no surplus to fall back on in emergencies; so if they tried an experiment and it failed, they were dead.

Occasionally, barbarians did cast off their inhibitions and acted in more Conan fashion, when they lived near a civilization weakened by civil war, plague, or other disorder. If their military techniques had drawn even with that of their more advanced neighbors they sometimes conquered the civilization and made themselves its new ruling class.

When Robert Howard wished he had been born a barbarian or on the Western frontier, he had in mind this anarchic milieu, reflected in his stories. Actually such disorder arises only rarely, in times of

conquest and transition, when the barbarians are destroying or being destroyed by other societies. The normal rules of conduct are suspended, and life, in Hobbes's phrase, becomes "poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

What, then, is the attraction of barbarian heroes? The distinctive trait of the conqueror of folk of another culture is his loss of inhibitions. The barbarian conqueror has left the toilsome, monotonous, dreary, tabu-ridden round of normal barbarian life. He has escaped the milieu but has not adopted the mores of the conquered, because he despises them. So he feels he can

get away with anything, like a bumptious adolescent freed from his parents' control but not yet fitted into the mold of adult life.

Now, we all have memories of our emotions during the early stages of our lives. This includes the time of adolescent emancipation, when we tend to quarrel with our families and try out deeds of daring and self-assertion to see what we can get away with. Long after we have left adolescence, we still hanker for that time when, for once, we enjoyed a sense of liberation from rules and restrictions.

That feeling is soon found to be mostly illusion. The world around us - the laws of nature, our fellow men, and our own limitations - clamped upon us as strict a set of rules as anything our parents applied.

This illusion was especially seductive to Robert Howard, who in some ways never did grow up. One reason he became a self-employed writer was that he could never hold a job for long. He so fiercely resented any discipline, correction, or coercion that whenever the boss gave him one order too many, or scolded him for some fault, Robert blew up, threatened to beat up the boss, and either quit or was fired.

Most of Howard's readers, I am sure, are too mature to behave so childishly. But we still remember the exultant feeling of emancipation and secretly yearn for the uninhibited life of the barbarian conqueror. In real life we compromise. We take jobs for pay, and then in our off time read stories of romantic primitivism. Thus for a while we feel as unrestrained as an Attila, a Siegfried, or a Conan. And because Conan gives us this illusion of freedom, he is likely to remain popular for a long time to come.

Although a considerable portion of the career of Conan the Cimmerian was spent serving in or leading armies, the literature has been particularly scanty on the nature of the "higher" (lower?) realms of warfare during the Hyborean Age. The principal concern of the bards and poets was, of course, to tell properly inspiring tales glorifying the various heroes of the period, Conan being most prominent among them. Similarly, the numerous commentaries based on the various cycles of legends and appearing in learned journals such as AMRA have generally been concerned with the minute details of the individual warrior's equipment and tactics. Needless to say, the time has come for a concise examination of the more complex aspects of the subject, particularly in terms of how to organize more efficiently for wholesale slaughter, as opposed to the retail sort which Conan seems to have preferred.

1. HYBOREAN ARMIES

Standing armies seem to have been relatively small in most Hyborean Age countries. Even the Aquilonians do not appear to have had a considerable standing army, being satisfied with a small Royal Guard and the feudal levy, supplemented by mercenaries in wartime. The Royal Guard and the mercenaries were, of course, professional troops and to some extent were probably interchangeable. The feudal levy, however, varied in quality from kingdom to kingdom. In Aquilonia, Nemedia, and Khoraja the troops were fairly professional if the sources are to be believed. Certainly the heavy cavalry and pikemen proved well-trained, efficient troops from all evidence. Among other nations, however, the levy seems to have left something to be desired. Certainly the general use of mercenaries indicates that local resources were not particularly efficient. Aquilonia, which seems to have had the most efficient feudal levy, a balanced force drawn from the various provinces, each contributing men of a particular specialty, relied but little on mercenaries. Other states, particularly the Shemitish city-states, seem to have leaned heavily on them. There is strong evidence that Turan had a considerably larger regular army than any other state but, although Conan spent a considerable amount of time among the Turanians, details are lacking.

AL NOFI Realms of Warfare



Generally speaking, most Hyborean armies seem to have relied greatly on heavy cavalry, frequently called knights. In most of the battles for which we have adequate records the mounted arm usually exceeded the foot in numbers. The importance of cavalry and the heavy armor which it wore in battle, coupled with the fact that it charged with the lance, implies the use of stirrup and saddle, which seem to have been lost during the great dark age following the fall of Aquilonia. In addition to the heavy cavalry there also seems to have been some use made of light cavalry, particularly for skirmishing, reconnaissance, and picket duty. Unfortunately, Conan himself was a heavy cavalryman (if only from necessity, since horses had to be pretty big to carry him) and again the sources let us down. The final element in the mounted arm was archers, apparently using a short but powerful recurved compound bow. This seems to have been particularly favored in the east and among less civilized peoples.

Among the infantry there were two basic types: bowmen and hand-to-hand troops. There seem to have been two types of bowmen: longbowmen, not unlike those found in England in more recent times; and shortbowmen, found almost everywhere. The most efficient bowmen were the

Bossonians, from Aquilonia's western frontiers. These were mostly yeoman farmers who regularly made use of their longbows in resisting Pictish incursions.

The second type of infantry was primarily composed of pikemen, the most effective of these being the Gundermen, from the northern frontiers of Aquilonia. Supplementing these were axemen and swordsmen, although the proportions assigned are difficult to determine. In more recent ages the Swiss pike armies seem to have run from 10% to 30% halberdiers, using what was substantially a short range, hand-to-hand weapon. Spanish tercios were initially about 30% swordsmen, 30% pikemen and 30% missile-armed troops, mostly using the arquebus. At any rate it would seem that similar proportions probably prevailed as the ideal among Hyborean Age armies. Practice, of course, would have been very different from the ideal.

As an aside, mention must be made of two types of troops found only in passing in the Conan Cycle. The Shemites, and perhaps the Stygians, seem to have made extensive use of chariotry, principally for shock purposes apparently, as there is no mention of their use in the more recent Egyptian fashion, as mobile platforms for bowmen. Finally, there appear to have been some engineers with most Hyborean armies. Although there is no mention of them, we several times find sieges or siege machines, and the implication is clear.

An interesting question is whether or not the troops marched in step. Marching in step was practiced in classical antiquity, only to fall out of style during the post-Roman dark ages. It was not revived again in the West until the +XVIII, although Swiss pike armies seem to have shuffled along more or less in

step. The efficiency of the Gundermen as pikemen would imply marching in step but there is no evidence for this. There is some evidence, however, that pikemen drilled regularly (Conan, it may be recalled, had an aversion to drill.)

Organization is another interesting question. Indeed, were the troops organized at all? The legends do note that Conan became involved with the wife of the commander of the CAVALRY DIVISION in which he was serving in Turan, but this may well be an anachronism introduced by some later scribe. Certainly various royal guard contingents had a clear identity, and various mercenary companies as well, but the wider question remains difficult to answer. How, for example, were the Bossonian archers or Gunder pikemen or Poitanian heavy cavalry organized? Most likely, noting the resemblance of Hyborean society to late medieval Europe, the answer is that they were not. Each man owed allegiance to his king and served under the orders of his local lord, who served under the local baron, who served under the local duke, and so forth. This must have caused considerable confusion in battle but at least it kept down the paperwork.

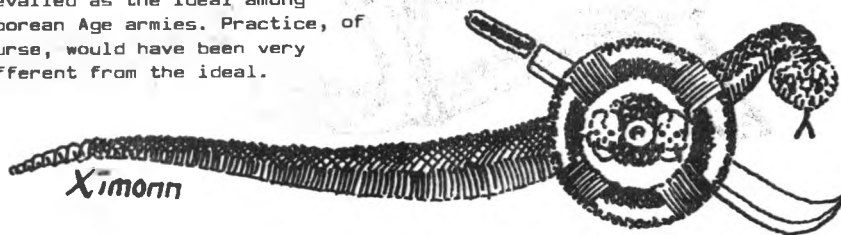
The final question of considerable importance to an understanding of Hyborean armies is that of logistics - the science of supply. Here we are totally at a loss, for the sources are completely silent. It seems unlikely that supply arrangements in the Hyborean Age could possibly have been more sophisticated than those of the Roman Empire, however, and that certainly isn't bad at all. At least the troops of the more advanced states, such as Turan, Nemedra, and Aquilonia, could have had some biscuit, bread, and wine every day. Considering the size of the armies engaged at the Valkia (HD, ii), totalling some 105,000 men and perhaps 50,000 horses, any

attempt to live off the land would have resulted in disaster, particularly in view of the probable state of agriculture at the time. Certainly in more recent times armies of such size have suffered more from starvation and disease than from the actions of their enemies. On the other hand, small forces seem to have been able to live off the land quite well; for example, the 40,000 knights who marched from Aquilonia to Turan to aid Conan in his journey back from Paikang (CA, Epilogue) undoubtedly lived off the land, although they probably paid for their supplies since they had to traverse the same territories again later. Anyway, it is unfortunate that the ancient scribes did not provide us with such vital information; but, after all, Conan calculating rations for 25,000 horse and 19,000 foot is not a tenth as interesting as Conan calculating his share of the loot from the sack of Khemi.

Although the sources are frequently very poor, a definite pattern emerges. The more highly organized Hyborean nations and some of their more highly organized neighbors had a military system not unlike that found in many Western nations during the +XIII to +XVII - a small professional regular force supplemented by semi-professional feudal levies and mercenaries.

2. A NOTE ON SIEGES

Nowhere is there more than a brief glimpse of a siege in the Conan Cycle, although there are several such glimpses. Apparently, from the examples available, most fortresses were fairly well constructed (cf. "Hyborean Technology" by Royal Chronicler de Camp) and siegecraft not well advanced. The fall of Venarium and of Fort Tusculan came about as a result of being stormed by barbarian troops and the latter certainly was a small structure. The



siege of Shamar (SC) seems to have been pressed rather vigorously, but the garrison was still holding out and making energetic sorties when Conan came to the rescue, weeks after the siege had begun against an unprepared city. It is unfortunate that Conan never participated in a siege (or, if he did, that it was never recorded), for then we might have more information, particularly as sieges may have considerably influenced the supply situation.

3. TACTICS

Tactics during the Hyborean Age seem to have been a combination of the "Heroic" tactics as practiced in Homer and the more sophisticated practice of the Thirty Years War. Thus we still find the generals actually participating in the fighting (a man could get hurt that way!); but, in spite of the essentially late medieval nature of warfare, most generals managed to retain control of a reserve. Considering the nature of armies and the few complete accounts of battles available, tactics seem to have run something like this: the armies would line up, perhaps after having slept on the field, with pikemen or heavy cavalry in the center. Whichever was in the center, the other arm would be partially on the wings, with the bowmen and cavalry in reserve. Some bowmen might be sent forward as skirmishers. The bowmen would work over the enemy's center to soften it up, then the friendly center would go in. If you were defending, it was best to keep your pikemen in the center, to skewer the enemy's cavalry, and your heavy horses in reserve, to chase him off the field. If attacking, you reversed the deployment, with your heavy cavalry breaking the enemy's center and your pikemen mopping up and providing a strong reserve in case your cavalry failed. It was all very simple once contact was made. Pikemen shoved at each other with

pikes while swordsmen, axemen, and cavalrymen chopped and stabbed away. Sooner or later one side would break and attempt to fly from the field. The victorious side would usually pursue for a time but not far. Casualties on both sides usually were heavy, with the losers suffering even more than the victors.

Evidence gathered from the battles for which we have fairly complete records indicate a considerable degree of sophistication among Hyborean Age generals on the

battlefield. Thus during the battle against the forces of Natchk (BC) we find Conan attempting a flank attack while holding a considerably stronger enemy in front. Similarly, during the battle in the Goralian Hills (HD, xxii), we find the Nemedians willing to risk 5000 heavy cavalry on a possible enveloping attack. Both attacks were really unnecessary, the death of Natchk totally dispiriting his followers, and the Nemedian enveloping force was cut to pieces by Aquilonian irregulars without once engaging Conan's army; but both demonstrate a certain understanding of the more sophisticated aspects of conducting a battle. Conan, at least, understood the necessity for battlefield security, for we find 500 light cavalry on picket duty the night before the battle on the Valkia (HD, ii), a move undoubtedly calculated to prevent surprise attacks and enemy reconnaissance. Such precautions were, of course, insufficient to prevent a magical visitor's attack on Conan as he relaxed in his tent, but who can cope with magic? (Indeed, what with all that magic around it is surprising that magicians didn't totally wreck the war business. Certainly Conan participated in few battles where the decision was not at least potentially in the hand of some wizard or other.)



Because of Conan's frequently heroic performance on the regular battlefield we have rather complete accounts of a number of pitched battles from this period and two instances of meeting engagements. The difference is that a pitched battle has both armies lined up before the killing begins, while a meeting engagement finds one or both armies arriving on the field as the battle commences. Shamu, the Valkia, and the Goralian Hills, to name but three, were pitched battles. Conan's relief of the siege of Shamar (SC) and the battle which resulted in his rescue from Turanian clutches on his way home from Khitai (CA, Epilogue) are examples of meeting engagements and the only examples to be found in the Cycle.

4. STRATEGY

This is an area which did not see much development in the Hyborean Age, although a number of rather interesting attempts at strategy may be found. Certainly the various conspiracies against Conan's kingdom fostered in Koth, Ophir, and Nemedias showed considerable strategic insight, recognizing that war is, above all, a political act. Both conspiracies (SC and HD) recognized that without Conan Aquilonian resistance would be feeble, lacking an heir to fight for. Of course, this is also good old-fashioned dynastic politics; but it is nevertheless a good, simple strategy designed to destroy the Aquilonian will to resist by striking at Conan.

The finest strategic conception of the Hyborean Age, however, is one with which we are only passingly familiar: the Kothian-Argosian war with Stygia, which engendered the Zapayo de Kova expedition (DT). Actually, this would be considered a rather brilliant stroke even today, akin to the landings at Inchon in 1950. Basically it envisioned a two-front assault on Stygia, one overland from Koth and the other seaborne from Argos: in effect, a gigantic pincer operation designed to divide Stygian attention and forces. In the event it failed because of Kothian treachery [Koth seems to have made a habit of treachery]; but actually, given the maritime technology of the age, it was a rather shaky operation at best, in spite of the brilliance of the concept. Consider that with all the advances in shipbuilding and the largest merchant fleet in the world Britain found itself hard pressed to support an army of 30,000-odd men in the highly productive American Colonies during 1775-1781,

It is not difficult to see why strategy did not develop more effectively than it did in the Hyborean Age. There was still a sense of chivalry surrounding warfare and the basic idea was to go out and hack your enemy to pieces, a much more satisfying way to go about things than to befuddle his mind with central positions and indirect approaches and amphibious operations.

5. THE GENERALSHIP OF CONAN THE CIMMERIAN

A natural-born warrior if ever there was one, Conan also seems to have been a good soldier, perhaps a naturally gifted one. In terms of the evidence discernible from the battles he conducted, he emerges as a cautious, careful, but frequently creative commander, concerned for the lives of his men and willing to take inordinate risks only when in dire straits. Thus, at the Valkia, although he lay partially paralyzed in his tent, it seemed that his armies were winning without him (as most certainly would have been the case but for wizardly intervention not merely before the battle but during it), and he preferred to wait things out to give time for reinforcements to come up. In effect, he realized that while the Nemedians could not win (fairly, at any rate), a poorly led Aquilonian host could most certainly lose. The reinforcements were bringing up his best knights and some of his finest officers, the Poitanians. Similarly, at the battle in the Goralian Hills, Conan took up a very careful position in a narrow valley with both flanks resting on steep, wooded slopes; yet he was certainly confident of victory and not significantly outnumbered. During the battle he patiently awaited the successive attacks of the Nemedian cavalry until a significant portion of it was shattered. Only then did he go over to the attack. His caution when things were in his favor is certainly a laudable trait. He was one of those generals Napoleon would have liked to have around: reliable, not likely to do anything rash unless the situation called for considerable boldness. When the situation did call for boldness Conan was certainly not backward. Several times he demonstrated considerable energy and creativity on the battlefield. Thus in the hard-fought battle against Natohk in Khoraja he took substantially the same chance Lee took at Chancellorsville 14,000 years later: he divided his already

outnumbered force and sent a portion of it around the enemy's flank while staving off defeat with the remainder. The situation called for desperate measures and the battle would most certainly have been lost had he not taken them. Another particularly creative action during this fight was his improvisation of mounted infantry and use of it in a charge. Although he was a trained cavalryman who undoubtedly understood the poor value of such a move in absolute terms, it was an excellent improvisation and caught the enemy off guard. During his campaign against Koth and Ophir for the relief of Shamar (SC) he also resorted to mounted infantry, dragging thousands of Bossonian archers and Gunder pikemen on anything with four legs. Desperate conditions called for creative measures in both cases and Conan delivered.

It would be pointless to go further, examining, for example, Conan's military accomplishments among the Bambula (VW) and his evident military successes against the Picts and Aquilonian Loyalists during his rise to the throne. The basic point is by now well established: Conan was undoubtedly one of the great captains of his age and the only one about whom we know anything.

6. CONCLUSION

The best conclusion which can be drawn from the sources as they are is that warfare in the Hyborean world, during the period of Conan's life, was not unlike that practiced in late medieval or Renaissance Europe. While there are differences in detail, and undoubtedly details which we do not know, the similarities far outweigh the differences. Conan unquestionably would have gotten along well at Arsouf or Manzikert or even Pavia.

THE SOURCES

The basic source for this analysis is, of course, the Conan Cycle in the current edition. The lack of source material is maddening, and particularly so in view of the availability of works poetical, magical, and commercial deriving from the Hyborean Age. Curiously, there does not seem to have been an Hyborean Vegetius or Leo VI of Byzantium, a military scholar who set forth the accumulated military wisdom of his age. Or, if such

existed, his work has not come down to us.



CONAN'S BATTLE

Conan commanded in a number of battles, of which we have information about a small number only. What follows is a series of "briefings" concerning the eight battles of which the ancient records speak.

Shamla Pass (bc). Conan's first battlefield command, given him by favor of the Queen of Khoraja. With about 9,000 men (1,500 heavy cavalry, 5,000 horse archers, 2000 spearman, and 500 militia) Conan managed to block the principle pass through which the 41,000 strong forces of Natohk (20,000 heavy cavalry, 10,000 light cavalry, 6,000 horse archers, and 5,000 foot archers) had to pass in order to attack the city. The main body of the Khorajans managed to hold the pass against repeated dismounted assaults by the enemy, while Conan led a small corps over a difficult, secret route to fall upon Natohk's flanks. Even magic couldn't save him then.

Velitrium. Though mentioned in passing in several of the ancient tales, nothing is known about this great battle in which Conan, serving as a general in the Aquilonian Army, inflicted a crushing defeat on the Picts.

The Alimane Fords (CL). This was not one of Conan's finer efforts. Leading an army of 10,000 to 12,000 Aquilonian rebels, Conan was ambushed whilst attempting to cross the Alimane River, which separated the Kingdom of Argos from the Aquilonian province of Potain. Conan's forces were completely crushed, no more than 1,500 survivors making it to safety. All of this is understandable, since he had divided his army in three separate bodies, and then proceeded to send each across the river by a different ford so that the 15,000 to 20,000 men of the Aquilonian Border Legion were able to attack and defeat each corps separately, a classic case of "defeat in detail". He won in the end anyway, but he could have done a lot better.

Shamu River (sc). Marching to the aid of a neighboring monarch, with 5,000 heavy cavalry, Conan was ambushed and completely defeated by some 30,000 troops in one of the neatest bits of treachery in the history of the Hyborean Age. Captured, Conan nevertheless managed to escape and rally his people against his enemies, culminating in

Shamar (sc). The combined Kothian and Ophirian hosts were besieging the city of Shamar, which Conan was intent upon relieving. The numbers are uncertain, but Conan was definitely inferior. By putting spearmen and bowmen on anything that remotely resembled a horse, Conan was able to move his entire army considerably faster than his enemies assumed possible, thereby "stealing a march". As a result, he came up long before they expected him. When he attacked the besiegers, the garrison of Shamar sortied in their rear, and the Kothians and Ophirians were crushed between the two forces.

The Valkia (HD). Nemedia, supported by Aquilonian dissidents and the animate corpse of the long-dead sorcerer, Xaltutun, invaded Aquilonia. Conan's army (45,000 present and 10,000 more marching up) had just encamped on the banks of the Valkia when some 50,000 of the enemy came up. Xaltotun's magic laid Conan low in his tent and an officer appointed to lead the army led them straight into a sorcerous trap, totally destroying it. Conan was made prisoner, but in the finest heroic fashion seen escaped to head the resistance, leading to

The Goralian Hills (HD). A very complex fight. Conan, with 19,000 spearmen, 5,000 bowmen, and 19,000 cavalry, engaged some 16,000 Nemedian infantry and 35,000

cavalry, while tens of thousands of Aquilonian irregulars led a 5,000 strong enemy flanking column away, and friendly magicians blocked Xaltotun's efforts to intervene. The result was a crushing victory for Conan.

The Alimane (bs). A Zingaran Duke led a large army on an invasion of Potain. Though very poorly reported in the ancient chronicles, it appears that Duke Pantho of Guarrald threw his heavy cavalry against Conan's Gunderland pikemen. Their pikewall held and the cavalry were cut to pieces by Conan's bowmen. As the enemy fell back. Conan went in with his own heavy cavalry, broke them, and pursued them back across the Alimane into Zingara, totally destroying them.

NOTE ON ABBREVIATIONS

References to various parts of the Conan canon have been made using the standard abbreviations for the various books and short stories, as given in AMRA, Vol 2 #71 (July 1982), pp. 28-30. The specific works referred to in the text are:

- bc "Black Colossus", CONAN THE FREEBOOTER
- bs "Black Sphinx of Nebthu", CONAN OF AQUILONIA
- CA CONAN THE AVENGER
- dt "Drums of Tombalku", CONAN THE ADVENTURER
- HD CONAN THE CONQUEROR (Originally, HOUR OF THE DRAGON)
- sc "The Scarlet Citadel", CONAN THE USERPER
- vw "The Vale of Lost Women", CONAN OF CIMMERIA

Readers should note that the abbreviations for the various volumes are in capitals while those for individual stories are in lower case.

Au-Rel the Aquilonian

Al Nofi



Varlak the Wizard

by
tane Sibley ©82

I AM THE MIGHTIEST
OF ALL!

CROM! I'VE
WANDERED FAR
AND FOUGHT
MANY ... THINGS...

WON AND
LOST
FORTUNES!

NO PETTY WIZARD
OR DEMON FIGHTER
STANDS IN MY WAY!

IT'S BEEN CLOSE
A FEW TIMES,
THOUGH ...

LESSEE... I'M
BROKE. THAT
MAKES ME FEEL ...

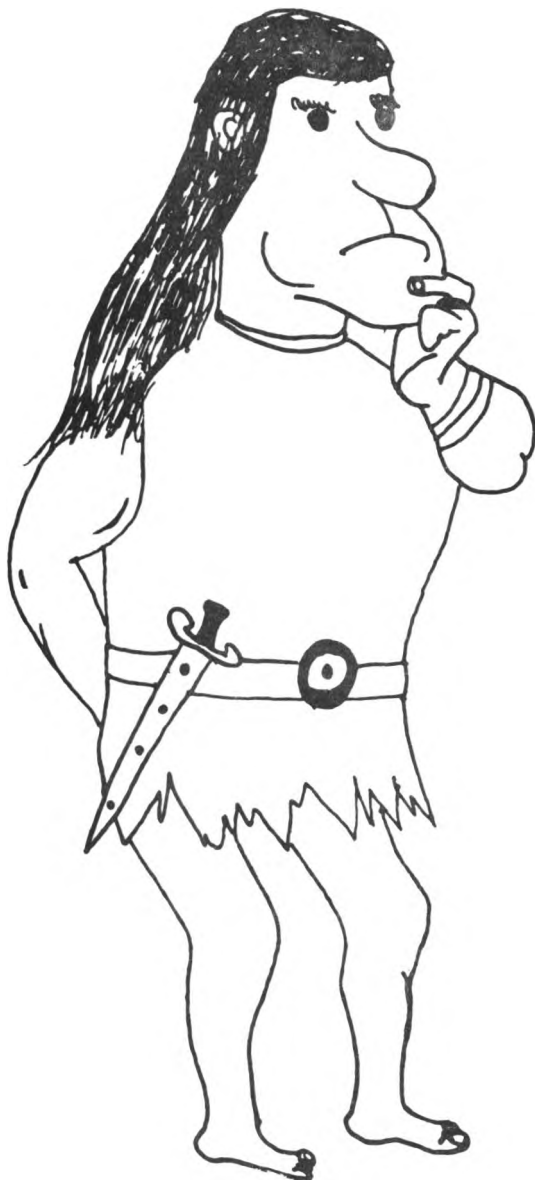
MEAN!!

AHA! MAYBE I
CAN CHANGE
MY LUCK...

YER MONEY OR
YER LIFE!!

NOW... WHERE WERE
WE, İLTARI?

The Ballad of Conan



Tune: "When I Was a Lad" (H.M.S. PINAFORE)

When I was a lad in the cold wild North,
I found it rather boring, so I soon set forth
For the rich southern lands that I thought would suit:
I was looking for battle and for girls and loot.

(He was looking for battle and for girls and loot.)
I fought, loved, and looted with great elan,
Because I am an iron-thewed barbarian!
(He fought, loved, and looted with great elan,
Because he is an iron-thewed barbarian!)

As a thief in Zamora I prospered well,
Though how I went unnoticed I could never tell;
In a crowd of Zamorians, dark and small,
You'd think I would be spotted since I'm eight feet tall.
(We'd think he would be spotted since he's eight feet tall.)
I'm rather conspicuous--a giant of a man--
Because I am an iron-thewed barbarian!
(He's rather conspicuous--a giant of a man--
Because he is an iron-thewed barbarian!)

Then I heard in the east there was fighting toward,
So I rode into Hyrkania to sell my sword
As a mercenary under King Yildiz,
For I like to be where the action is.
(For he likes to be where the action is.)
I rose through the ranks in far Turan
Because I am an iron-thewed barbarian!
(He rose through the ranks in far Turan
Because he is an iron-thewed barbarian!)

The life of an outlaw was more my style,
And so I took to piracy for quite a while;
Off the coast of Kush and on the Sea of Vilayet,
I had bloody, bold adventures that I dream of yet.
(He had bloody, bold adventures that he dreams of yet.)
When Amra hove in sight the merchants cut and ran,
Because I am an iron-thewed barbarian!
(When Amra hove in sight the merchants cut and ran,
Because he is an iron-thewed barbarian!)

Then I thought it was time that I settled down,
So I slaughtered King Numedides and seized his crown.
I had a bit of trouble with Xaltotun,
But I fetched a gem from Stygia that spoiled his fun.
(But he fetched a gem from Stygia that spoiled his fun.)
He thought he had me finished but I scotched his plan,
Because I am an iron-thewed barbarian!
(He thought he had him finished but he scotched his plan,
Because he is an iron-thewed barbarian!)

So if you live a quiet, ordinary life,
With mortgage payments and a nagging wife,
And you go to work in a tie and suit,
But long to be bloody, bold, and resolute--
(But long to be bloody, bold, and resolute--)
Escape is the answer: be a Conan fan,
Pretending you're an iron-thewed barbarian!
(Escape is the answer: be a Conan fan,
Pretending you're an iron-thewed barbarian!)



by Anne Braude

LANGEVELD'S CATALOG OF MILITARY HISTORY, UNIFORMS AND TRADITIONS

BY COLIN LANGEVELD

The Emperic Guards, or The Guards as they are more commonly known, were formed during the First Galactic Expansion (2182-2255) from various regiments to act as bodyguard to Seldamer II (2189-2231). To gain entry to this exclusive regiment was no mean achievement, prime qualifications being that the applicant had to have been in military service for at least ten years and had to have been in action. Being wounded during that time was not essential but helped. Recruits had to be over 2 metres tall; consequently, a large number of aliens joined the ranks after the Equal Rights for Extraterrestrials Act of 2192. (See Xris Morgains *THEY MAY WALK LIKE MEN BUT WHO THE HELL DO THEY THINK THEY ARE?* pp. 624-626.)

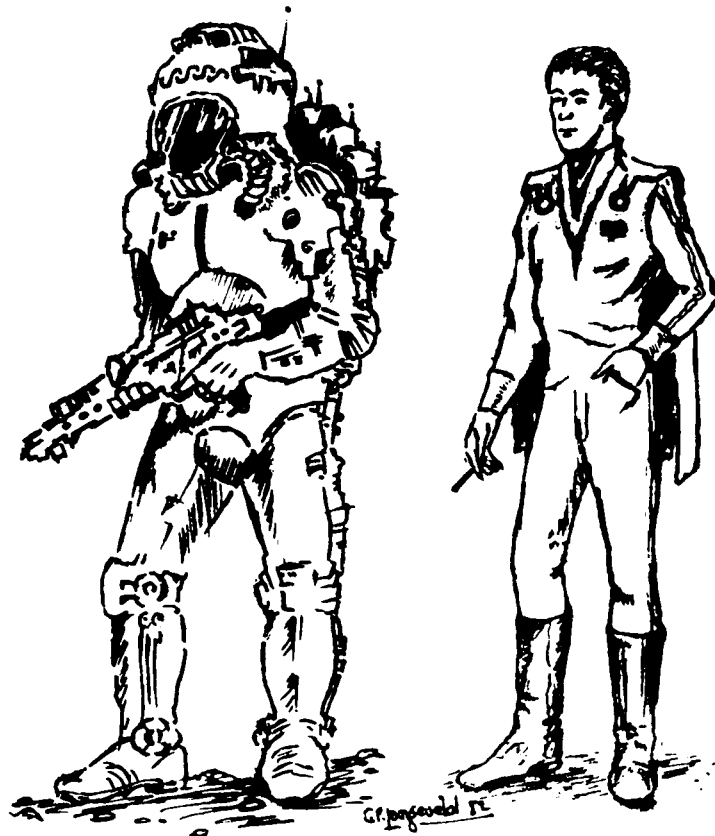
The Invasion of Tealam (Virgo III) was to be the opening curtain to The Guards long battle history. In this bloody action they were the first to make planetfall, sustaining heavy casualties: 8 officers, 305 other ranks, and an aardvark - the regimental mascot. The Guards were the first troops to be issued the Shitser Fear Induser and the Vision Distorter Intensifier. The Coltfield MK IV was standard issue until it was replaced by the Markhoff Stutter Lazer in 2194.

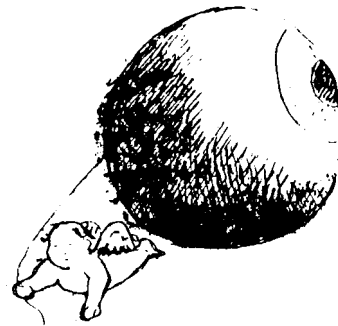
The Emperic Guards have not been short on colourful personalities. One of the more famous to emerge from their ranks was Talim Redor, better known as "Easy Talking Redor of the Diplomatic Corps." Redor rose through the ranks from Guardsman to Space

Marshal in a mere 15 years. He then resigned his commission and joined the Diplomatic Corp. Emperic historians will be well-acquainted with the story of what happened when Redor had to visit the washroom during a lunch break at the Girian peace talks of 2249. His ablutions complete, he turned to leave but was approached by the Girian Chief Mystic Adviser who greeted him with a gesture of friendship typical to his

race. Talim Redor, a Free Mason by birth, in an instant forgot his Quick Learn period in Girian customs, was overheard to counter with the vitriolic statement, "Get your pecker out of my pocket you filthy E.T. weirdo." What followed is common knowledge. For further details see Offram Dizner's *GENERAL DIPLOMATIC COCK-UPS* pp. 876-878 and Trueman's *THE SECOND 50 YEAR EMPERIC-GIRIAN CONFLICT* is highly recommended.

The Guardsman seen on the left is wearing the standard Rog Pington MK III Marine Space Armour which was in use between the years 2453-2487, the only variation from line regiments being the ornamentation on the helmet and the motto, "First In, Last Out," granted to the Guards by Davardy I in 2245, which is embossed on the breast plate. Battle honours include Pisces III, Tregan, Anlican IV, and Weze II. Although Hamal III is claimed as a battle honour, many military historians will argue this point saying as Hamal III is inhabited by .5 metre amphibian farmers, this does not qualify. But as Colour Sergeant Hoffmeyer was wont to quote, "Well, they through shit didn't they?" Also shown is the dress uniform as worn since 2250: coverall, midnight blue with silver trimmings and black boots. Side arms and black gloves are only worn when attending the Emperor. Cloaks (officers only) are light blue with silver lining.





List of reviewers to insert on page 43

W Richie Benedict
Anne J Braude
Don d'Amassa
Tom Egan
Bev Kantor
Jacqueline Lichtenberg
Pat Mathews
Susan M Shwartz
Robert Walker

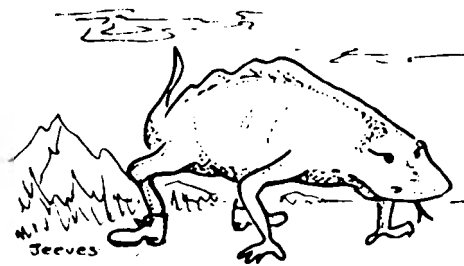


RIP
ROSS SMART 1981

DRAWING DOWN THE MOON: WITCHES, DRUIDS, GODDESS-WORSHIPPERS, AND OTHER PAGANS IN AMERICA TODAY, Margot Adler, Viking, 1979, 455 pp., \$16.95

Ever since my essay on witchcraft appeared, various people have been urging me to read this book and bring myself up to date. Well, I have; and I find that almost none of my ideas drawn from historical study apply here. The witch of tradition is a malicious member of a tightly organized conspiracy of evil, devoted to the service of the Christian Devil. The contemporary Witch or Neo-Pagan rejects the Christi- archal view of the cosmos entirely; she may be politically active as a feminist or an opponent of persecution and discrimination directed at her, but she has no malice; and her magic is benign. She worships a feminine, creative nature deity, the Goddess, with her consort the Horned God, neither of whom equates with the Devil. And if there is anything that Witches are not, it is tightly organized; unlike the cults to which Wicca is sometimes compared, the Moonies or Hare Krishna devotees with their legions of zombie-like adherents totally dominated by a Master or Inner Ring, the style of Neo-Paganism is anarchy: churches and covens continually dissolve and reform; new traditions are constantly being created; and the only dogma on which they all agree is that they have no dogma in common.

As portrayed by Margot Adler, a Neo-Pagan herself, Wicca and the other groups discussed here can be considered the religious manifestation of the counterculture of the sixties. About the only constant found in all of them is an ecological concern - a desire to live in harmony with nature and to end the destructive exploitation of the environment. Indeed, Neo-Paganism has less resemblance to any sort of organized religion than to the encounter groups, feminist consciousness-raising groups, and other aspects of the human potential movement that have sprung up during the past two decades. Faith and doctrine play no part; Pagans speak rather of their rituals bringing them into harmony with nature, each other, and their inner lives, liberating the creative forces in the psyche, and strengthening their sense of independence and self-worth. I was particularly struck by the freedom and sense of play that appear so often in Adler's pages: there are some groups founded purely in fun that went on to become genuine Paganism, much to the dismay of their founders. (I particularly



like the Hasidic Druids, the First Arachnid Church, and the Erisians - the founders of this last group being perhaps the only people in the world to receive a divine revelation in an all-night bowling alley.) The flourishing Church of All Worlds is founded on a mind-boggling mix of the ideas of Ayn Rand, Abraham Maslow, and Valentine Michael Smith; most Neo-Pagans are avid readers of science fiction, which perhaps accounts for the fact that they see technology, rightly used, as a potential force for good rather than an unmitigated evil.

I enjoyed this book immensely and heartily recommend it, but my views on its subject are mixed. Adler's Neo-Pagans come across as benevolent, creative, likeable people, whom I would much rather have living next door to me than, for example, the Reverend Jerry Falwell; but as a Christian, I must believe that they are ultimately on the wrong track. On the other hand, as a feminist, an amateur Jungian, and a lover of poetic myth and symbol, I am strongly attracted to much that is depicted here. Adler concludes her book by linking contemporary Paganism with the great mystery religions of classical times, such as the Isis cult and the Eleusinian Mysteries, the Greek cult of Demeter and the Kore that flourished for two thousand years, as containing traditions which "involve processes of growth and regeneration, confrontations with birth, death, the source of life, and the relationship of human beings to the cosmos." It is worth remembering that Christianity itself began as one among many of these mystery religions, and presumably became dominant in Western culture because it met the need for these involvements in the most satisfactory manner - because, Christians believe, it contained more of the truth than any of the others. If the Christian churches today are ossified, no longer meeting these needs, perhaps they should take a look at why Neo-Paganism is growing in popularity - and then take a long, hard look at themselves.

ajb

Gillian Bradshaw, HAWK OF MAY, Simon and Schuster, 1980, \$10.95
KINGDOM OF SUMMER, Simon and Schuster, 1981, \$12.95

As a general rule I dislike modern novels, whether historical or fantasy, dealing with Arthurian material; and I particularly dislike those which play fast and loose with major elements of the received tradition. These books do exactly that - and I loved them. The hero is Gwalchmai (Gawain), who appears first as a young boy, the second son of King Lot of Orkney and Queen Morgause. (Traditionally he is the eldest, and there are two other brothers who are omitted here.) A harper, a healer, and a poor warrior, he is a disappointment to his father and thus easy prey for his idolized mother, who draws him into the service of Darkness. The mix of magic and fifth-century British history strongly resembles that of Mary Stewart's Merlin novels; but Merlin was always a child of the Light, a position which here it seems at first will be filled by the sunny Medraut (Mordred). But Medraut chooses Darkness, while Gwalchmai escapes; and because as Lot's son he is also a descendant of Lugh, Lord of the Sun, he is taken to the Isles of the Blessed where he swears allegiance to the Light and is given a magic sword. After one day there, which proves to be the length of three mortal years, he is taken to Britain where he battles a Saxon borderer, wins a magic horse of the Sidhe, and travels to Camlann (Camelot), where he seeks to enter Arthur's service. But Arthur refuses him, believing him to be a tool of Morgause, and Gwalchmai has a long and difficult struggle to understand himself and to prove his trustworthiness.

The sequel, KINGDOM OF SUMMER, is a much grimmer book, focused as it is on Gwalchmai's tragic love affair with the princess Elidan, who parted from him bitterly after he had killed her brother in battle and for whom he is searching all over Britain, intending to beg her forgiveness. The story is narrated by Rhys, the son of a farmer who had befriended Gwalchmai in the first book, who becomes the warrior's servant and loyal friend. On a mission for Arthur, Gwalchmai is once more confronted by Morgause and Medraut, who nearly kill Rhys before the climactic magical duel; and with Rhys's aid he also finds Elidan, who refuses him forgiveness and conceals the fact that she has borne him a son. There is to be a third book, IN WINTER'S SHADOW, unpublished as of this writing.

These books are very close indeed in quality to the aforementioned Mary Stewart novels, which makes them world-class fantasies. Stewart may be stronger on the historical element, but Bradshaw is stronger on the magical; the powers of both Light and Darkness are displayed effectively and convincingly, and the visit to the Otherworld is marvelous in every sense of the word. The liberties taken with Arthurian tradition justify themselves by the fact that they work brilliantly, like T.H. White's making Lancelot ugly and Stewart's making Merlin a Mithraist. (I am extremely curious to know how the trilogy will end, as the author follows neither of the two traditions dealing with Gawain, both of which kill him off early in the final series of battles leading up to Arthur's death or passing. I have a theory of my own, based on a much more obscure Arthurian tradition, which I won't go into except to say that Chaucer mentions it in his SQUIRE'S TALE.)

VERY highly recommended.

ajb

FANE, David M. Alexander,
Pocket/Timescape, 1981, \$3.50

This is another one of those Sorcerer's-schlemiel-Apprentice stories, set on one of those planets where magic works but science doesn't: in this case because of the interaction of an interstellar storm with the planet's "peculiar modulating magnetic field" - and if you believe THAT, perhaps I can interest you in a set of the complete works of Velikovsky and some shares in a phlogiston mine. The hero is the nephew of a powerful wizard of the Good Guys who is selling out to the Bad Guys; he sends young Grantin to pick up a magic ring sent him by the chief villain. Grantin puts on the ring, which promptly becomes bonded to him

the wizard wasn't wise enough to take the elementary precaution of telling him not to - and spends the rest of the book fleeing people who want to cut off his finger, arm, or head to get the ring back. Characterization is, to put it kindly, implausible. The best one can say of the hero is that he doesn't like to crush fuzzy little chicks to death with his bare hands. There are a couple of aliens but no real sense of how any of the cultures of Fane works. (Item: the Bad Guys are Satanists, but nobody else has any religion at all. An Antagonist with no God?) The magic lacks logic and consistency; but then, so does everything else in the

book. Put this one on your miss list.

ajb

HOLY BLOOD, HOLY GRAIL, Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln, Delacorte, 1982, 461 pp., \$15.95

Conspiracy freaks of the world, have I got a book for you! Compared to the intricate scenario proposed by the authors of this book, Devil's Triangles, second gunmen on grassy knolls, and even Ancient Astronauts pale into insignificance. HOLY BLOOD, HOLY GRAIL describes a plot nearly a thousand years old, run by a secret cabal controlling the Knights Templar, the Albigensian heretics, the Rosicrucians, and Freemasonry (with special guest appearances by Napoleon, Nostradamus, Claude Debussy, Jean Cocteau, Charles de Gaulle, and the Ark of the Covenant - how Indiana Jones got left out I can't imagine). Its object: to restore the Merovingians to all the thrones of Europe.

The Merovingians? The
MEROVINGIANS???

For those of you who are now asking "Who the hell are the Merovingians?" let me elucidate. They were the royal dynasty ruling the Frankish tribes of Gaul from the fifth to the eighth centuries A.D. The only one you will ever have heard of is Clovis I, who was converted to Roman Catholic Christianity and had his subjects convert also, thereby insuring that Europe would go Catholic instead of Arian. The later Merovingian kings were known as "les rois faineants," or the do-nothing kings, because they sat around and drank beer while their mayors of the palace did all the work. Eventually the mayors of the palace got tired of this, kicked out the Merovingians, and turned themselves into the Carolingian dynasty (see



under Charlemagne: the rest - you should pardon the expression - is history). According to the authors, the Merovingian bloodline survived, notably in the ducal house of Lorraine, which produced Godfrey of Bouillon, the first ruler of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem, and which later married into the House of Hapsburg.

In order to know why any of this matters, you have to know who the Merovingians REALLY were. The authors trace their ancestry back via the Trojans to Arcadia in ancient Greece, where exiled members of the Israelite tribe of Benjamin had settled. (I am NOT making this up.) Meanwhile, back in Palestine, after the Crucifixion (it was faked; Jesus later went to Alexandria, Egypt, and eventually died in the siege of Masada) Mary Magdalene, the wife of Jesus, took the children and went to Marseilles, accompanied by her brother Lazarus, who wrote the Fourth Gospel. The children married into the Frankish nobility and beget (of course) the Merovingians. The authors base this on a tradition that Mary Magdalene brought the Holy Grail to Marseilles; they interpret the French "Sangreal" (Holy Grail) as concealing in a play on words its true meaning, "sang real" (royal blood). I have two problems with this. One is that although I am by no means the world's greatest Arthurian scholar, I have out in a fair amount of graduate work on the subject without ever hearing of this "tradition"; nor do any of my reference books mention it. The other is that the form "Sangreal" is by no means universal in the Grail romances. (If you are wondering how Arthur got into the Grail cycle, he is another secret clue: the historical Arthur lived in the fifth century. Get it? He was A CONTEMPORARY OF THE MEROVINGIANS!) Jesus is portrayed as a descendant of the royal House of David who tried unsuccessfully to claim the throne of Judea - an Israelite Bonnie Prince Charlie.

When the Frankish kingdom of Jerusalem was established at the end of the First Crusade in 1099 and Godfrey of Bouillon was elected to its throne, a secret order called the Priory of Sion was founded to look after the interests of the Jesus-Merovingian bloodline. They first founded the Templars, then broke with them and went underground; ever since they have been trying to put Merovingian descendants on one or another of the thrones of Europe, principally that of France. That hoary old anti-Semitic hoax the Protocols of the Elders of Zion is supposed to be a corrupt version of the secret

master plan of the Priory of Sion, who are everywhere (presumably having the power to cloud men's minds). One of the book's weirder theories is that Pope John XXIII was a secret Rosicrucian, affiliated with the Priory, and meant to imply in his apostolic letter on the Precious Blood of Jesus that Christ's death and resurrection were incidental if not superfluous for our redemption.

The arguments of the book are nothing if not ingenious. As you might expect, anagrams and "secret" meanings of words and phrases show up a lot. The authors also give rather tortured occult meanings to apparently obvious references in history and Scripture. They come up with a unique version of the history of the early Christian Church by the simple expedient of discarding all the orthodox sources and assuming that the real story is to be found in the writings of various heretical sects. And they have a fascinating notion of what constitutes historical evidence, which goes something like this: Our theorizing to this point leads us to conclude that X must have occurred in, for instance, the first century A.D. But there is absolutely no extant evidence for X. This goes to prove how important X was: either it was kept secret or suppressed by rival factions, or both. Conversely, it was so well known that nobody felt the need to mention it, since everyone took it for granted.

Considered as a serious work of historical scholarship, this book is enough to make strong men weep. But considered as fantasy, as a cockamamie quest-romance or perhaps the Ultimate Snark Hunt, it is highly entertaining. One is forced to sympathize with the authors, who do not really practice to deceive: they are always careful to distinguish between their source material and their own speculations, and fairly careful to distinguish between the standard and the offbeat in the references they cite. This combination of honesty and apocalyptic wrongheadedness becomes almost painful to watch after a while. I am tempted to draw a moral from the fact that three educated, intelligent, and successful men can write a book without applying to their facts and theories any trace of the evaluative methods of either science or scientific historiography (one author even has a degree in psychology, in the pursuit of which he should have learned something about evaluating data); it is a sad commentary on contemporary education. But the book is a bestseller, so the wages of this sort of intellectual sin are not to



be sneered at. Which gives me an idea: if any of you out there care to send me a stamped, self-addressed envelope - and a dozen Krugerrands - I will be happy to supply a copy of the Secret Key which, properly applied, will reveal that the recent novels of Robert A. Heinlein conceal a message: the American's Friends' Service Committee is merely a front for a centuries-old, worldwide conspiracy with only one goal - to make Fred Lerner governor of New Jersey. Fred, you see, once got a blood transfusion from a Merovingian....

ajb

SONG OF SORCERY, Elizabeth Scarborough, Bantam, 1982, \$2.25

This is a rather offbeat, charming fantasy based on the ballad "Gypsy Davey," a version of which was very popular in my college days under the title "The Whistling Gypsy Rover." The older version, followed here, has the lady lured away from her new-wedded lord by a gypsy who has "cast his glamour (spell) o'er her." As the book opens, this is a brand-new song, and the young minstrel singing it is out of luck; he has unknowingly chosen to perform it before the lady's family, and Granny is a witch.... The family refuses to believe that Lady Amberwine would behave like that of her own free will, so Maggie, her natural sister and a witch of no mean ability herself, sets off to learn the truth, accompanied by the minstrel and a sarcastic cat (Granny's familiar). There are many humorous touches, such as the encounter with the lovelorn dragon,

and a thriller-like plot, as Maggie & Co. trace and rescue Amberwine. The setting is a medieval world just a little askew from our own time-line. An unusual, well-written story with interesting characters, an unconventional ending, and a very engaging heroine - definitely recommended.

ajb

ERASMUS MAGISTER, Charles Sheffield, Ace, 1982, \$2.50

The jacket blurb calls this book "an historical fantasy," which is as good a classification as any for something essentially unclassifiable. The hero is a real person, Erasmus Darwin, grandfather of Charles and a famous physician and scientist in his own right, as well as a prolific inventor and a best-selling poet. The book is made up of three episodes in which Dr. Darwin solves apparently supernatural puzzles by scientific means, though a couple of the "natural" explanations are pretty unnatural (one involves the Loch Ness monster). ERASMUS MAGISTER isn't really sf or fantasy; the stories it most resembles belong to the mystery genre: Lillian de la Torre's detective short stories featuring Erasmus Darwin's contemporary Dr. Samuel Johnson, and Melville Davisson Post's tales of "Uncle Abner," who unravelled mysteries with supernatural overtones in Thomas Jefferson's Virginia. It might disappoint readers looking for straightforward sf or fantasy, but fans of de la Torre and Post, and mystery fans in general, should love it. I did.

ajb

THE BANE OF LORD CALADON, Craig Mills, Ballantine, 1982, \$2.50

This is yet another variant of your basic Boy Meets Dragon story. It seems that several generations ago a Lord of Caladon swiped a treasure from a dragon's hoard, and the dragon retaliated by seizing his castle and lands. Ever since, every Lord of Caladon has fought the dragon as soon as he had begotten a male heir. Score so far: Dragon 4, Lords of Caladon 0. Our hero, having been raised by his maternal grandfather in a distant land, decides to try to change the family luck by first returning the stolen treasure, which he must retrieve from its present possessor, the witch-queen of a pirate isle.

This isn't so much a bad story as it is an awfully predictable one. The

dragon is pretty good, but he only makes brief appearances. Neither the hero, his adventures, nor the secondary world in which the story is set really grips the reader's interest; and everything seems a little too familiar - not plagiarized, but conventional. A passable read, but not really worth buying, considering the price of paperbacks these days.

ajb

THE RETURN OF THE DRAGON, Jane Zaring, Houghton-Mifflin, 1981, \$7.95

"On the small island, off the coast of Ireland, there was room for just one Celtic saint and one repentant dragon."

With an opening line like that, you know that you are in the hands of an expert storyteller; and indeed, the book began as a series of tales told by the Welsh-born author to amuse her children on long car trips. The now-repentant dragon, Caradoc, is homesick for his Welsh mountain cave, from which he had been driven by villagers enraged by his misdeeds. He makes his way back, acquiring as companions David the black lamb (who plays the harp), Peregrine the falcon, and Rhiannon the owl, and persuades the villagers to let him stay on the condition that he perform twelve good deeds within the next year. With the help of his friends he foils tyrants and witches, rescues a princess and a unicorn, and performs a host of lesser kindnesses. The four are well and individually characterized, accomplishing their missions by means of their brains, skills, and courage. (Caradoc has been taught herblore by Saint MacDara and is an expert healer, though his elderflower tea is simply ghastly, which puts a strain on the courtesy of visitors.) The author draws extensively on Welsh legend and folklore - annotated in a postscript - and writes with grace and humor. Polly Broman's illustrations, done in the style of old Celtic manuscript illuminations, enhance the charm of the book. Very highly recommended to all lovers of children's fantasy.

ajb

AMAZONS II, ed. Jessica Amanda Salmonson, DAW, 1982, \$2.95

This is a sequel to Salmonson's anthology AMAZONS!, winner of a 1980 World Fantasy Award, and it is even better. There is a greater diversity of story types and fictional

settings, some of the latter being especially new and interesting: ancient Ireland (Gillian Fitzgerald's "The Battle Crow's Daughter"), Tanith Lee's fantasy version of medieval Europe ("Southern Lights"), a Faerie version of Kansas (Lee Killough's "The Soul Slayer"), Slavic folklore (Gordon Derevanchuk's "Zroya's Trizub"); and in a real tour de force, Phyllis Ann Karr's "The Robber Girl" tells the adventures of that character from Hans Christian Andersen's "The Snow Queen," now grown up but essentially unchanged in nature. All the stories are good, but the standout is George R.R. Martin's "In the Lost Lands," a superbly faceted gem of irony which, if there is any justice in the world, ought to show up on a lot of award-nomination and year's-best lists. Definitely recommended to feminists and fantasy fans.

ajb

THE WARLOCK UNLOCKED, Christopher Stasheff, Ace, 1982, \$2.75

This book is blurbled on the cover as "the long-awaited sequel to THE WARLOCK IN SPIKE OF HIMSELF," but there have actually been two previous sequels: one which I haven't seen - but Hilde tells me it's awful - dealing with the same characters, and one (A WIZARD IN BEDLAM) set on another planet and featuring a descendant of the warlock of Gramarye, Rod Gallowglass, which I didn't like as well as the original. This one I did enjoy as much as the first book. It



is a tale of science, magic, ecclesiastical politics, and dastardly plots, set on a planet colonized long ago by refugee Creative Anachronists, where interbreeding among people with lots of genes for ESP has produced a full complement of Little People as well. But don't try too hard to apprehend the background; it won't stand up all that well to close examination. The story is a funny action-adventure with an unconventional hero; this time out, he and his whole family are snatched into an alternate universe, where they must rescue a boy king and fight off assorted supernatural monsters while trying to figure out how to get home again - sort of "The Waltons in Oz." Lightweight but pleasant.

ajb

PAWN OF PROPHECY, David Eddings, Ballantine, 1982, \$2.50

I almost passed this one up when I noticed that it was the first volume of an announced series of five; having that many titles decided on with only one book finished looked like the hallmark of an author who had bitten off more than he could chew but was too dim to know it. Fortunately, I was dead wrong about this: what we have here is an author not afraid to give himself plenty of space and leisure to develop a fully ramified secondary world. The plot elements are nothing very original: an ancient and inimical god; an undying sorcerer and his sorceress daughter, who oppose him; a magical Talisman of Power sought by both sides; and a young prince brought up in ignorance of his heritage. But the author knows exactly how to handle all of them in a coherent, organically developing pattern, so that plot developments are at once surprising and inevitable. This volume deals with the "enfances" of the hero, Garion, from earliest childhood to early teens, as he is brought up on a remote farm by his rather odd Aunt Pol until the forces of evil make their moves and he is caught up in the initial stages of his quest. The writing is excellent, the various characters interesting and highly individualized, and the fictive universe richly evoked, from the delights of a farm kitchen in festival time to the magic, myth, and heroic legend that fill the background and gradually move to center stage. This series, The Belgariad, will if it lives up to the promise of the opening volume very likely turn out to be one of the major accomplishments of the fantasy genre. Very strongly recommended.

THE KESTREL, Lloyd Alexander, E.P. Dutton, 1982, \$10.95

The sequel to WESTMARK is here; and if it doesn't win all the juvenile-fiction awards going, it will be because they don't like to let the same author win two in a row. In the first book of this projected trilogy, Lloyd Alexander abandoned his previous metier, fantasy, to explore illusion - specifically, our illusions about law and order, right and wrong, and similar moral cliches - to demonstrate the truth of the Socratic saying that the unexamined life is not worth living (and what is more, you'll be lucky to escape with it in the real world). Here he subjects our ideas of war and heroism to the same scrutiny. Mickle is now Queen of Westmark, and her radical notions of social justice, developed during her career as a street urchin and confidence trickster, are decidedly unwelcome to the aristocrats who have a lock on power and prosperity. So a small group of them conspire with the neighboring kingdom, which will stage a phony invasion - just enough to overthrow the monarchy and enthroner a puppet. It's all very cozy and harmless; the commanding general of the army is in on the plot and prepared to surrender at once.

But things don't work out that way. The soldiers of Westmark, not being in on the plot, refuse to lay down their arms. Mickle takes command of her troops in the field, supported by the revolutionary Florian and his followers, who form a partisan band which is joined by Mickle's fiancé Theo. And instead of a neat and bloodless coup, we have a situation suspiciously resembling a certain recent unpleasantness in Southeast Asia, with guerrilla warfare, reprisals against noncombatant peasantry, atrocities, stalemate, attrition, and political coverups.

Alexander is not writing a juvenile version of Vietnam; however, it is unlikely in the extreme that anyone would have even thought of writing a juvenile like this before Vietnam, much less brought it off brilliantly. We have a variety of attitudes to examine: that of the hero, Theo, is one of a dislike for violence that modifies through commitment to the defense of his homeland into a fanaticism capable of the worst excesses, which is sparked off by his finding the body of a friend tortured by enemy troops and not quenched until he finds that



the enemy he has shot down in cold blood is Mickle in disguise. We have the patriotism of the ordinary peasant, concerned with protecting his own; the naive Teddy Roosevelt-style enthusiasm of civilians with no notion of the realities of war; the cynical pragmatism of the professional mercenary soldier, concerned only with his own comfort and survival; the painful dilemma of the honest statesman, who believes in truth and freedom of speech but engages in censorship and propaganda because he thinks they will save his country - which they do; and the fanaticism of the radical idealist to whom principles are more important than flesh and blood, especially those of other people. Almost every possible perspective on war is canvassed: I kept expecting a Westmark Quaker to turn up caring for the wounded, but this one WAS omitted. At the end, Westmark is free, but it will never be the same; and Mickle, Theo, Florian, and their friends are poised to build a new and better society. This is an even better book than WESTMARK, and I strongly recommend it.

ajb

THE SILVER METAL LOVER, Tanith Lee, DAW, 1981, \$2.95

What a godawful, ridiculous plot idea. There's this plain-Jane Poor Little Rich Girl in a future society, see, who's tied to her mother's apron strings and has no real friends, no self-confidence, and no life of her own. Then she falls in love with this ROBOT, a perfect humanoid replica, and they run away together, and she starts to look and feel better, and, you know, be her own person; and then the factory RECALLS the robot....

But it works. As a matter of fact, it works splendidly, because of the masterful way in which Tanith Lee makes us care deeply about her heroine, the candid and vulnerable Jane. When we first meet her, she seems a perfect wimp; but her determination and her devastating honesty lure us into increasing involvement, until finally we are rooting desperately for her to find a happy ending with her Silver. This is of course impossible - or is it? The totally unexpected twist at the end should outrage the reader, because nothing in the book has prepared us for the possibility; in fact, all the canons of probability are violated. But the reader accepts it, gladly, since it satisfies the emotional demand Lee has instilled, the necessity that this powerful, transforming love should not be utterly lost. All this is set against the background of a wealthy and decadent future world, where gilded youths indulge every sen and aesthetic whim, where life glitters in the foreground of a landscape devastated by geological instability and irreversible pollution.

On looking back over this review, I find I have made THE SILVER METAL LOVER sound rather like something you'd get if Oscar Wilde and Isaac Asimov collaborated on a Harlequin Romance. Not so. It is science fiction, but science fiction in the form of the psychological novel rather than the space adventure or the extrapolation of present-day technology and/or problems. It bears about the same relation to a Harlequin Romance as MOBY DICK bears to "Row, Row, Row Your Boat." I haven't yet read any of Lee's other sf, which got published when my budget didn't allow me to indulge in unknown authors on spec., even in paperback, though I have read and enjoyed very much a number of her fantasies, especially NIGHT'S MASTER and its sequels. So I am a comparatively late arrival on the praise-Tanith-Lee bandwagon. But I shan't let that stop me from banging the big bass drum: Buy this book! Buy this book! Buy this book!....

ajb

THE SOUL EATER by Mike Resnick
Signet, 1981, 151 pp.

Once I had read this book, I found it hard not to think about it. That is because SOUL EATER has depths, layers, and echos which make it far more than merely a "good book".

Of course it is a good read. It can be read, if you wish, only for what it appears on the surface, an exciting and slightly bizarre adventure story. It can be admired for its excellent characterizations and its ability to depict, effectively, alienness. The book has movement, suspense, and a well developed plot...just the sort of thing for an evening's diversion; but it is more than that.

The "Soul Eater" of the title, is otherwise known as the "Dreamwish Beast" and numerous other titles. is a sort of Flying Dutchman of space; a being of pure energy frequently reported (but never documented) in a certain region of the galaxy. The novel is the story of how Nicobar Lane, professional hunter, comes to believe in the Soul Eater's reality and to become obsessed with hunting and destroying it. It is an obsession even more relentless, and even less justifiable, than Ahab's hunting of Moby Dick. The result is a book which is not only exciting, but intensely moving and also thought-provoking.

The theme of MOBY DICK is damnation. Ahab's obsession with the white whale gradually and insidiously engulfs the entire crew of the Pequod, and it is essential to an understanding of the book to know that Ahab is not mad. Neither is Nicobar Lane, although some of his actions will suggest to some readers that he's gone off the deep end. But madness, while interesting as a literary device, immediately robs a tale of any moral or ethical meaning and that would have been contrary to Melville's intent just as it would be contrary to Resnick's.

Just as Melville's novel has damnation as its theme, Resnick's is concerned with redemption. That is not to say we have here a "happy ending"...happiness is in the heart of the beholder and I suspect many readers will find the ending distinctly unhappy.

I don't believe that redemption is a popular theme these days. The idea makes too many people uncomfortable. It implies, among other things, that evil is a tangible, manifest reality into which human beings may wander and from which they can be rescued. Psychiatry, and other disciplines in which moral relativism is chic, would like us to believe that

antisocial behavior arises from madness, material deprivation, and so on. In literature these days, to portray a character as primarily evil opens one to charges of being "simplistic". Yet I doubt that anyone will aver that Ahab...who is damned...is a simplistic character. Neither is Nicobar Lane. He is a cold-blooded killer of animals, yet is genuinely fond (although he won't really admit it) of his pet/mascot, the Mufti. He is meticulously calculating (especially about money) and yet allows himself to be "taken" (to a certain extent) at Tchaka's Emporium. He is a swaggering self-sufficient and very lonely. He is outwardly amoral and scrupulously rational. This facade crumbles before an irrational and evil obsession with the Dreamwish Beast. No insanity, no childhood trauma, no socioeconomic cause can explain this; none of these is even offered.

And underneath the obsession lies Lane's own redemption. An important point of this book is that redemption comes from within, regardless of the fact that it may occur due to external stimuli. The temptation, fall and ultimate salvation of Nicobar Lane is a fascinating, powerful story which no serious sf fan will want to miss... especially for the consideration, in this book, that salvation entails its own problems. I strongly recommend this absorbing novel.

row

AFTER MAN by Dougal Dixon,
St. Martin's, 1981, \$15.00, 124pp.

This is a beautiful and interesting book. Considering the amount of color and the intricacy of the artwork, the \$15.00 price tag is probably all right, although I have an inherent objection to paying that for almost any book.

The premise of AFTER MAN is that mankind will shortly become extinct when he has brutalized the environment to the point that it will no longer support him. The aftermath is evolutionary chaos out of which, 50,000,000 years later, a new, stable ecology has been achieved with numerous new species filling the available ecological niches. In many ways this future world is not so different from the one which primitive man occupied 10,000 years ago. Continental drift has made Europe/Asia/Africa/Australia/North America a single continent, whereas South America, California, and eastern Africa ("Lemuria") are isolated land masses. Broadly speaking, there has been little change to the flora of the world (although such things as rain

forests of Western Australia might be a little unexpected). The course of evolution, therefore, was primarily to fill ecological niches left vacant by the extinction or near-extinction of species we know today. The result is many animals which are different and yet somehow familiar (both because of their ancestry and because of shapes assumed which are reminiscent of earlier species).

After an introductory essay on how life is presumed to have developed and evolved on Earth, and on how the evolutionary process works, AFTER MAN takes up in succession the various climactic zones and isolated land masses of the Earth 50 million years from now. Plates picturing various new species are faced with pages discussing and illustrating animal life in that era. The effect is fascinating and almost convincing, as if we have somehow recieved a document from the far future.

I have a few quibbles with the book, for which I can only give the excuse that my imagination about the future of life on earth would necessarily differ from Dixon's. He postulates the total disappearance of canines, and while the domesticated types might not make it, I have difficulty imagining that the hardy and inventive coyote wouldn't still be around in some form. Dixon's premise is that the big survivors would be those species which are successful in spite of Man, not because of him. So good-bye to horses and cows and pigs and all domesticated species. The descendants of rats, rabbits, bats and a few others dominate the future world. But the coyote has been at least as successful as the rat... since the time of Columbus this animal has actually expanded its range. It has even changed its hunting habits (from pack to more or less solitary) to meet the challenge of the human-dominated environment of this continent. And one wonders if other animals (such as the wild cat) might not have descendants in Dixon's future.

To my mind, a likely candidate for future descendants is Man himself. It seems unlikely to me that so generalized, adaptive and intelligent an animal, however decimated by an ecological disaster, would not find some way to survive, even though probably evolving into new forms in the course of time. Even if Man did not survive per se, one must consider (which Dixon apparently did not) that the ecological niche which he occupied would then be empty and should come to be filled by some other species. It seems unlikely that the world

50 million years hence would not have a new race of tool-users.

So much for quibbles. It's still an absorbing, intelligent, and convincing book. It's also extremely attractive. May you never chance to meet a Night Stalker (what a little yummy that is; get the book and find out what.).

rw

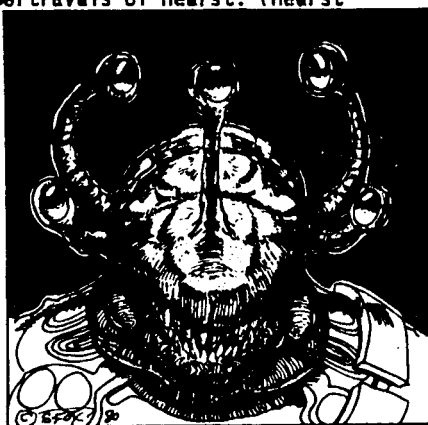
CITIZEN HEARST by W. A. Swanberg, Bantam Books, 1963, 653pp.

I know only a few Mainstream books are reviewed in these columns, and still less Mainstream biographies, but I just read one of the best, a book that after a slow first fifty pages I found fascinating. Like all scholarly non-fiction biographies, it depends on accounts of surviving associates of the subject, his letters and writings by and about him, and draw cautious conclusions about his psychology. It says little and implies much about the values and standards of his period of history. Still, it suited me well to read a work of research after much S-F, and I don't regret spending a week reading it and doing little else. (I am unemployed at present.) The book, CITIZEN HEARST, I picked up because studying THE DEATH OF ARTEMIO CRUZ in a summer class in Mexican literature got me interested in self-made multimillionaires. (THE DEATH OF ARTEMIO CRUZ by Carlos Fuentes, 1962,) While CITIZEN HEARST lacks the vivid scenes and brooding passions of the Carlos Fuentes novel, it told me even more about corruption. Hearst, foremost exponent of Yellow Journalism, by means of screaming propaganda pushed America into a war with Spain and started her imperialistic adventures. Swanberg finds the key to this action not in a cynical desire to make money, but in self-deception--in Hearst's romantic desire to follow his whim that the Cuban revolutionaries were selfless heroes. I know two people who boast that they live their wildest fantasies; who try to live like Hearst, I can't stand either of them. Truly Randian romanticism can bring with it the vilest fraud.

W. R. Hearst was a study in contradictions who never took the time to order his thinking logically. During the Depression he flirted with Fascism and blasted Roosevelt as a Communist fellow traveller, spending millions on San Simeon (his gaudy palace) and trying to evade income taxes while people were starving. This he did after crusading for the poor in his newspapers for most of his career. And yet, he was a first-rate writer,

editor and executive. Like the fictional Gail Wynand of Ayn Rand's THE FOUNTAINHEAD he put that energy into his newspapers that he denied to his ideas. Swanberg says of the mourners at Hearst's funeral: "They were recognizing a character so prodigious as to be understood only as a flawed accident of nature that would never occur again--a personality of such titanic scope and torrential energy that it deserves recognition on that scope alone, error or no error." However, unlike the fictional Gail Wynand and Artemio Cruz, W. R. Hearst was born to wealth and power and had a happy youth. Truly, the task of the scholarly biographer is harder than that of the novelist. The writer of fiction can draw on his self-knowledge while the biographer must depend on the quicksand of contradictory testimony.

Swanberg mentions Aldous Huxley's AFTER MANY A SUMMER DIES, THE SWAN and the movie CITIZEN-KANE, fictional travails of Hearst. (Hearst



screened CITIZEN-KANE many times at San Simeon.) He does not mention Ayn Rand.

All in all I enjoyed CITIZEN HEARST. I learned more about history from it, and I felt it to be just and reasoned portrait of its complex subject.

bk

DREAMRIDER, by Sandra Miesel, Ace Books, 279pp, \$2.75

Sandra Miesel's impressive first novel, DREAMRIDER, is a book I'm going to keep on my shelves because it possesses a quality I find all too rare these days: texture. Her story of Ria, a history student at the University of Illinois at Champaign during some future totalitarian era, dovetails neatly with the Other World of shamanic visions that Ria enters. This world too is the area surrounding the university, but in an alternate timeline, one in which perfur, sentient fur beings such as the

macotters, join with human allies to fight the mutated macrats and to rebuild a shattered world with all their powers. Among these powers are the gifts of the shaman to heal, to teach and to adjust not only lives but the fates of worlds.

Ria's is one such fate that the shaman Kara and her perfur associate, the macotter Lute, reach out to. A loner with a fine mind and a tormented past, Ria cannot fit into the sanitized repressiveness of her world. She is a candidate for personality reconstruction by PSI which controls citizen's minds all the while that its regime strangles the society it allegedly tries to heal. According to the brilliant and idiosyncratic macotter Lute, Ria's world is about to become the embodiment of her worst nightmare: a shadow merry-go-round ridden by dead children. Her training, a series of journeys into the pasts of many alternate Earths, is to help her to avoid that.

DREAMRIDER takes place on three levels: the drab world of Ria's university, full of petty intrigues and grim economies; the bright, engagingly warm society of Kara and Lute's Chamba; and the parallel times in which Ria watches the coronation of Henry IX, or Robert E. Lee taking Richmond, or the escape of Earth from future calamities. In these episodes Miesel evokes the past of alternative Earths with a skill that reminds me of Keith Roberts in PAVANE, a book which has always been exceedingly special to me.

While Ria embarks upon her shaman's quest, she fights on the other levels too. She must repel control by PSI and aid Lute in fighting macrats. These experiences too help to strengthen her to reach her goal which is... and thereby hangs material for a sequel and the one major drawback of this book: it is too short. Clearly Miesel is working toward a resolution which will leave Ria in control of her power and living a rich and complete life in a world (or worlds) she has transformed, a world which includes the scholarship Miesel adroitly portrays and caricatures, the energetic hedonism of the perfur, and the comforts Ria comes to appreciate. Unfortunately, that can only be hinted at within the scope of one novel alone.

So I'm waiting for another visit to the world of Miesel's scholar, macotters and shamans. Any writer who can mix Eliade with manuscripts, T. S. Eliot with dystopian criticism, and not bog down in a morass of humorless erudition is clearly a writer I'm going to watch for.

sms

SWORD OF CHAOS by Marion Zimmer Bradley and the Friends of Darkover
Daw Books, paperback, \$2.95

Occasionally a fantasy world takes on a life of its own. When it begins to live in the mind of other writers, Marion Zimmer Bradley, creator of the Darkover series, believes it has reached this status.

The stories in this collection range from confusing to exquisitely horrifying and fall into several categories. With one exception, all the stories may be grouped under one or more of the following categories; New or Misunderstood Telepathic Talents, Mythology and Legend, Amazons (Renunciates), Tower Life, and Horror. The expectation is a very short, humorous piece at the end called "A Recipe for Failure" which combines Darkover with Anne McCaffrey's Dragonrider series to marvelously funny effect.

There are no terrible weak pieces in the Misunderstood Talents category, and there are two really outstanding stories, "A Gift of Love" and "Di Catenas". Both are accounts of how love and marriage come to the form we see in the majority of the Darkover novels, touching without being maudlin. Both "Wind-Music" and "Of Two Minds" are a bit confusing to read. The confusion is justified in "Of Two Minds" because the story heavily involves a telepathic boy who tries to learn to communicate with others despite his physical handicaps of being blind, deaf, and mute. The only justification for "Wind-Music" is that the major character is undergoing threshold sickness. Though he survives and seems to be recovered by the end, there is still a feeling of inconclusiveness. Will he accept the altered life, or will he try to destroy those who have complicated the alteration--most especially his father? "Cold Hall" deals with a new talent, anti-glamour, and the boy who wields it seems to feel that love-making is wrong. The ending is handled with wonderful humor toward the whole incident. "Where the Heart Is" answers quite acceptably the question troubling many Darkover fans--"What happened to Lew, Dio, and Marja after they left Darkover?" And "Skeptic" discovers that some people are not only NOT telepaths, but that some are human telepathic dampers. A reasonably stable story, if a bit drawn out.

The legends of Darkover have caused much speculation. Some deal with the gods such as "Dark Lady", the story of how Avarra came to be served by a human woman. Some deal with seeming-spirits such as "A Legend of the Hellars" and "A Sword of Chaos".

In the first a spirit is called up to help a king get heirs. She merely curses him. The story is slow and rather tiring. "A Sword of Chaos" on the other hand is quite possibly the best story in the book. The sword in question is possessed by a spirit of revenge which requires a very special payment in the end. Finally some legends deal with real people such as the coupled stories "Escape" and "Rebirth". The latter was written as a sequel to the former by another author and "Rebirth" explains how Varzil the Great comes to have such radical ideas about peace.

Of the three stories about Amazons, two, "In the Throat of the Dragon" and "They Way of the Wolf" are about a mutually beneficial teaming of Amazon telepathically to achieve a goal. Though handled in entirely different ways, both are quite enjoyable. One, "Camilla" brings back a known Amazon, Camilla, after leading a successful expedition for the Terrans, asks an unusual and totally unexpected fee. Readable,



but a bit repetitious.

Stories about Tower Life include three largely unexplored phases. "In the Throat of the Dragon" shows how a self-exiled laranzu is coping with the reasons for his leaving. In "The Lesson of the Inn" a failed Keeper learns to "feel" again. "Confidence" turns out to be a visionary test at the beginning of a telepath's work in a tower. The reason for the test is unclear, but the final wrap-up is well executed.

All of the horror-related stories have been mentioned in other categories. The best of these is Bradley's own "A Sword of Chaos", giving an especially chilling, yet exquisitely beautiful ending.

As in any book of short stories by many authors, there is a wide spectrum of talent and ability. On the whole, however, SWORD OF CHAOS is well worth the price, and it is a must for any true Darkover fan.

tfp

WALPURGIS III by Mike Resnick,
Signet, 1982, 166pp.

Imagine, if you will, that Mankind has achieved FTL travel and is doing his thing out there in the stars. Not difficult; a favorite premise of sf writers. Imagine, also, that he has found that most of the other Earth-like planets are, if not

uninhabited, at least relatively undefended. Imagine further that so many such planets were found in the early years of exploration that they were thrown open, not only to colonization, but to outright ownership, to literally any group with money enough to send people there. These are the initial premises of Mike Resnick's previous two books, BIRTHRIGHT and THE SOUL EATER, and the initial conditions behind the rise of Resnick's "Republic"...what some of us more old-fashioned types might call the "Terran Empire" (early stage).

Imagine now, however, that one group given one of these planets is a coalition of satanic, fertility, and other "old religion" cults. What you get is Walpurgis III, a world entirely absorbed by the believer in these cults and ipso facto cut off from virtually all contact with the Republic. Into this encapsulated environment comes Conrad Bland...who despite his name, is the greatest (if that is the word) mass murderer in human history and the very embodiment of the evil which most Walpurgians worship (explicitly or implicitly). The Republic has lost 23 good operatives trying to get this guy, and the government of Walpurgis is (secretly) begging them to come in and get him, somehow.

So on tap is a chap named Jericho, just possibly the greatest professional assassin in human history. He is master of disguise, deception, and burglary, not to mention expert in any weapon you care to name. His method is to get onto the planet where his victim is, entirely without weapons, currency, or anything but his makeup kit. He will then use his talents to learn to blend in with the society, to obtain the wherewithall to survive and move around, get weapons, and finally to locate and kill his victim. This is obviously not an easy matter on a planet dedicated to every sort of devil worship and witchcraft imaginable. But Jericho believes he is equal to the task. He lands unnoticed on Walpurgis. He burgles a few stores for clothes and cash. He rents a half dozen hotel rooms. He gets drunk in a few bars. He kills a pedestrian at random to see what will happen. He runs an ad in a local paper. But John Sable inexplicably tumbles to what's going on, and tips off Conrad Bland. Despite a few more deft

murders to put Sable off the scent, things look grim for Jericho until White Lucy....well, of course, you're going to have to have to read this to find out about her.

What you have here is, first, a rattling good adventure story... what happens when the Galaxy's foremost slaughterer runs up against the Galaxy's foremost executioner, a Mission Impossible to end all Mission Impossible. It is a story full of wry humor and stark grimness, of exciting action and keen observation, of towering inhumanity and startling humanity.

What you have, second, is a striking departure from the good vs. evil theme which haunts so much of our literature. WALPURGIS III has, essentially, three main characters: one who is evil, one who does evil, and one who worships evil. Conrad Bland is a mass slaughterer of humanity because it is impossible for him to do otherwise; it's just his way. Jericho executes individual human beings because he is a killing-machine-for-hire; it's what he gets paid to do. John Sable opposes homocides (but only certain homocides) because it's his job. If you enjoy heroes, whom do you root for here?

Well, consider John Sable. Quite in the line of duty, he comes up against two manifestations of evil which are not merely abstract, attributes of the goddess Cali, or of the demons Azazel, Asmodeus, and Ahirman. He must in the end, face the question of whether one evil must be rewarded because it has exterminated another evil. In making that decision, he must play, not the devil, but God. It is an experience not conducive to the further veneration of wicked spirits.

Perhaps we may understand Sable as a sort of reverse Candide, who happily believes his is the vilest of all possible worlds, only to discover that there are universes of evil beyond his former comprehension. In the end he must realize that all every man can do is accept life as it is, not as a generic abstraction, and cultivate his garden.

This is not entirely a perfect book. It seems at some points to make its (admittedly powerful) philosophic points too pushily. Toward the end, as Jericho stalks Bland, we shift from the former's point of view to that of Bland's vicinity. We learn of Jericho's progress through the "messenger" technique. This creates a somewhat comic-opera atmosphere which is a jarring but effective counterpoint to what else is going on...but also tends to flatten the excitement and suspense.

Maybe. The reader will have to decide whether these are flaws at all, considering the high level craftsmanship throughout. WALPURGIS III is a carefully written book by a writer who is not content to give us merely a "good read" (although it is certainly that). The story moves ever forward, and while we are given plenty to chew on as well, we never get bogged down in boodles of philosophic discourses.

This is not a book you will put down willingly; give yourself a full evening to read it. Nor is it a book you will put aside and forget once it's done. In the end, you will probably know John Sable's attitude toward evil (and Evil). But do you know what he now feels about good (and Good)? In that sense Mike Resnick has externalized one of the greatest of all internal questions. For, like John Sable, we all have gardens to cultivate.

rcw

SURVEY SHIP by Marion Zimmer Bradley, Ace books of N.Y., (first mass market edition), illustrated by Steve Fabian, \$2.50, 232pp.

Marion Zimmer Bradley is one of those names to conjure with-- her Darkover World series are finely wrought creations of science-fantasy; she has done much for Tolkien fandom too. None can gainsay her gift with words, but this is one awful work. It is a glorified exercise in 'soft-porn' approach to science fiction with a very thin plot indeed. The excellent illustrations by Steve Fabian (thirty-seven full page ones in all) only accentuate the erotic quality, the constant clichés of glorified youth, pompous sermonizing by the ship 'mystic' (an Indian, no less), the racial tensions, homosexual vs. heterosexual conflicts so 'nicely' resolved, the sentimental camaraderie of heading 'into the unknown', etc.

The scene is the far future when a rationally ordered Earth guided by an unbelievably benign and wise (!) United Nations has created a scientifically perfect Academy to train and select a small group of young people. These are the future cadets of space travel-- to go forth and select planets to colonize for Earth. Six are chosen, three male, three female-- all perfect physical specimens. Very democratic too-- all races, some a result of genetic breeding. Their chief activity on board the ship in the months ahead is to show off their sexual hangups and proclivities in a prose all too saccharine with romantic clichés. They seem to be constantly undressing together, boasting of how progressive they are, and trying

to fight off their boredom in this scientific little utopia of a perfect world. It just isn't believable. Some crises occur on board the ship, but naturally no one dies or is seriously injured. When in doubt, have or talk about sex, sex, sex. One wishes for an outbreak of pimples or impotency or something!

The theological aspect of this journey into libido centers on the speculations of Ravi the Indian, that God is the entire Universe; with wretched humans free to do whatever our hot little minds can dream up (the standard liberal 'situation ethics' of today's theology). Sin is taboo and a Rousseau-like innocence is the standard. The whole theme of suffering as purification is drowned in the deep shadows of Oriental mysticism. Individual self-worth is defined as a form of heroic materialism, cultivating the will for self-realization. There are contradictions here, not explored by the author. It ultimately leads the plot and characters to sterility.

The six characters all repeat the same ideas and themes in varied ways. Maturity is something asserted, not explored in meaning by Marion Zimmer Bradley. It's as if THE BRAVE NEW WORLD has arrived-- with no unpleasant consequences. It's too bad, really. The human soul is a much more powerful and complex reality than this novel would portray while human sexuality is a force far beyond the trivial sentiment this works out to be. It touches the borders of Sacrament and Transcendence, of pain and mystery and Creation for life. I hope the author may find this in her future works.

tme

THE WARLOCK UNLOCKED by Christopher Stasheff, Ace books of N.Y., 1982 \$2.75, 282pp.

Stasheff is a newcomer to science fantasy, but his recent novel THE WARLOCK IN SPIKE OF HIMSELF sets the stage for one fascinating future 'star' world where scientific speculations about psychic powers can merge with a simplistically designed medieval world of kings and barons and witches (benign). Herein, Stasheff continues the adventures of his 'psi'-hero, Rod Gallowglass, who is a powerful ally of the reigning King of Gramarye-- and at the same time a secret agent of an Earth security bureau trying to frustrate the devious schemes of two subversive groups of this far future era.

The author anchors the reader's interest by concentrating on the

influence of Roman Catholicism in the age of Galactic Exploration, the worlds of 3059 A.D. Here, the Pope, John XXIV, is determined to use a religious order that harmonizes electronic technology and traditional faith to counteract the Church's enemies at home on Earth and on the distant planets like Gramarye. The plot is a bit crazy, mixing current controversy over Rev. Moon's Unification Church with magic elements in the alternate world that exists on Gramarye, with descendants of the Dungeons-and- Dragons refugees who, over 500 years, have built up their own version of the best aspects of medieval society. There are intrigues aplenty, weird creatures both 'natural' and supernatural-- and plenty of good humor throughout.

Indeed, it is this humor that prevents any real sense of tension for the reader. The feeling of tragedy is absent despite the logic of Gallowglass' arguments over what this world is facing. The descriptive passages that make this world real for us don't bring us back to the time of Chaucer or manorial society in any phase. It has the feel of superficiality. No great battles are here but the psychic powers are fairly handled. The Church's position is treated with sympathy. The arguments of medieval society are acutely brought out; the modern Vatican seems believable with its black Pope and desire to avoid the growing renewed threat of totalitarian powers on Earth. But the real awe and wonder that magic should be invested with are absent. The characters are interesting, sometimes charming, (e.g. the 'Cathodean' priest, Father Al), but still a little too sedate for this far-future era threatened with social upheaval.

Warlocks and Redcaps, elves from Faerie, theologians from Rome, a far-future world system that reads so much like today, an inept UN, and a likeable hero who is thankfully free from the cynicism of today's antihero-- nothing outstanding, but good adventure reading all-in-all.

time

MERCHANTER'S LUCK by C. J. Cherryh
Daw Books, 1982, \$2.95, 208pp

MERCHANTER'S LUCK is another of C. J. Cherryh's complex and intelligent space operas, this time set in the universe of DOWNBELOW STATION. It has a tramp freighter, whose owner ships out under false papers every time his debts start to get ahead of him; an ambitious young officer from one of the largest ships in space, who wants command badly enough to buy and refurbish

the tramp; a lot tougher enough to use the tramp as live bait to catch a nest of space pirates; an amazing, foolhardy race into Pell Station, and a mystery.

As always with Cherryh, it has a full cast of people, with neither cardboard nor barbie-dolls found even among the lesser characters. The plot is full of twists and turns. The pace is brisk. For adventure fans and just plain readers.

pm

ALONGSIDE NIGHT by J. Neil Schulman,
Ace Books, 1979 (reprinted 1982)
\$2.50, 271pp plus afterword

ALONGSIDE NIGHT is a competent first novel on a reliable old theme. Earth or America, is rapidly headed toward dictatorship; a secret underground exists, running a countersociety in elaborate detail; a young student is drawn into the revolution by a series of events that add up to an inevitability.

The hero, Elliott Vreeland, is likeable. The girl, Lorimer, is a little less believable; as if a complex person were being seen through a veil, darkly. Since Elliott is seventeen, this is realistic, but since Schulman is not seventeen, it would have been nice to have a little more omnipotent author, especially since Lorimer is Elliott's sidekick and partner, second lead in this book. Schulman acknowledges in his afterwords that he found it more realistic for his hero to make his choices based on his personal impressions of people rather than on ideology; Uncle Bob, whose BETWEEN PLANETS he cheerfully acknowledges as the inspiration for ALONGSIDE NIGHT, would be grateful. Books are so much more interesting than sermons, and so is this one.

It's faults are the faults of the naive: Lorimer's half-

characterization; the apology for making Elliott a person rather than an ideologue; a similar apology that ran contrary, to the effect that people make better characters than gods do. We are spared the good major character that goes bad, and vice versa, but the F.B.I. guards with their naive and honorable morality of loyalty were unexpectedly touching.

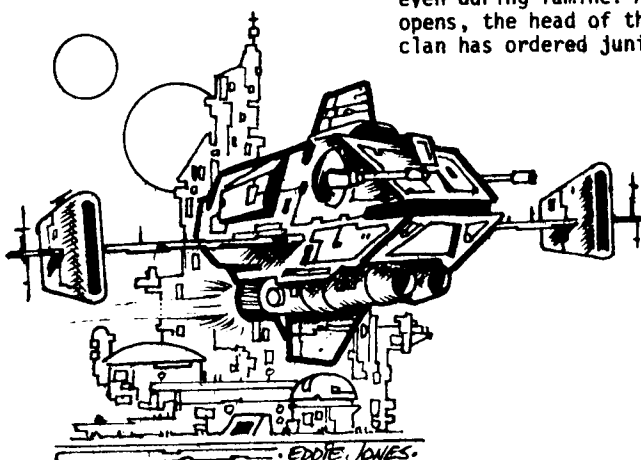
As for the ideological content, while it all sounds nice, this is not a book to try on those old enough to remember the last burst of revolutionary fervor, with its unflinching morality of truth, beauty, peace, love, happiness, flowers-- and condemnation of pigs, warmongers, the WW II generation--and its slow collapse before all sorts of mundane realities. Maybe this one won't collapse, and maybe it's a true path to a better world, and it may even be a good way to live in the middle of this tired old mundane world. Countercultures are very attractive sometimes. But let those who are too young to have tried it once, try it this time,

pm

COURTSHIP RITE by Donald Kingsbury,
Simon & Schuster Trade Paperback,
1982, \$8.95

COURTSHIP RITE is a novel of political intrigue set on a world where the dead are reverently eaten by their kindred, where all leather goods are made of human skin, elaborately sacrificed during the owner's lifetime as a matter of status, and where elderly, disabled, criminals, and those low in kalothi, survivability, or luck-- are expected to report to the temple to be sacrificed as food during the world's periodic famines.

Oelita, 'the Gentle Heretic', is an increasingly powerful rebel against this harsh system, preaching mercy, even during famine. As the novel opens, the head of the ruling Kaiel clan has ordered junior members of



the clan to add Oelita to their maran, which has its eye on the electronic researcher Kathein, rebels by obeying in its own way. Oelita will be tested by the Death Rite, a series of lethal situations which can be escaped by a knowledge of the traditions, a cool head, and luck. Meanwhile, the sea trading Mnankrei have spread an agricultural plague, in order to force Oelita's home region into Mnankrei hands.

In the midst of this intrigue, Kathein, who has been studying 'Frozen Voices of God', or information crystals leftover from landfall, comes upon a volume of popular history "The Forge of War", and all hell breaks loose,

The people who eat their own weak are horrified by the massacres of Terran history. Oelita, forced to accept a God who speaks of Hiroshima and the Nazi death camps, runs screaming into the desert; to live as a hermit until she can accept the horrors. And yet, within a few days, a fashionable ball is alive with costumes taken from Earth's military history. One of the maran has decided that Lenin was a stupid politician. The Mnankrei are trying to recruit a tribe of desert nomads to serve as their world's first military caste. And the nomad chief, reviewing the record and giving the matter some thought, is of the opinion that mass slaughter is due to the fact that Earth's warriors were lousy strategists. Meanwhile the Liethe, a caste of concubines, are playing their own rather pointless games.

There are holes in the book. The existence and role of the Liethe is one. It is possible, for women at least, to change caste by marriage; why would the Liethe youngsters submit to the rigorous discipline of the hive and the vagaries of a slave concubine's life if alternatives were available? Except for some higher purpose, perhaps a religious purpose; but the Liethe are far from being Bene Gesserit.

Another flaw is in the culture portrayed, not in the book. They are uniformly convinced that their world is incredibly harsh, that God has placed them there as a supreme test. On what evidence? There is desert. The native plants are not only inedible, but poisonous, without extensive processing. Only eight items, all imported from Earth, are edible, but the people are coping very nicely with all of this.

There are no animals of any kind on this world larger than insects, but human beings.

This, not the harshness of the world, is the reason for the cannibalism.



Like a thesis by Marvin Harris, the details unfold. With no large animals, human porters are the only means of transportation until a clan of mechanics, on a drunken dare, invent a pedal-driven 'skreiwheel'. With no protein-giving animals but mashed bees, the human dead become the only ready source of protein; hence the funeral feast, and the sharing the flesh of the dead as communion and as a means of sharing the virtues of the deceased. Once this is admitted, then, with no other source of leather, human skin becomes leather- and a memorial to the late owner. Oelita, wryly recognizing the inconsistency, carried a book bound in her late father's hide. It was her most cherished possession.

Then the only thing the legend of this world's extraordinary harshness does is give a rationale for killing the unfit for added meat, and point to the thought that the original settlers were a spoiled citified lot. If a pregnant Oelita can live in the desert and forage successfully while wrestling with a serious, disturbing philosophical problem, this world is not that harsh. Oelita is under too many handicaps.

But as a book based on a thesis by Marvin Harris, it is horrifying, fascinating and beautiful.

pm

BLADE RUNNER, (Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep) by Philip K. Dick, first printing 1968, reprinted 1982, Ballantine Books \$2.75, 216pp

In a nearly destroyed world of 2021, where android slaves are offered to potential colonists as an incentive to leave Earth while their genes are still viable, Rick Deckard is a bounty hunter. His job is to track

down and 'retire' rogue androids illegally on Earth, and the latest group of androids, the Nexus-6, are of highly superior intelligence. The electric sheep of the title is his. In a world of massive animal die-out, everybody owns an animal who can afford one, and those who can't, pretend, for the neighbors and for their own comfort. The cult of the animal, and the widespread popular religion of empathy boxes, by which a devotee can merge with a still-living prophet who loves and accepts all and has a down-home folksy wisdom as well, is echoed in the instructions on how to tell a human from an android. Androids, Rick is told, and tells himself, have no empathy, theirs is a cold, malign, abstract intelligence. How they are capable of malice and not empathy is not explained; androids must be all menace, or it would be too easy to sympathize with them.

Yet this world of empathy boxes and condemnation of androids has a repellently callous streak. One of the more sympathetic characters, J. R. Isadore, is borderline retarded; everyone refers to him contemptuously as a 'chicken head'. We see enough inside his head to be outraged at this, even as we were with Charly Gordon's ill-treatment in FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON.

The story also opens, for no good reason, with a long scene that does nothing to advance the action nor to set the scene, between Rick and his wife. She is severely depressed to the point where a woman of our day would seek treatment, a fact shown often but with no meaning to the story, unless this was supposed to be what drove Rick to bounty hunting. A good deal more should have been made of Iran Deckard and her illness, or a whole lot less.

Apart from this one flaw, and the massive turn-off caused by making it the narrative hook, the novel is an exciting cops-and-robbers adventure and a fascinating world-description. When the movie comes out, I intend to buy a ticket.

pm

THE VAMPIRE TAPESTRY by Suzy McKee Charnas, Pocket Book, 1981, \$2.75 294pp

Fans of the romantic Dracula may well not like the tough, realistic predator who teaches at a small college, drives fast cars, and is at the top of the food chain. A loner, sourly arrogant, and near-celibate, Dr. Edward Weyland is more like a most-detested teacher or least favorite uncle than the ultimate seducer of horror fiction. This vampire tale is not about sexual awakening, but about food.

To Dr. Weyland, people--students, passersby, casual dates, and anybody he can hunt--are mobile food supplies, to be drained and left to recover, and possibly used again. He has only a dim knowledge of where he came from, beyond the fact that he is ages-old, and periodically hibernates; he cares very little. Why it is important for him to neither know or care, to forget everything between his waking periods, is skillfully shown and startlingly shown at the end of the book.

The rest of the book describes, slowly, what it is he must forget in order to survive.

Weyland must live among humans as one of them, but not as a human would live. He must identify with humans enough to understand them, but not well enough to empathize with them. As the book opens, he has just established himself at a small college in upstate New York. And a housekeeper, a South African woman who is a hunter herself, not only has an idea what he is, but can identify with him well enough to hunt the hunter.

New York has other predators, the fleeing Weyland discovers, some of them vicious enough to make a vampire sick, and not all of them are in that admitted jungle, the streets. Now the vampire, once the hunter, is also prey, and knows the experience of helplessness and dependency on another person. It is unnerving.

This is a brilliant book, with a new but overpoweringly obvious, once stated, view of what the vampire must be, of college life and human life, of the lone wolf among humans, and of the heart of the nonhuman. Read it in chapters or all at once; But don't expect to put it down.

pm

A WOMAN CALLED SCYLLA, by David Gurr. Bantam Books (New York and Canada) 1982, \$3.50, 287pp

The spy novel, while still a going concern among readers, has intricate machinations that are often handled well in print do not necessarily translate well to the screen. You end up with James Bond simplicity, which is all right, but there is a lack of the chess-piece plot development that people like. Of course, this can be carried too far as well and you end up with something that is very hard to follow. Most of us prefer the middle ground-- the intelligent thriller such as those produced by Robert Ludlum, Le Carre or Len Deighton. This new book falls into this category and it is by a Canadian-- or at least a naturalized Canadian. Mr. Gurr was born in London and emigrated to Canada during his youth. He has one previous work to his credit-- the novel TROIKA.

Jane Montigny, the heroine, is an American correspondent who is driven to research the fate of her English mother who died during mysterious circumstances during World War II. Apparently she was a secret agent with the code name 'Scylla'. The trail starts in Montreal in 1976 and leads to McKenzie King diaries, to C.I.A. headquarters in Virginia, to Churchill and Roosevelt and to Rhodesia, Sir Harry Oakes and the Duke of Windsor. Who is the person trying to prevent these 35 year old secrets from coming to light? Is it a traitor that still is hidden in high government echelons?

Does the reason for the cover-up lie with the ultimate war-time secret, the atomic bomb? There is a culmination of events in London in the rat infested halls of the deserted War Cabinet offices below ground.

Aside from the regrettable tendency to utilize a certain four-letter word repeated (this can be excused as part of the characterization of a very tough determined woman), over and over, Mr. Gurr has written a compact and highly entertaining thriller. He has the same knack as Clive Cussler (NIGHT PROBE, RAISE THE TITANIC) for analysing secrets of the past and weaving them into an interesting narrative.

Certainly this book would not be ignored by anyone who likes the mystery and spy genre.

wrb

HOW TO MASTER HOME VIDEO GAMES, by Tom Hirschfield, Bantam Books (New York and Canada), 1982, \$2.95, 198pp

Video games, whether of the home or commercial variety are the activity of the 1980's and are a multi-

million dollar industry. It was perhaps inevitable that someone would bring out a book detailing the different games and highlighting strategy to follow. This book views the home market and the main companies (Atari, Intellivision, and Activision). There is a section concerning the records that have been set, and various clubs that have been set up. There is even a chapter on the commercial variety, Pac Man and the techniques one should follow.

I am somewhat at a loss in knowing how to review this book, as I am not a video-game aficionado. In fact, I have only played a video-game once, one of the available early models circa 1975 or thereabouts. I am interested and fascinated by various board games. I think that one of the problems with video-games as such is that they are too action oriented for more cerebral types-- i.e., chess players. It has seemed to me that you need terribly quick reflexes to be a success at video-games. Admittedly, you do improve by practice and doping out your strategy in advance, but it can make you feel quite inferior for awhile. Also, being a science-fiction fan, video-games remind me of computer programming and all those old scenarios of the vast electronic complex taking over the world and making zombies out of everyone.

However, having registered my objections, I must admit the book does have a certain appeal. to even non-fanatics as myself. It is far toward making you understand why these games are popular (all of us want to beat programming of any kind, even that imposed by our own brains). There are useful diagrams, a clear explanation of scoring, and many helpful tips. It is certainly the most complete book of its kind that has yet appeared. Among the games covered are: Asteroids, Combat, M Missile Command, Space Invaders, Warlords, Sea Battle, Dragster, Space Armada and Stampede.

A useful hand-book in understanding a current phenomenon which will appeal to all ages.

wrb

JOURNEYS OF FRODO: AN ATLAS OF J.R.R. TOLKIEN'S 'THE LORD OF THE RINGS' by Barbara Strachey, Ballantine Books of N.Y. 1981, \$7.95, 110pp, ISBN: 0-345- 28723-7 (ISBN: 0-345-29633-8 pbk.) Trade.

This is one of those fancy trade paperbacks that fits the case of 'what could have been...'. Produced on heavy white paper stock, its interior pages (unnumbered, while its Contents-page lists arabic numerals) give fifty-one red and black lined drawings as maps of Frodo's journeys. The cover showing

part of Hobbiton is in colors of red, blue and shades of green-- not too inspiring overall. Each map on pages the size of 5 1/4" x 10" is completed by commentary on the opposite page. In no way can it be used as a summary of the Ring epic. The style is terse and not very interesting.

Nothing is known about the author except that she is not a cartographer or a professional artist. She claims to be an avid fan of Tolkien and cites her dependence on 'the three Ring volumes, the UNFINISHED TALES, and the published paintings of Tolkien. She is sadly inferior in so many ways to Karen Fonstad's ATLAS OF MIDDLEEARTH. It is not so much that her estimates of distance measurements are often at variance with Mrs. Fonstad; she does use standard measurements for each map, explaining how she arrived at them and occasionally going into ambiguities of Tolkien's statements of his own distance and place locations. Her whole style is uninspired and her art seems too amateurish. She cites sources within her explanatory pages and her information is overall probably correct (except for distance measurements). Symbols used are explained on a separate page, but why cycles of the moon are gone into seems unnecessary and frivolous. No bibliography is provided.

Her worst feature is the desire not to project hills and mountain features, but instead to use contour 'aerial-style' line variations with measurements next to them. It lacks the sweep and drama to catch the amateur users of the atlas. As she notes in her Forward, "I am not a cartographer and I have deliberately not tried to work on the basis of projections, but drawn everything as though the earth were still flat and not spherical." Her boundary lines of kingdoms are difficult to locate, and there are no attempts to draw cities or towns on cross-section designs (except Minas Tirith). It's like a series of crude road-maps which we have to pour over because the symbols seem so on top of one another. Woods are done adequately, but try locating a major river. It gets quite frustrating. Her speculations in her prose are fair, but nothing outstanding. (Trivia also appears.)

For the amateur this gives little benefit to his imagination as he reads the Ring epic. Its information will take too long to digest. For the experienced Tolkien fan there are better books-- Karen Fonstad's ATLAS for instance. Middleearth still appeals to all, but the art of cartography demands the best for an expensive work like this.

tme

THE JADE ENCHANTRESS, by E. Hoffman Price, Random House (U.S.A.) and Ballantine Books (Canada) 1982, \$3.25, 285pp

Exotic (and erotic) locales are a basic element of science-fiction, fantasy, and romance novels. The local book stores have a problem in categorizing the works of E. Hoffman Price because they straddle so many areas-- history and mysticism included. Mind you, this is his second paperback (at the age of 84), but he is no newcomer to the writing field-- his career goes back to the days of the pulps and he knew just about anyone who was anyone in the field. He also knows the subject of ancient China like the back of his hand which has the result of lending veracity to his novels in a manner that no one else can really achieve.

Kwan Ju-Hai is a worker in jade, and one of two sons of a landowner when he meets up with a ghost, a spirit named Nei-Yu -- the Jade Lady. After being a nun while alive, and celibate for a thousand years after being dead, she has become rather sick of the whole business, and has decided to take a lover. Ju-Hai has already had several girlfriends- one of them being Hsi-feng, the family servant and he has no intention of dying to become an Immortal. The Jade Lady has the problem of either bringing him up to her level, or else descending to his, but whatever the circumstances, she is determined to succeed.

Through some bureaucratic schenanigans, both Ju-Hai and his father are drafted into the army of the local warlord in order that he can seize the properties through the agency of the younger brother who is not overly bright. It finally becomes apparent to Ju-Hai that his only recourse to regaining the family estates is to turn to the Jade Lady and magic. He has to learn a lot more about shamans and the world of spirits in order to succeed, and not incidentally survive in the desert after he and his father decamp from the army.

Aside from a regrettable tendency to overuse the expression 'Manure' or 'Dung' (or variations thereof) as a cuss-word, this novel is a fascinating venture into ancient China, and the insights into Chinese philosophy and mysticism are particularly good. The characters are fully developed with a sense of humor and the pacing is a fast speed. It is a pity that Mr. Price didn't start writing novels earlier but he seems to be making up for lost time. With the emphasis on fantasy and magic the novel joins his first endeavor; THE DEVIL WIVES OF LI FONG (also published by Ballantine) as an entry in the genre that is truly different. The only writer comparable is Van Gulic with his Judge Dee series of mystery novels-- also in ancient China.

I wish I had the background in order to judge the historical accuracy, but it somehow just feels right. You become totally engrossed in the settings of a culture that to most modern Western minds is totally alien. It is diverting to read a fantasy with some depth instead of the superficiality that passes for knowledge. This book finds a ready audience and it is well worth your time and attention.

wrb

TRON by Brian Daley, Random House (U.S.A.), and Ballantine (Canada) 1982, \$3.25, 173pp

This is an oddity any way you look at it. It is definitely science fiction/fantasy based on a new movie by the Disney organization intended for a general audience--not just teenagers and children. It also capitalizes on the preoccupation of the 1980's, that of video-games and computers. And so we have a book--a novel structured out of these disparate elements. In other words a linear program of printed words with no visual graphics other than your own imagination.

It is a tribute to the skill of writer Brian Daley (who also has worked on novelizations of Star Wars) that it works as well as it does.



Science-fiction has been called the game-playing literature. War game freaks are usually s.f. fans as well. There has been a great deal of publicity to the effect that the movie will usher in a new era of computer simulations for entertainment purposes. Somehow, I don't feel this will be the case. It is true that there will be a revolution in using computers for engineering special effects as in STAR WARS and THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, but as far as continually watching computer animation on the screen, I remain dubious.

Be that as it may, this movie is certainly a unique example of its kind and will no doubt find a wide audience, possibly being the biggest hit the Disney organization has had in some time.

The plot involves a man who is an expert programmer and video-game aficionado who is literally sucked into a micro-chip world of energy grids and patterns. In the real world, he was approached by a computer expert named Alan Bradley who cannot get access to one of his own programs. Kevin Flynn soon finds out that he is dealing with a conspiracy abetted by the head of the corporation (originally known as Dillinger-- you would have thought they could have come up with a better name for a villain than that!) At any rate, when Flynn breaks into the building he does not realize the circuitry to the program has been booby-trapped in a way no one dreamed possible. When he enters the electronic world, he has two missions-- to survive the gladiatorial combat, and to somehow regain the normal world. Everyone inside the game is a counterpart of someone existing in the outside world. Flynn soon meets up with the doppelganger of Alan Bradley who is a legend at personal combat and is known as 'Tron'. The dictator of this mini-world is the spitting image of Dillinger and is called 'Sark'. He is not in total control, however, and owes allegiance to the Master Control Program. A complete society has evolved with its own rules and its own religion. Battles occur at fantastic speed across a surrealistic landscape made up of geometric forms. There is a love interest between Tron and Yori just as there is between Alan and Lora in the 'other' world.

As a science-fiction novel it moves quickly and is certainly imagination plus. It is average as far as S.F. goes, however, because the characters lack real depth as people. You never really quite believe in them. Whether the book or



the movie works best, I cannot say, but the book is capable of putting you in the picture, and what more can anyone ask of a novelization of a motion picture script?

Had this book just been an S.F. novel, I am sure it would have sold well among the fans of the genre. As a book and a movie it should do very big business indeed. A curiosity, but an interesting and entertaining curiosity.

wrb

CONAN THE BARBARIAN, by L Sprague de Camp and Lin Carter, Bantam Books (U.S.A. and Canada), 1982, \$2.50, 181pp

Sword and sorcery novels are like trips to Egypt--a fascinating place to visit, perhaps, but you would not want to live there. If you do intend to visit, however, you could do worse than the grand-daddy of them all in the person of Conan. The barbarian-warrior was created by the late Robert Howard, who disappointingly does not seem to be mentioned in the credits for this novelization. Howard, after creating several other memorable characters for the pulp magazines of the 1930's died at an early age--a suicide who felt he really did not belong in the present century. Now a multi-million dollar movie has been produced starring former body builder Arnold Schwarzenegger and James Earl Jones. We may expect Conan-mania to break out this year if the picture is at all a success. From the brief clips I have viewed so far, it does look impressive, but it must be remembered it is from the same people who gave us the remake of KING KONG and FLASH GORDON-- both of which were only moderately successful at the box office. At least for the novelization of the movie, the publishers have chosen two pros in the fantasy field. L. Sprague de Camp is well known for his science-fiction and fantasy stories, as is Lin Carter, and they have both collaborated on Conan

literary efforts well before the current interest. Basically what you have is a macho-male fantasy, but not nearly as objectionable as the Gor novels-- well hated by many S. F. fans.

At least Conan is not nearly the Chauvanist that the characters in the Gor novels are. He seems quite willing to let women be equals as long as they are able to stand the pace. Conan's period is approximately 12,000 years ago, anyway when the lost continent of Atlantis was still around, so his attitudes are understandable. Basically, the plot line could be taken from a Western-- Conan seeking to avenge the murder of his parents by the head of a snake cult. He grows to adulthood in slavery and becomes a gladiator. Actually, although there is killing in the novel, the level of violence appears to be relatively low. It is certainly highly cinematic in descriptiveness. It is full of non-stop action and is diverting if you have not been able to see the movie. I wonder how they are going to handle some of the scenes dealing with snakes. Somehow, it is easier to read about them than to see them in full color on the wide screen. For aficionados of the genre, this is a workmanlike job of converting one medium to another. Now, when are they going to make a movie of RED SONJA or VAMPARELLA?

wrb

CENTAUR AISLE by Piers Anthony Random House (U.S.A.) and Ballantine Books (Canada) 1982, \$3.25, 294pp

The strange thing about Piers Anthony is that for such a prolific writer of science-fiction and fantasy, he is virtually ignored by many fans and seems to be lost in the shuffle. I know that I have not read a lot of his books, even though I am familiar with him as a writer. This book is the fourth in his series about the land of Xanth (a lovely name, that-- it gives me a rare opportunity to use the Capital

X on my typewriter).

As in many other fantasy lands, the thing about Xanth (according to the map in the front of the book, it suspiciously resembles Florida where the author lives), is that magic and myth are staples of everyday life. The unique thing is that Xanth natives each have different magical talents. The nearest neighboring land is Mundania, where magic does not work at all. A person leaving Xanth can drop into Mundania at any historical period making them very difficult to locate. The hero, Dor, is the next Magician-King designate. He does not want the job, however, as it involves, among other things, granting audiences to decaying zombies. His talent is that he can make normally inanimate objects talk to him (actually that sounds perfect for a potential politician). The daughter of the King is crazy about him, but he has mixed feelings about her. The King, Good King Trent, decides to embark on a mission to Mundania, along with the Queen, who regards Dor with a jaundiced eye at the best of times. When the King and Queen do not return on schedule, it is obviously a case of something having gone dreadfully wrong. Dor is left with accepting being King years before he is ready to do so, or else going after the King and ending up with the same problems that are preventing him from returning. The centaurs in Xanth appear to be the intellectual elite, and Dor takes one of them with him, as well as the King's daughter, Irene, a golem and an ogre. Although they believe King Trent has left some cryptic clues to his whereabouts and is somewhere in Medieval (an evil Middle Age) period, they overshoot and find themselves in a period known as 'America-Modern'. Immediately, they have problems-- for one thing-- how do they smuggle Arnolde, the centaur-historian into a public library so he can learn the truth about where and when they are? A spell seems to be in order, but will their magic work in Mundania? When they do find the right period, circa 650 A.D., other problems arise when they find the King is being held prisoner by a tyrant.

It seems that in dealing with fantasy, you can go two ways-- the grimly serious approach or the light humorous approach. Most authors go the first way, as it is a lot easier to write, it takes much more skill to go the second way and have it work. As may be judged from the title, CENTAUR AISLE is full of outrageous puns and unusual situations. A little of this can go a long way, and it is to the author's credit that he doesn't overload the humorous aspect and

thereby lose track of his plot. The hardest part to swallow is the talking furniture, but after a while you get used to it. After all, Lewis Carroll used the same approach, and ALICE IN WONDERLAND is considered a classic. I was not familiar with earlier books, but found it to be unnecessary, as this one stands on its own merit. It did make me curious about the others, however, which is what a series should do.

All in all, if you enjoy fantasy and a light touch, you will certainly enjoy this book a lot. It polls apart from Tolkien, Thomas Covenant, and Gormenghast (right spelling?), but creates a coherent fantasy world nevertheless. Great for an entertaining diversion.

wrb

FEVRE DREAM by George R. R. Martin, Poseidon Press, published by Pocket Books, a Simon&Schuster division of Gulf and Western, \$14.95, 350pp

I saw the ad for this book and immediately thought "Aw, it can't be that good!", but since it was by George R. R. Martin, I thought it was worth looking at.

I've never been much of a Mark Twain fan, nor have I dreamed about piloting a riverboat. Trapeze flying and jet plane piloting are my kind of thing. And I actively dislike the Stephen King genre. So the dust jacket blurb quoting Roger Zelazny saying that Martin has written a novel to delight fans of both Stephen King and Mark Twain put me off totally.

But the book is about Vampires! George R. R. Martin is not Stephen King at all, though he might be Mark Twain in themaking. It couldn't be as bad as it sounded, and after all, don't the blurbs on the jackets of my books sound like a cross between Stephen King and Gor? After all these years of loving vampire novels, I wasn't going to be put off by any blurb!

So I read it. Could not put it down! Was on the edge of my seat over the detailed descriptions of riverboat racing. Snapped at people who tried to talk to me. Howled over the concept of not being able to find your own steamboat when it's the biggest one on the Mississippi. And was held spellbound by the character of Joshua York, the 'good' vampire, certainly the equal of Yarbro's Saint Germain, though younger. Could not find any horror elements in the book, though icy things do happen.

I enjoyed the book. I recommended it for a Nebula. And I'm recommending it to people who like my Sime/Gen

books with only one caution- there's a scene missing that I would have written into the book- but that would have made it another book.

FEVRE DREAM is about the struggles of a young vampire orphaned very early in life who grows up in human slums as a street person and nevertheless believes that killing is wrong. He studies and learns enough science to develop an elixir which can substitute for the thirst for living blood. And then he searches out others of his kind, gets them to live on this elixir and not kill, while hatching a scheme to open a bridgehead of friendship between humans and his people.

His people are dying out, probably because the women die in childbirth. Perhaps human medicine can find a way to save them, and human doctors might even do it, if vampires didn't kill humans.

But he's forced prematurely into confessing his nature to a human, Abner Marsh, captain of the riverboat Fevre Dream, (a most colorful and deeply drawn character who is the viewpoint character throughout, though it is Joshua York's story). Simultaneously, York is forced to confront an older and stronger, and thoroughly evil leader of vampires, Jamon Julian.

A friendship based on honor develops between York and his human confidant, who ends up making a heartrending sacrifice so that York may perhaps prevail.

The 'missing scene' that would have been there had I written this story is the scene where Marsh, from purely human motives, freely offers York his blood. But Martin's vampire physiology and psychology are such that the scene could not be written and still keep York a non-killer.

The only structural flaw in this book that I could find is that it is York's story- York's success or failure climaxes the plot- but it is Abner Marsh's point of view. Marsh's story should culminate in his decision to aid the vampire or pursue his personal goal of winning a steamboat race. He makes the decision about the race long before he confronts the last decision about aiding the vampire. And so for me, the book lost just a little power from what it might have been.

But I'm not sure I'd want it to be any more powerful. It's not nice to snarl at your family just because they're hungry.

j1

FAMILIAR MYSTERIES: THE TRUTH IN MYTH by Shirley Park Lowry, Oxford University Press, 1982, \$19.95 339 pp

This is a book about the WHY of myth rather than any particular mythology. As the author, a disciple of Joseph Campbell, says in her introduction: "Many myths embody a peoples' perception of the deepest truths, those truths that give purpose, direction, MEANING to the people's life. That myths use concrete symbols to express abstractions accounts for their unrealistic trappings. That they often embody the essence of our experience accounts for their power, What makes a myth important is how it guides our personal lives, supports or challenges a specific social order, makes our physical world a manageable place, or helps us accept life's mysteries--including misfortune and death--with serenity."

However fantastic in content, myths have their roots in the realities of experience--the precariousness of life, the fear (and necessity) of death, the fear of disorder, the inevitable conflict between parent and maturing child. Lowry examines a wide variety of myths and shows how the universal symbols for life and death, cosmos and chaos, grow inevitably out of man's psychic life and his perceptions of the natural world. She treats myths both famous and obscure, ranging from GILGAMESH to STAR WARS (the latter convincingly presented as a specifically American interpretation of Judeo-Christian eschatology). The book is aimed at the general reader (who is presumed to be both educated and intelligent) and is lucid, humane, balanced, extremely well written, and deeply moving. It does for myth what Bruno Bettelheim's THE USES OF ENCHANTMENT does for fairy tales--except that it is a better book, Lowry, unlike Bettelheim, is not confined to a Freudian interpretation. The book is of particular interest and value to readers of sf and fantasy, both genres whose kinship to myth is now commonplace observation. Very highly recommended.

ajb

NIGHT VISION by Frank King, Tor Books, 1982, \$2.95 283 pp (reprint of a 1979 hardcover)

THE FORSAKEN by Cameron Read, Tor Books, 1982, \$2.95, 343 pp.

Here we have a pair of recent, unsuccessful horror novels. The former is a tale of bizarre dreams, compulsive violence, and psychological horror. The latter is a more conventional tale of a haunted house, with strange manifestations and things that go

bump in the night. Unfortunately neither novel conveys much of a mood of horror to the reader.

King's novel is well composed as far as syntax, character development, and such purely mechanical elements, but the story fails to maintain the reader's attention, jumping from character to character, each of whom is so warped in some aspect of his or her character that empathy never really develops. The action is so greatly dependant upon the metaphysical events that the plot itself fails to provide any real sense of continuity.

THE FORSAKEN has the opposite problem. The story, although fairly standard, is well conceived for the most part, but the writing is so stylistically unsophisticated that it jars, often seems awkward and contrived. The characters have little independent life from the plot, and the supernatural incidents involved are so routine that the reader interest flags almost immediately.

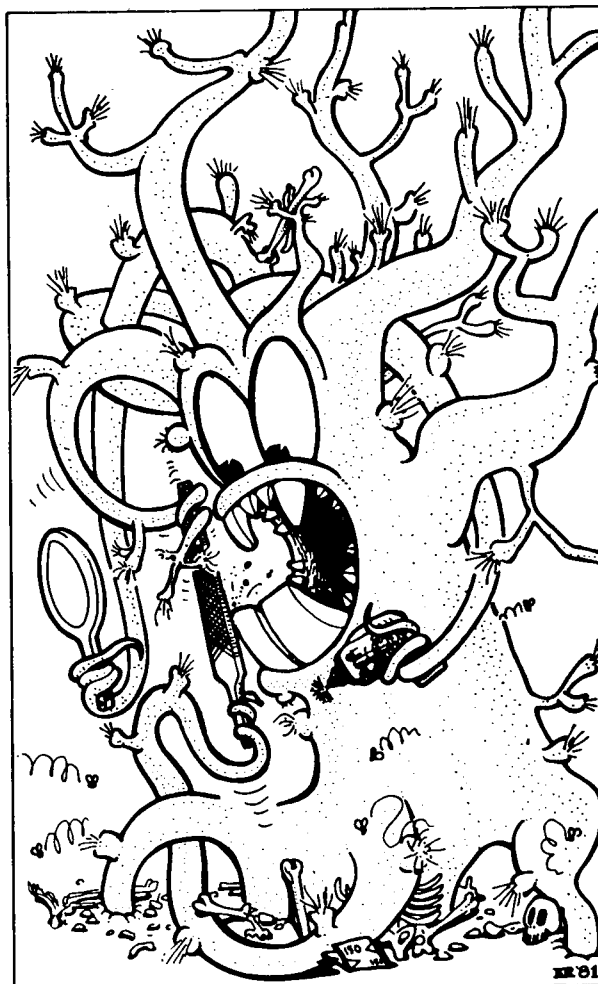
dd'am

THE AZRIEL UPRISING by Allyn Thompson Bantam Books, 1982 \$2.50, 181 pp

FORBIDDEN SANCTUARY by Richard Bowker Del Rey Books, 1982, \$2.50 203pp

Here are two first novels that are as dissimilar as any I've read in close juxtaposition in some time. Thompson's is a story of a Russian conquered America, with scattered guerilla groups trying to find the leverage to overthrow the invaders and regain control of North America. The Bowker is about an alien vessel that arrives on Earth, its first contact with another human race, and the problems that the intermingling causes.

The former is a fast paced action story with ruthless elimination of spies, furious battles, little consideration of the moral issues involved, only the most superficial characterizations, and a suitably climactic ending. The latter is slow paced, contemplative, with what little action there is taking place mostly off stage. The characters are integral to the plot and drawn with reasonable depth (particularly that of the Pope), the central issue is



the moral position of the Roman Catholic Church when it is asked for sanctuary by a member of the alien crew, and the ending is clear but understated, and leaving much room for thought.

In case it isn't obvious, *FORBIDDEN SANCTUARY* is by far the superior book. Thompson's novel is about as involving as a war comic, and the endless stream of menaces and attacks rapidly become boring. Bowker, on the other hand, raises a number of complex ethical questions, and faces them fairly forthrightly. It's not a great novel, but it's a good one, where *AZRIEL UPRISING* is merely another potboiler.

dd'am

TAROTOWN by Bruce Jones, Leisure Books, 1982, \$2.50, 234 pp

THE UNFORGIVING by Eva Zumwalt, Tower Books, 1982, \$2.95, 336 pp

THE WITCHING by Colin John, Tower Books, 1982, \$3.25, 331 pp

GOLEM by Barbara Anson, Leisure Books, 1982, reprint of 1978 original \$1.50, 184 pp

PLAYMATES by J. N. Williamson, Leisure Books, 1982, \$2.95, 303 pp

Tower and Leisure, both imprints of the same publishing house, I believe, have turned very heavily into supernatural horror recently, publishing far more in that genre than in science fiction. Since the general quality of their science fiction titles have been terrible, it is perhaps surprising that their occult and horror fiction, though certainly not outstandingly good, is at least comparable to that of the major paperback houses.

J.N. Williamson has written over a dozen such novels in the last few years, becoming one of the most prolific (if not the highest quality) writers in the field. *PLAYMATES* is, however, one of his better novels. Although there is a certain amount of gore, for the most part this is a novel of Irish legend which derives most of its suspense from things left left unsaid rather than those explicitly stated. It succeeds quite well at what it sets out to do.

GOLEM is an intriguing novel. A young man is convinced that his father, a Rabbi, was murdered by a cult of devil worshippers. Using his access to a highly sophisticated government computer, he inputs all of the legends of the Jewish golem and computes the true formula, with which he creates the legendary creature. Unfortunately he doesn't know how to control it, and although it carries out his wishes, he too falls prey to the Frankenstein syndrome.

TAROTOWN is a sort of sexy, supernatural version of *THE STEPFORD WIVES*. In this case, a new housing development seems to have far too high a proportion of attractive young women in it. A psychic investigator arrives after a series of gruesome hallucinations to unearth a lesbian occultist with delusions of grandeur. Although not as strong as the two novels mentioned above, it is competently handled.

THE UNFORGIVING, on the other hand, is an extremely good novel, set for the most part in the late nineteenth century. It is a ghost story in the classic manner, restrained, understated, horrifying by implication rather than deed. In fact, there is not even a death until well after the 200th page. Zumwalt (never previously published to my knowledge) has done nothing new, but she has created a cast of characters, some likable, some thoroughly detestable, and set them in opposition to



supernatural forces from a time now past. It is one of the better novels I've read recently.

Last, but certainly not least, we have *THE WITCHING*. This is a murder mystery set in the Pennsylvania Dutch country against a background of hexcraft and extraordinary mental powers. In rapid succession two practitioners of hexerei are found murdered, one the victim of arson, the other bludgeoned to death. There are plentiful suspects and diverting intrigues, a reasonably good cast of characters including a deputy sheriff who steals the stage from the protagonist, and a fairly smooth moving and interesting plot. On balance then, it is clear that what ever shortcomings this publisher may have in choosing straight science fiction, are not carried over into the selection of supernatural novels. The last two mentioned are, in particular, well worth having.

dd'am

THE HUNGER by Whitley Strieber, Pocket Books, 1981 \$2.95, 307 pp

Whitley Strieber, author of the very fine modernized werewolf story, *THE WOLFEN*, has turned his hand to the vampire in this very fine new horror novel. It has a number of striking similarities to Suzy McKee Charnas' *THE VAMPIRE TAPESTRY*, particularly with regard to their portrayal of the vampire as not particularly supernatural being, but more as a super predator upon humanity.

Miriam Blaylock is the vampire in this case, a woman who has survived for centuries, and may be the last of her kind, although she devotes much of her energy to seeking to transform selected mortals to her immortal state. She must be cautious, however, for unlike the vampire of legend, she is vulnerable to guns and other weapons. Strieber has added a bizarre aspect of the fate of failed immortals that I won't spoil for the reader. It doesn't work entirely, but nevertheless contains considerable impact.

As with the Charnas book, the main attraction is the personality of the vampire. As ruthless as Blaylock is, she retains traces of human vulnerability, particularly noticeable in the flashbacks to her earlier life. By the latter half of the novel, it is clear that even the author has developed an affection for his creation. One of the best supernatural novels of 1981.

dd'am

THE COMPLETE ROBOT by Isaac Asimov, Doubleday Books, 1982, \$19.95, 557 pp

Here are 31 stories, apparently the total of all the robot stories Isaac Asimov ever wrote, in a single volume, excluding the novels, almost none of which are below par. Asimov in shorter form was at his consistent best with the robots, and those who have missed *I, ROBOT* and *THE REST OF THE ROBOTS* should act now, for the contents of both those earlier collections are included here.

The stories are grouped into sections, one devoted to Powell and Donovan and their early attempts to deal with robotic psychology, as well as the far superior Susan Calvin stories. Some of the stories are not a part of the positronic brain sequence, but are included as well. The stories span Asimov's career as well, ranging from 1941 to 1976.

It is difficult to pick out individual stories because of Asimov's consistent approach, but "the Bicentennial Man", "Reason", "Escape" and "Galley Slave" are

certainly among the very best stories Asimov has written. Most are puzzle stories, their resolution hinging upon the unravelling of one or another ingenious logical device. A few are relatively slight, such as the perennially reprinted "Robbie", "Light Verse", and a few others, but most provide sufficient meat to be worthwhile. Long time readers will find nothing of particular note that they haven't already encountered, but this is an ideal volume for someone just discovering the field.

dd'am

THE PURGATORY ZONE by Arsen Darnay, Ace Books, 1981, \$2.50, 240 pp

The latest novel from Arsen Darnay is extremely disappointing. The world called the Kibbutz zone is a Utopian society where man has learned to renounce war and the more costly forms of aggression. Most people pass through a rite of passage in early adulthood that admits them to a telepathic community that supports and reinforces this atmosphere. A few incorrigibles (known as retrogrades) are given an opportunity either to adjust, or to visit a time van and be transported to an alternate time some where they can act out their desires.

Ravi Shannon is one such retrograde who decides to travel to the Purgatory Zone, an alternate world in which the United States has developed into a vicious caste system, and violence and imprisonment are an everyday fact of life. Shortly after his arrival, he runs afoul of the authorities and is in serious danger from one or another source from that point on.

I'm giving away the ending here, so don't read on if you worry about that sort of thing. I doubt that anyone could read more than a quarter of the novel without realizing that there is no such thing even within the context of the book as parallel time zones. It's an artificially induced dream state used as a form of therapy. The major problem with the novel is that there are so many obvious paradoxes, one either realizes the trip is an illusion, or concludes that the author is boring in any case, and Shannon's escapes are all engineered from without. Darnay has been very entertaining in the past, but THE PURGATORY ZONE flops.

dd'am

VOORLOPER by Andre Norton, Ace Books, 1980, \$6.95, 267 pp

The latest other worlds adventure novel from Andre Norton is one of the best of her recent efforts,

enlivened by a large number of effective illustrations by Alicia Austin.

Voor is a fairly primitive world, its colonists more jealous of their personal freedom than the material benefits available elsewhere. But it is not a world without danger; increasingly the northern settlements are mysteriously disappearing, the inhabitants slain or missing, with only an occasional young child surviving.

Bart S'lorn is one such child, now a young man travelling with his father as a loper, a homeless wanderer unwilling to settle in a single locale. When his father dies in an accident, Bart and a young healer, Illo, continue their journey into the north, determined to discover the mystery of their own survival, and the deaths of their settlements.

Norton is at her best in this kind of story, with a small number of people wandering across uninhabited landscape. VOORLOPER is another of her novels in which evidence of the Forerunners, a dead interstellar civilization that preceded humanity, surfaces. It is a low key but rewarding adventure story as well with that fine touch for exotic settings that she displayed so often in the past.

dd'am

A FOND FAREWELL TO DYING, by Syd Logsdon, Pocket Books, 1981, \$2.50, 206 pp

Following a devastating nuclear war, India and a new Mideastern country known as Medina become the only major powers left on Earth. Mankind is becoming increasingly scarce, as infertility has become the major preoccupation of science. David Singer, a refugee from the primitive culture of North America, becomes a citizen of India, so that he can pursue his researches into cloning.

Unfortunately, the political situation is not particularly conducive. India has developed a space station that will give them the edge over Medina, but its use is one of the sources of controversy between two major factions in the Indian government. The present head of state is determined to use the scientific facilities available to repair the massive damage done to his grandson's body in an air raid ordered for political purposes.

Singer is caught in the middle of the power struggle, while simultaneously pursuing his study as a means to achieving personal immortality through personality transfer. And his lover Shashi, has increased the tension by insisting that such a transfer would create

only a soulless copy, not a continuation of the original.

Logsdon has made a major effort at tackling the ambitious themes of this novel. In the large part, he has succeeded, although the lack of depth in his presentation of the post-holocaust cultures weakens the effect. The moral questions he raises, (as well as the religious ones) are the kind which really have no answers, and he has the sense not to provide half baked ones. This was not a major success, but it was interesting enough that I am looking forward to his next effort.

dd'am

FIREBIRD by Charles L. Harness, Pocket Books, 1981, \$2.25, 207 pp

Charles Harness has created an almost Hamiltonian space opera in his newest novel, a story that plays with all of time and space, yet has no human beings as characters. Largo and Czandra are two computers which are actually sentient beings, entities linked through various non-physical means determined to preserve their own existence past the theoretical end of the universe.

To this end, they have enslaved virtually every organic intelligence in the universe. Each race is bred with a biological structure in their brains which makes them susceptible to control by the computers. To upset the flow of entropy, the computers ruthlessly destroy myriad star systems, having calculated that the loss of so much mass would make it impossible for the outflung galaxies to ever fall back upon themselves.

Sprinkle this background with a small but determined resistance group, a pair of star crossed lovers, a fabulous spaceship, and a number of other contrivances, and you have an epic space opera. But it's a hollow one. The characters never really live, the computers and their projected alteration of the nature of the universe are always remote. The book is rather empty and fails to hold at least this readers interest.

dd'am

OZYMANDIAS by Thomas F. Monteleone, Doubleday Books, 1981, \$10.95, 179pp

This is the sequel to Monteleone's earlier GUARDIAN, set in a post collapse world where a sentient computer dwells alone in a desert until found by an expedition from one of several re-emerging nation states. At the beginning of this volume, Guardian has itself (himself?) incarnated in a human body and sets forth with his immortal robot sidekick on a quest to discover the meaning of life.

The plot summary sounds mildly silly, which is a bit of a disservice. Although the man/machine transformation never struck me as very credible, once you leaped past that chapter, the novel unfolds in an entertaining, reasonably plausible fashion. OZYMANDIAS, as he dubs himself, is unwillingly lead into leading a religious revival. At the same time he is recognized by the more mundane power

more mundane powers as a service of unimaginable powers, and is virtually enslaved in anticipation of a major war.

This is certainly only an installment in the series, for the ending is ambiguous and indicates that there is more to come. Readers who dislike serials would be better off waiting to see if Monteleone sums everything up in the third book, because they are sure to be dissatisfied after the first two. As an adventure writer, Monteleone is steadily improving, but he has yet to set out an outstanding novel.

dd'am

BOOKS RECEIVED

VALENTINE BOOKS 1982

THE HEAVEN MAKERS by Frank Herbert
THE MYSTERIOUS PLANET by Lester del Rey
ELFIN SHIP by James T. Blaylock
VOYAGE FROM YESTERYEAR by James P. Hogan
THE DEVIL WILL DRAG YOU UNDER by Jack L. Chalker
SIX OF SWORDS by Carol Nelson Douglas
OUTPOST OF JUPITER by Lester del Rey
STAR BRIDGE by Jack Williamson and James E. Gunn
TIME'S DARK LAUGHTER by James Kahn
THE COMPLETE POEMS OF RAY BRADBURY by Ray Bradbury
MOON OF MUTINY by Lester del Rey
THE THRALL AND THE DRAGON'S HEART by Elizabeth Blyer
STEN by Allen Cole and Chris Bunch
NORTH CRYSTAL TIERS by Allen Deen Foster
ERIC JOHN STARK; OUTLAW OF MARS by Leigh Brackett
THE JEDI MASTER'S QUIZ BOOK by Rustin Miller
CHARON; A DRAGON AT THE GATE by Jack L. Chalker
BEDLAMB PLANET by John Brunner
DAISY by Edgar Pangborn
DEVILISH THE DAMNED by Roger Zelazny
QUEEN OF SORCERYS by David Eddings
SPECIAL DELIVERANCE by Clifford D. Simak
SHAKESPEARE'S PLANET by Clifford D. Simak

THE PIRATES OF ROSINANTE by Alexis A. Gilliland
THE DRAMATURGES OF YON by John Brunner
UNDERSEA QUEST by Fred Pohl and Jack Williamson
THE CURSE OF THE WITCHQUEEN by Paula Volsky

VALENTINE BOOKS 1983

NIGHT MARE by Piers Anthony
OPERATION LONGLIFE by E. Hausman Price
THE WEBS OF EVERYWHERE by John Brunner
THE SWORD OF BHELEU by Laurence Watt-Evans
UNDERSEA FLEET by Fred Pohl and Jack Williamson
WALL AROUND A STAR by Fredrick Pohl and Jack Williamson
FURTEST STAR by Fredrick Pohl and Jack Williamson
THE DISAPPEARING DWARF by James P. Blaylock
TIMES WITHOUT NUMBER by John Brunner
A TAPESTREY OF MAGICS by Brian Daley
THE FOUNDATION TRILOGY by Isaac Asimov, revised edition
FOUNDATION, FOUNDATION AND EMPIRE
SECOND FOUNDATION
THE WALLS OF AIR by Barbara Hambly
THE UNBEHEADED KING by L. Sprague de Camp
SECTOR GENERAL by James White
THE LOVE OF MOTHER-NOT by Allen Deen Foster



WHITE GOLD WIELDER by Stephen R. Donaldson
THE ONE TREE by Stephen R. Donaldson
MEDUSA; A TIGER BY THE TAIL by Jack L. Chalker
THE BLUE HAWK by Peter Dickensen
NAGASAKI VECTOR by L. Niel Smith
THE WAY TO DAWNWORLD; A FARSTAR AND SON NOVEL by Bill Star
JUXTAPOSITION by Piers Anthony
GRIFFON IN GLORY by Andre Norton
THE SHADOW OF THE SHIP by Robert Wilfred Franson
SPACEANGEL by John Madix Roberts.
THE TREASURE OF WONDERWHAT; A FARSTAR AND SON NOVEL by Bill Star
THE UNFORSAKEN HERO by Sterling E. Lanier
STAR WARS: RETURN OF THE JEDI by James Kahn
ERIDANN by Robert F. Young
LIFE PROBE by Michael McCollum
MAGICIAN'S GAMBIT by David Eddings
CODE OF THE LIFE MAKER by James P. Hogan
THE MANY-COLORED LAND by Julian May
THE ARMIES OF DAYLIGHT by Barbara Hambly
CITY AT WORLD'S END by Edmond Hamilton
HALF PAST HUMAN by T.J. Bass
THE GODWHALE by T.J. Bass
WHERE THE NI-LACH by Marcy J. Benett
FRIDAY by Robert A. Heinlein
ICE PROFFET by William R. Forstchen
LEST DARKNESS FALL by L. Sprague de Camp

MIDWORLD by Allen Dean Foster
THE WIZARD AND THE WARLORD by Elizabeth Blyer
THE SWORD AND THE SACHEL by Elizabeth Blyer

TIME-LIFE BOOKS

VOLCANO edited by George G. Daniels and the editors of Time-Life books

ARCO PUBLISHING

LAZERS: LIGHTWAVE OF THE FUTURE by Allan Maurer
ROBOTS; REEL TO REAL by Barbara Kasnoff
ENERGY FOREVER; POWER FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW by George de Lucenay Leon

PRENICE-HALL

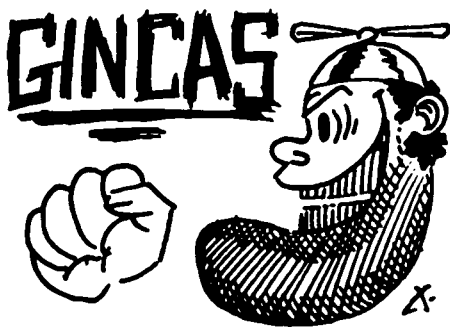
MORE NUMBER PUZZLES by Kenneth Kelsey
NATURE WITH CHILDREN OF ALL AGES by Edith A. Sisson

STONEHENGE PUBLISHING

DISCOVERING ENERGY by Frank Frazer

FAR SIDE BOOKS (published by Simon And Schuster)

THE WAY THE NEW TECHNOLOGY WORKS by Ken Marsh



King Tolkien

THE STAND is subtitled by its publisher "a novel of ultimate horror." It is indeed this, but it is more. It is Stephen King's first attempt at an epic novel; as such, it is influenced by a book he mentions several times in the course of his novel, that being J.R.R. Tolkien's THE LORD OF THE RINGS.

Whereas Tolkien's novel is an epic in the classical tradition, rich in imagery, poetry, and mythology, THE STAND is contemporary, written in King's characteristic style, realistic in setting, with characters who are a cross-section of society. There is no attempt to emulate Tolkien's style (just as King's THE SHINING, influenced by Poe, did not seek to imitate the poet's literary manner). The influence of Tolkien is in the framework he has provided, one in which an incarnate figure of evil lives and seeks dominion over all men. Against his vast powers, brave men gather and finally undertake a hazardous quest into the Enemy's own land to destroy him.

The unusual structure of THE STAND, in which the first third appears almost to be a separate novel, is best understood in the Tolkienian frame. This is the terrifying account of the devastation of the nation by a virulent strain of bacteria developed in secret bacteriological warfare laboratories and inadvertently released into the open; most of the population dies and, in the aftermath, the novel swings onto a new course, wherein the survivors are influenced by either of two potent and mysterious figures: Mother Abigail, as personification of Good, and Randall Flagg, as Evil.

The two parts of the book become one if the first is seen as King's version of the horrifying events which must precede the birth of a toweringly evil figure, thus a prelude to the epic which will be the

heart of the novel.

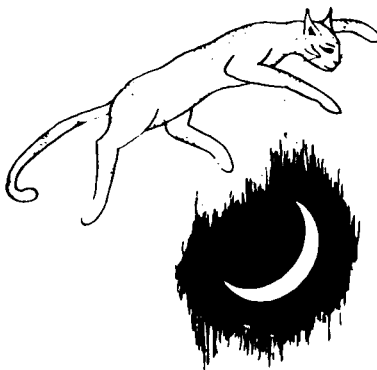
Tolkien's figure of evil is "that dark Lord, arisen again," Sauron, "greatest of the servants of Melkor," the latter being Tolkien's paraphrase of the Biblical Satan. As he returns, Sauron chooses to dwell in dark, mountainous Mordor. King's equivalent is the "dark man," Flagg, first seen as a sort of vagabond in Idaho, but heading toward his future headquarters atop a tower in Las Vegas. He too is reborn, and appears to have had different identities and even differently colored skins. His own "time for transfiguration was at hand." Each arises after a period of terror and turmoil.

Each gathers an army. "Mordor draws all wicked things, and the Dark Power was bending its will to gather them there." Flagg calls across the land in their dreams all men and women to join him, and the malcontents, like Sauron's "orcs, trolls, wargs, and werewolves...and many men, warriors, and kings," flock to him.

Each seeks power. Sauron's plans await the recovery of the One Ring of Power, while Flagg takes time to develop an army and air force to attack his enemies.

Opponents gather. Frodo, Sam, Merry, and Pippin - four Hobbits - leave their homes to undertake the Quest of entering Mordor, there to destroy the evil enemy. Similarly, four men in Boulder, safe haven of those who have chosen to follow Abigail, go west into the desert: Larry, Stuart, Glen, and Ralph.

Each group discovers horror in the powers of their enemy as well as from traitors; also, each gains aid from courageous friends, even from a mythic person after his apparent death: thus both Sauron and Flagg create terror by their ability to search the earth as a solitary Eye, while aid comes from Aragorn/Strider



to the four Hobbits and from Tom Cullen to the four men, with supernatural help coming from Gandalf and Nick Andros respectively. And the traitors: Harold Launder, envious and petty, attempts to murder the Boulder leadership, escapes, and dies on the route to Flagg, betrayed in turn by him; and Saruman the White, seeking for himself the power of the Ring, betrays those who trust him, thinks himself free, as did Harold, but is in truth controlled by Sauron and is eventually slain.

And, each hopelessly lost in his own fantasies, there lies in each book a character among the most fascinating in the panoply which inhabits them: for King, it is Donald Merwin Elbert, the Trashcan Man; and for Tolkien, Smeagol, known as Gollum. Each roams the corridors of madness, relieved only by the fantastic strength of inner desires. Trashcan is gripped by a compulsion for the awesome power of fire and explosion; Smeagol, who had once been captive to Sauron, had owned and lost the Ring, and is consumed by a desire to regain it. Each plays his role around the periphery of his master, Flagg or Frodo, is held in cautious trust, and is, at the climax, influential in the crisis which caps each book. It is a triumph for Stephen King that he can achieve one of his wildest, most improbable, and yet seariy inevitable shocks in an oeuvre replete with them; for Tolkien, the use of the lonely, hated, and hating Gollum results at the moment of truth for Frodo in a scene of brilliant and dramatic psychological truth.

When the enemy has been vanquished, each author concludes with chapters devoted to the more mundane problems that the living must face as they rearrange their lives and homes to suit a new situation. In a final significant gesture, the heroes of each book leave their homes for places their hearts require. Stu and Fran leave Boulder for the

tranquility of Fran's native Maine; Frodo joins the Elves in the Far West, a place of enduring beauty.

It is not denigrating THE STAND to find its germ-plot in an acknowledged classic. It is completely independent and even powerful in its own right, a unique apocalyptic novel.

(Some of this material has appeared in a slightly different form in my essay "King and the Literary Tradition of Horror and the Supernatural," in FEAR ITSELF, edited and published by Tim Underwood and Chuck Miller.)

Ben Indick

I have finally read The Stand, which I found interesting, rather than enjoyable, and I think the ending seems logical if you think of it in terms of the Christian view of evil, as presented more explicitly in the novels of Charles Williams and C.S. Lewis..ie., that evil is not a power equal and opposite to good, but a perverted form of good, derivative and ultimately inferior. Thus Lewis's Martians, who were unfallen, had no word for evil in their language; the concept was expressed by "bent," which indicates a state of lapsed straightness rather than an original condition. Therefore, everything good, including existence itself, suffers diminution when corrupted to evil purpose. As the highest goods are love, intelligence, and free will, all will be defective or twisted among evil beings. Lewis and Williams both present visions of the private face of supreme evil as idiocy; and when Flagg impregnates Nadine, she sees his demon face with eyes "glaring and glinting and finally stupid." Long before the final confrontation, Flagg has been shown becoming, in his own eyes and those of his followers, increasingly flaky and less in control. He makes stupid decisions, like concealing from his chief henchman the information that would have made possible the capture of Tom Cullen, who escapes to play a crucial role on the side of Good. He reacts emotionally in ways that demolish his long-range plans, as when he kills Nadine. And he can no longer remember his own past.

As he is increasingly unfree, he is also no longer able to control others in his previous totally manipulative way. When people act freely, like the Boulder leaders coming unarmed into Las Vegas, he does not know how to react. And when Trash, who had been cast out for torching the pilots and who ought to be on the run, returns instead with the nuclear warhead, Flagg is thrown for a loss and completely unable to act at all, let alone keep his mind on the fireball he has created. As Nadine tells him just before he kills her, "The effective half-life of evil is always relatively short." All he can do is to assume his demon-shape and vanish before the bomb goes off.

Another point made by Lewis and Williams is that the natural world, as God's creation, often works to foil evil just by obeying the laws of its own nature, though evil powers can control it for a time. Thus the ball of electricity is presumably only operating naturally

when it is drawn to the electric cart with the warhead. As for Mike's suggestion that direct divine intervention is involved, King is deliberately ambiguous. The two Boulder leaders present perceive the electricity as taking the form of a hand--and it certainly has grown considerably with no reason given--but the author himself does not say that it is a hand. This ambiguity extends throughout the portrayal of good in the book. Flagg is definitely a supernatural being, but none of the abilities displayed by the good guys, including clairvoyant and precognitive dreams, healing, and even communication with the recently dead, are beyond human abilities--if we assume parapsychology's definition of those abilities.

The only problem with interpreting the book in this way is that the author, unlike the Inklings, does not make this view of the derivative nature of evil explicit in the book. My chief problem with it was in fact the portrayal of good; even Mother Abigail's religion is singularly joyless, unlike that in the Inklings, novels and, in fact, the actual religion of poor rural blacks, as anyone who recalls the TV coverage of the civil rights movement of the sixties knows. And the notion that she must do a terrible penance for what is after

all a pretty venial form of pride is unsound theologically, as is the belief expressed after the death of the Boulder leaders in Las Vegas that they were a required blood sacrifice. But since Mother Abigail is ultimately right, and since she is a

Christian, I think we can assume that King's more authentically Christian portrayal of evil is not accidental. I could say a lot more about the depiction of love and free will in the book, which would support my point, but I have already gone on long enough. The Stand is not an allegory; but I think that, as Frye says about the fantasy/romance form, a suggestion of allegory creeps in around the fringes.

Anne Janet Braude

APOLOGIES TO CORRESPONDANTS

We lost several other responses to Ed's remarks on Tolkien and King in #29. We told Braude who was able to re-create her remarks but do not remember who the other correspondants were. If we find the letters or they re-submit their remarks we will publish these in NIEKAS 32.



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AUSTRALIA

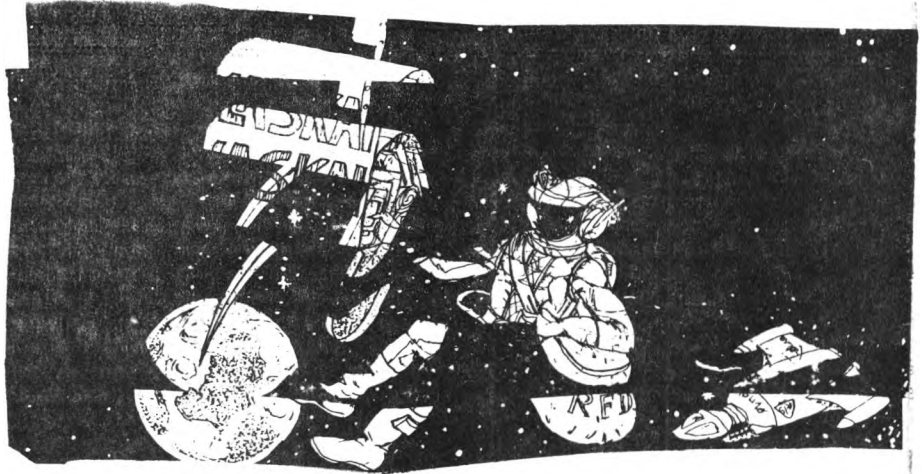
Thanks for NIEKAS 29 (I'm not sure that I like the idea of the title on the back page, too disconcerting for me), if only for Anne Braude's article on Romance; at last, a zine that doesn't play down to its readers.

I enjoyed the Fbx portfolio, though my favouriteillo thisish would have to be "Summer and Fall on the Miskatonic"--now that's weird! (But who is, it taking a dip in the inkwell?)

In "Mathoms" Anne Braude states, "Inspector Lestrade, in the Sherlock Holmes stories, is the archetypal [baffled policeman]... I must disagree; an earlier version is to be found in Edgar Allan Poe's tales of ratiocination (indeed, [these are] often acknowledged to be the first true detective stories): The Murders in the Rue Morgue, The Purloined Letter, and The Mystery of Marie Roget in the form of the somewhat obscure Monsieur G-----, who inevitably seeks the aid of C. Auguste Dupin and his detective faculties to solve the crimes. Braude's words stick me as remarkably familiar.

In another article (the "Romantic") Anne Braude's words strike me as remarkably familiar. She states, romance is not an image or an idea, but a feeling, a feeling that may grip us unawares at a strain of music; in many years upon the Spanish existentialist poet, novelist, and philosopher Miguel de Unamuno said, "In a commentary on David Ouxote, there are times when, on suspecting, we are suddenly seized, we know not how by whence, a vivid sense of our mortality which takes us without warning and quite unprepared. A sensation of annihilation, a supreme anguish (which) with a single stunning swoop, dashes us away--to recover into an awareness of the substance of things. Unamuno was describing the existentialist nightmare, but it strikes me that it has more than a little to do with man's yearning for the Romantic and the mythic, for they are only stylized examples of our own deepest feelings which can put together a

[Don D'Amassa] reviews Pogo's Anderson's winners remarking there are few authors who can put together a collection of award winning stories. Frankly, this was enough to put me off the book! I have found that award winning stories (specifically Hugo and Nebula winners) do not interest me, and are often inferior to much that has been published that year but ignored. Gene Wolfe's The



Island of Doctor Death and Other Stories, which failed to win an award through a procedural misunderstanding, is an example (though he has since, and justifiably, won). Books that receive a plethora of marketing hype on their release always turn me away (which is why Dunsen Wood failed to interest me) a I just know that, no matter how good the book is, it will never live up to the exorbitant claims of the publisher. I read a great deal and I prefer to read books that time and popularity have shown to be classics rather than the ones I am told in day-to-day letters are destined to be another Lord of the Rings. (The number of books that have had that claim displayed across them in recent years is horrendous.) As I have only ever read one Anderson book, and the stories therein struck me as remarkably similar to those of Washington although they had been published in the late '50s/early '60s, I read and concluded "No trace with kings" which fell down at the end--the deification of the society, and the mystery, were much better by themselves). Woodside NY 11377

Thomas M. Egan
60-261 43rd Avenue
Woodside NY 11377
Robert Mapson's research in his "Island of Doctor Death" leaves some rather surprising gaps. First, the book was her excellent research in "The Children of Tiamut" leaves some rather surprising gaps. First, the serpent-ment of the sculptural the first true strange monsters in Babylonian ziggurats called sirrush. This serpentine beast is surely the first true dragon to be depicted. Beryllant is then, Mr. Walker forgets, the famous Babble tale of Daniel and the dragon. The god-like dragon of An Babylon is destroyed by the poison-breath of the Hebrew prophet. The dragon-like monsters. Remember, Co And in Pre-Columbian American lore there was the Popul Vuh, the myths of a dragon-like monster of Remember, Me Co And in the Mother Serpent? How many human beings were sacrificed to her in the temples of Aztec/Mayan Mexico? Tens of thousands, perhaps

hundreds of thousands.

hundreds of thousands? Don't forget the current reports of "Nessie," the Loch Ness Monster! Surely, she's a lake-dragon, an' avay. There are many news-items of lake monsters of serpentine cast all over the world! Aren't the many reports of sea-serpents really surviving dragons?

Remember, too, that in his The Search for Frankenstein, Radu Florescu points out the fact that in c. 1530 there was a statue erected in Germany portraying the slaying of a "worm" dragon by a famous knight of the House of Frankenstein. (Dracula in the 15th century was the "son of the dragon.")

The Renaissance Fair every year at Sterling Forest, New Jersey (30 miles from NYC) shows giant puppet figures of the knight St. George and the vble dragon. I'm happy to report that again this year the dragon lost the fight--to the vast delight of the crowd.

Finally, at a local A&S department store, the former head of Disney Animation Studios, Tom Destasio, on August 25th created one fine dragon drawing for me--"Pete's Dragon"! I recommend Jean Dantel's new zine DRAGONLORE to all dragon-lovers. (PS--My dragon-article, "The Dragons of China," is in DRAGONLORE #2.)

George Flynn
27 Sowamsett Avenue
Warren RI 02885

Ed, I think the one thing that shocked me in [NIEKAS 30] was finding out that I read The Lord of the Rings before you did! (I was one of the people who read it as it came out in 1954-55 and had to wait months for the succeeding volumes. What torture!)

An interesting recent Arthurian novel that Marsha doesn't mention is Parke

Goodwin's Firelord: the now-usual authentic 5th-century background, with fantasy elements extremely minimal if they're there at all (it can all be interpreted as being in Arthur's mind, of which Merlin seems to be an aspect).

I agree with Dainis Bisenieks about Crowley's Little, Big, which is a marvelous book (in the full meaning of the word). Real fairies at the bottom of the garden, Frederick Barbarossa becoming President of the U.S., and much more--and it all hangs together! And as Dainis says, of course, beautifully written.

Suzette Haden Elgin
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Huntsville AR 72740

I've just had a chance to read [NIEKAS 30]. I know I told you last time I wrote that I was impressed, and that was true--I was very impressed. For this latest issue, however, I am in a quandary caused by the usual inadequacy of the English language as a mechanism for the expression of my perceptions. After you've said you're impressed, and thrown in a "very," where do you go lexically? I could say that I am "overwhelmed," and we would all giggle/snicker/throw up, depending on our various personal perspectives. I can take up a mode entirely inappropriate chronologically and tell you something like "Wow, is your dragon issue neat!" and we can all giggle/snicker/throw up. I can go all scholarly about the matter, and then I personally will choose the vomitus member of the predicate triplicate I've been slashing away at in this paragraph. I will therefore revert to the inadequate (and helpless) statement that (a) I like NIEKAS even better than I thought I did, and (b) the dragon issue impresses me even more than the previous issue did, and (c) you people do a truly remarkable job with your publication. Boy howdy, do we have a predicate anti-glut. (And you see what you get into when you start corresponding with linguists?) I will also point out, from the perspective of my own long experience with the publishing of all sorts of things, that I do NOT see how in the world you can afford to do what you do at the price you charge, especially when you send complimentaries to contributors as you do. Somebody on your staff (perhaps several somebodies, or allbodies) should trek off to Washington and straighten out the Reaganomics Massacre. Quickly, please, while there are still a few people eating.

Because I was responsible for several years for choosing the poetry pub-

lished in STAR LINE (the newsletter of the Science Fiction Poetry Association, at Box 491, Nantucket Island MA 02554), I am particularly impressed by such items as Anne Braude's poem "Dragons" on page 20. Not only is it witty, nicely calligraphed except for the blot at line six, and free of cliches except for those specifically introduced as a useful component of the wit--but it is a sonnet; its rhyme is impeccable in two languages; and gloriosky bodaciousness, it scans. (Line fourteen has a glitch, but Milton has done worse.) So much of the time a poetry editor is confronted with the following: free verse, which is just fine but becomes tiresome as one's total poetic diet; forms like the haiku (which isn't free verse, but will be lumped in with it by the readers, increasing the aforementioned tiresomeness); "traditional" verse that rhymes and scans and all that good stuff, but is vile in content; "traditional" verse that has promising content but is written by someone without any conception of poetcraft, therefore rhymed badly and impossible to deal with metrically. Poets tend, I think, to work with traditional forms until they get good at them and then discard them for freer forms--which is perfectly understandable. But it means that the people who could do really fine traditional forms ordinarily don't use them, leading to the situation just described.

And then there is the poem, again a very competent sonnet, by Diana Paxson--"Desiring Dragons," page 33. It is intended to be serious rather than witty, which means that Paxson is not as free to use the conventional phrases as Braude was, and "jewelled fire" and the like flaw her poem. But it is nevertheless good work, competent work, well crafted work, and I like it. I like "thinking I heard the rasp of scales on stone..." for what it tells me about the difference between scales on dragons and scales on a catfish, say.

I don't like all of the poetry you used, to which the only possible response is "So what?" But you use a lot of it (some, I notice, by members of SFPA) and it tends to be of superior quality. Your prose is astonishingly well done, a greater percentage of the time than there is any reason to expect. And as for your graphics--speaking as a person who cannot draw a recognizable circle even when provided with a stencil, your illustrations are just splendid.

Having said all those good things, I would like to know if there is anything I could write for you that would be considered adequate compensation for a copy of your special

religious issue. Compliments won't pay your printers or buy your postage stamps...

I'm sending a carbon of this letter to Bob frazier, editor of STAR LINE, so that he can strongly recommend that members of SFPA who are not familiar with NIEKAS (as I certainly wasn't) take look at it. SFPA is always looking for journals that ought to be read when the time comes to nominate poems for our Rhysling Awards, and I am convinced that a Rhysling nominee might very easily turn up in the poetry you publish. I am also advising him (this is a dual-purpose letter, you see) that if he wants to quote me as doing the "strongly recommending" that is just fine with me.

Anne Braude was kind enough to send me an advance copy of her review of Book Three of the Ozark Trilogy, and I'm delighted, especially with the comments regarding feminism. I won't comment on it, however, until you've published it. This letter is far too long already. Keep up your good work and your high standards, and thank you again for gifting me with the complimentaries; if I ever get paid any royalties perhaps I'll be able to subscribe.

Susan M Schwartz
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New York NY 10028

I forgive you and the Demon Speller for spelling my name "Schwartz" at the by-line of my dragon article. The New York Times did the same damned thing. A goal for me: make certain people know my name so well they won't misspell it.

Good grief, David Thiry seems to have as much against university coursework as I sometimes do: wonder why. Have you ever noticed just how interestingly the academic aspects of fandom are counterbalanced by the people who enter it in a deliberate attempt to get away from all that English Lit. analytical stuff? I wonder why about that too, and I'm not being false-naive.

Algis Budrys
824 Seward Street
Evanston IL 60202

[Ed], You know that because your name is actually Meškys it means Keeper of Bears, whereas if it were Meskys it would mean He Who Throws Things. So you know you got to put that Y in "Laiskai," because if you don't it doesn't mean "letters"; if it means anything at all it means

loose things." But never, Ianter doesn't know "lietuviskai" (a) should be "lietuviškai," and (b) means "in the manner of Lithuanians," when she meant to say "lietuviškai," which means "of Lithuania," e.g., "Egle," is, indeed, a typical Lithuanian surname. (One of my favorites in the sub-group of what we might call faunal dubbings is Karve--Mister Cow --and another is Kiaulenas, which means Pig Farmer. If I had been a girl, my parents would have named me Egle, which means Pine Tree, and she gets into this group because she was, of course, the legendary Queen of the Garter Snakes.)

Wonderful language, Lithuanian. To embrace someone is to make a sheaf of them in one's arms; the word for "dawn," aušra, begins with the mouth open in awe and ends with the shh of the morning wind in the pines; girls are named Song, or The Storm's Wife. But one does, of course, also run into an endless parade of Marija and Juozas, Petras and Povilas; the word for bathing beach is paplūdinė (puh-ploo-dee-neh) which is onomatopoeic only if you visualize a fat noisy kid going off a high board, and, of course, the Lithuanian idiom for "I'm going to throw up" is "I'm traveling to Riga"; I wonder if the Latvians say "I'm going to Kaunas." Maybe Dainis Biesenieks could enlighten us.

Gene Wolfe
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Anne Braude's "Exit: Pursued by a Worm" reminded me of a book I might recommend to you: *Alien Animals*, by Janet and Colin Bord. It surveys the literature on lake monsters (such as Nessie), mysterious cats (elsewhere called "leapers"), black dogs, giant birds and birdmen, and what the authors call BHM's and most of the rest of us ABSM's ("Bigfoot" & Co.) and concludes that all are other-world creatures able to manifest themselves only at certain times and places, and perhaps only to certain persons. Toward the end of their book, the Bords--who are not, or at least should not be, given their field of research--speculate that dragons may have been creatures of the same sort seen during the Middle Ages. If they are correct (and I confess I was more sympathetic to their view when I finished their book than when I began it), then dragons may reappear where conditions are right again. It may, indeed, not be easy to get rid of dragons.

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[NIEKAS 30 was] yet another super issue--a lovely, illo on the cover--but not a cover illo as it needed "NIEKAS--etc" as part of the design to establish it as a cover.

Not being a dragon lover (I was a fence sitter until McCaffrey's Pern and the dragon fans appeared--now I fancy I'm anti-dragon) I can't pass much comment on that section.

On the "Gincas" comment--you missed out my qualifier to the "rampant fringe demands freedom to do their own thing"--I seem to recall I had added "and expects everyone to want (or put up with) the same" or words to that effect. Without that phrase it seems I'm against anyone wanting to be different.

Enjoyed Don D'Amassa's "Haunted Library," but might I submit H.G. Wells's "The Inexperienced Ghost" as a superlative "atmosphere building" yarn in that genre?

Andruschak [was] interesting as ever. Why doesn't NASA organise some public money grabbing schemes? \$10 gets your name on a roll of honour to land with the next Venus/Mars/? probe. \$10,000 gets a space probe named after you. And so on. Maybe coax the post office to [issue] a set of se-tenant space stamps (the attached bit costing 10¢ extra, all profits to NASA). Sorry it's Andy's last for a while--hope he returns,

Three cheers for Sherwood Frazier. Like him, I just can't swallow a supreme being creating all the cosmos for the benefit of the inhabitants of one fly speck therein--and then totally ignoring those inhabitants.

Liked very much Marsha Jones's column. I seldom go to big-screen shows now due to cost and parking difficulties (it can add 50% to the ticket cost).



David Palter
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Thank you for NIEKAS 30, which is another lovely issue. I hope you will not take it amiss if I devote the greater part of my loc to comments about comments about my earlier comments. It's nice that my earlier letters have been noticed, even though almost all that notice seems to be in the form of disagreement.

It would, in fact, be in keeping with the generally high scholastic standards of NIEKAS if I were to support my claim that female authors have now attained a prominent position in the field of SF, with a detailed statistical study showing number of books sold by male as compared to female authors, as Piers Anthony suggests. (I would not, however, attempt to do a comparison of who is most highly critically rated, as Piers also suggests, since this involves us in too much ambiguity for a scientific study. Most authors are liked by some critics and disliked by others, and there is no certain way of knowing who is most highly critically rated.) However, unlike the regular NIEKAS columnists, I am just not that ambitious. My personal experience has been that close to half of the SF & fantasy I am reading these days is by female authors, and I suspect that this experience is shared by many other NIEKAS readers. This, however, is not conclusive proof, and if you still wish to assert that there are few successful female writers of SF, there is not much more I will say about it (except, perhaps, where's your statistical study?).

It is a bit startling to discover that Piers Anthony interprets the term "homophobia" to mean either hatred of man, or hatred of same. It is true that by literal interpretation of the Greek roots, we arrive at essentially that meaning (although strictly speaking it should be fear, not hatred). However, the use of "homophobia" to mean fear of homosexuality is currently very well established. There is, actually, precedent for non-literal etymologies. A similar case is the word "hydrophobia," which literally means fear of water, but is more often used to mean rabies. Of course, it would be more explicit to describe fear of homosexuality as homosexualityphobia, but this is a bit clumsy. We could call it gayphobia, but I'm afraid that Piers would interpret this to mean fear of merriment.

Katny Godfrey disagrees with my suggestion for the abolition of public education, on the grounds that (for various obvious reasons) it is important for people to become educated. Ironically, she also comments, "It's bad enough that many pupils meander through school without learning to read beyond a minimal level." This is precisely my point: I disapprove of public education because it has visibly failed. I do want to make it possible for people to become educated, hence I favor the development and use of more effectual educational systems than the one we have now. Her concluding remark, "We have no other niche for children during the day," does not mean that there is no alternative to public education, merely that more work is needed to create such alternatives and make them increasingly available.

Beverly Kanter defends the use of tranquilizers as a temporary remedy, something to help people "who ran into sheer bad luck who would get well in a few years in any case." The problem with tranquilizers as a temporary measure, to get over some emotional shock, is similar to that of using heroin to get through a period of bodily pain. They are addictive. Forgive me for asking, but for how many years have you been using tranquilizers? I understand that it is more than a few. I should also point out that it is somewhat sloppy of me to discuss tranquilizers as a generality, since there is considerable variation among the different drugs and substances used to promote tranquility. You mention that you take Lithium and Haldol; to my knowledge, Lithium is relatively benign. I have greater reservations about Haldol. In any event, I am not trying to assert that tranquilizers have no legitimate use. There clearly are some circumstances when they are useful. However, it certainly is also clear that they are heavily over-used in this country, and that in many cases there are more effective ways of dealing with one's emotional distress. To the American public, the hope of making one's problems magically disappear by taking a pill is irresistible. Real solutions, however, usually require a bit more work. (By the way, as I have occasionally been criticised for objecting to things I have never tried, I should mention that I did once use a tranquilizer. My mother prevailed upon me to take one at my brother's funeral. It did nothing for me.)

It may be that I enjoy NIEKAS's assorted scholarly dissertations more than does David Thiry, because when I went to college I didn't take any

English courses. In any event, I did enjoy the dragon features and again find that my historical perspective on the subject has been improved.

Keep up the good work.

Dave Thiry
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This past weekend, some of us free-thinkers were entertaining some character who is running for a minor office under the auspices of the Libertarian Party. I brought up the subject of what the hell would we do with the material which the NASA projects have accumulated over the years, once the organization would be shut down. We divided into two groups, which, I think, not only demonstrate two of the extremes to which libertarianism can be brought, but also which show the very important work which NASA has performed.

This tall, thin stranger wanted to eliminate the expensive play-toys of the space program completely: the hyper-expensive planetary fly-bys, which are poetic in concept but economically disastrous; the ludicrous probes into outer space (as if we could contact anyone in such a haphazard manner); and that sort of thing. We all agreed with this.

However, what he said next, I couldn't quite take. This fellow told us that all the satellite projects should be handed over to the military, who are the principal users of the communications and photographic facilities anyway. That was okay. But, he also wanted to give all the communications facilities on the ground, missile construction facilities, and that sort of thing to the major corporations who built them! Yikes! (He said, "Maybe we can talk them into buying up Cape Canaveral for one dollar in ten." I mean, really!)

Of course, most libertarians have as much to say about the incestuous marriage of government and the corporations as we do certain nasty social diseases. And we told him so. (I had to say, silly-mouthed me, that the banks already owned the Cape since the federal government is in debt to them to the tune of a trillion dollars, anyway.)

Somebody else said that handing the Jet Propulsion Laboratory to the Chase Manhattan Bank was like sign-

ing the deed to the Vatican over to Moscow. I don't know about that one. Personally, I think it's silly to even be in this predicament. For certain, the multinationals would put up the high-tech of the NASA programs up for auction to your highest Soviet bidder. But what to do with all the hardware, anyway? Give it to the Pentagon? Haven't they got enough to play with as it is? Sell it to the space advocacy groups? Have they got a spare half-trillion dollars? Give it to the multinationals, and so steal the taxpayers' last opportunity to make some of their own money back?

The solution is beyond me. No single group of Americans can afford to continue to explore space tech, and those who can would use the technology to further their own selfish needs. It's obvious that, eventually, the government will be forced to tax everyone 100% of their income to pay for all these pet projects, and by then, it will be too late for any Libertarians to save our necks. It's a helluva problem.

(By the way, to increase your appreciation of the Libertarian Ideal: the original purpose of this guy's visit was to collect donations for the defense funds of those little boys the Selective Service has decided to persecute...uh...prosecute. Despite my poverty, I gave him a week's worth of my playtime bucks for the fund. We're not all that bad, when it comes to defending true freedom.

When Sherwood Frazier used the term "fundamentalist religion" in his article discussing creation science, I was taken aback a bit. In the interest of accuracy, I have a few comments to make thereon.

The term "fundamentalist religion" is very broad, and can lead someone not familiar with religious groups, particularly those in the South, to think badly of those who truly have no part in this latest assault on the Constitution and Common Sense.

A local clergyman for one of the Baptist churches in this town was a delegate to a recent Southern Baptist Convention. Besides the usual infighting one might expect between factions in such a large organization, the subject of forcing creation science on schoolkids came up. The Convention debated the subject, and you may find the results somewhat interesting.

The official stance of the Baptist Church, most often seen by outsiders as the most "fundamentalist" of the large churches, was declared to be

against the teaching of religion in public schools for constitutional reasons; also, it was said that creation science has no basis in either scientific fact or biblical doctrine.

It was explained to me this way: since most of the prophecy in the Bible is purely allegorical, so then should most of the ancient legends in the oldest books be considered as being not literal. Therefore, the centuries-old claim of Bishop Ussher that the world was 4,000 years old was hardly true. There was no proof to creation as the scientific creationists claim it to have occurred, in other words, either in rational proofs or the Bible.

So, the most powerful fundamentalist religious group in the South, and most certainly in Arkansas, has officially washed its hands (pardon that) of the whole matter. Who is responsible for this, then?

The answer is clear to anyone who has watched Sunday morning religious programming. Characters like the Reverend Jerry Falwell and other neo-fascists have seen this brief gap in the sensibilities of superstitious America as being a wonderful opportunity to inject their own ideas (and fund-raising campaigns) into the heads of children. And they are effectively applying the time-honored stick-and-carrot methods of votes-or-money to the state representatives in question.

The American Judicial system, still being pretty much operative according to the rules set down way back in the seventeen-whatevers, has repeatedly overthrown these successive movements, starting with those of a character named Oscar Brownley (I think that was his name--he was colonial America's answer to J. Fair-thee-well), through the popular adherency of Hiram Butler's "solar biology" in Kansas, through those really neat characters who are applying the big dollars to government today. Every time they are declared illegal, these big brothers come back with more money and still-larger groups of an increasingly-ignorant electorate. They've been defeated in Arkansas, but they are trying their luck here in North Carolina (a state whose government is pretty damned suspect, to say the least), and elsewhere.

The libertarians are fighting them, as are civil rights groups and anyone with a lick of sense. But they are funded by frightened America, and that's all hell of a big army to be sure.

Anyway, let's just make sure we

identify who is responsible for the situation, and not begin any discussion by using sweeping generalizations like "fundamentalist religion." Then, I won't have to rant so much.

[My apology, David. The term "fundamentalist religion" as applied here was meant to indicate those religious groups that translate literally the meaning of the scriptures. The info concerning the official stance of the Baptist Church is most interesting. Thank you. sherwood.]

I thought Ms Jones's article was particularly timely, for myself. I'm not talking about her movie reviews, which are not subject to my comments, but I rather found her discussion of Arthurian books helpful. You see, only recently I had the opportunity to read Steinbeck's wonderful translation of Malory's stories, and have been trying to find more books on the great King and his Noble Knights. I wanted to avoid the latest surge of re-written Tolkien-cum-S&S books, and get down to some serious Round Table tales. She mentioned a few I do believe I'll get around to, now that I've got some idea of what I should be after.

Anne Braude's poem, "Exit: Pursued by a Worm," makes up for all the nasty things I've said about her in the past. I hereby retract my statements, and replace them with a healing dose of praise.

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As always, the artwork in #30 was great. A fine collection of hand-some reptiles.

On "The Haunted Library": Of the two versions of "The Ghost and Mrs Muir," Josephine Leslie's was the original, and Alice Denham's the TV tie-in. Don had them switched. (This correction courtesy of Ken Johnson.) Don discussed a lot of books superficially, mostly to dismiss them. I get the distinct impression he doesn't care much for the sub-genres he discussed this time 'round. I much prefer reading articles in which the author has a real enthusiasm for the topic, like Ruth Berman's recent piece on Shakespearean themes in children's books.

On "Review and Comment." To Pat Mathews: If Heinlein is putting his

own words in Lena Horne's mouth, he's simply treating her exactly as he does all his characters nowadays.

My own impression from reading Danse Macabre was that Stephen King never met a horror movie he didn't like.

To Anne Braude: I agree with your distinction between "low-mimetic" and "naturalistic." I recently saw an old James Stewart/Margaret Sullivan movie on television ("Next Time We Love") and was struck by two things: how truly authentic most of the dialogue was (and splendidly acted and directed, too), and how strange the movie seemed as a result. In being so real, so true-to-life, it seemed almost unreal. Perhaps without the distance afforded by the processing, however slight, that most real-life dialogue undergoes before becoming part of any of the media, the viewer/reader becomes as uncomfortable watching the situations as the characters are experiencing them. Or else he becomes bored.

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After all the discussions of writers and money I've heard over the years, at cons and other places, I've come to the conclusion the whole subject was exhausted by two comments made at the very beginning of the history of modern publishing. In England, Dr Johnson laid down his famous dictum that only a blockhead ever wrote for anything but money. On the other side of the channel, Voltaire stated that "One does not write to make money, one makes money so one can write."

The two comments neatly sum up the attitudes of the hacks and the artists, but in the end they come down to the same thing. If you're a writer, you're going to be awfully worried about money--and you're probably wasting time if you're doing something you aren't going to be paid for. The artists, in fact, may be even chintzier about writing for free than the purely commercial types. After all, they want the money so they can have the freedom to create their next work, not just to buy a few more cases of beer.

So obviously I must think NIEKAS is worth getting. Believe me, I find it very hard, these days, to make any kind of effort that isn't directed at some possibility it may add some more numbers to an account with my name on it.

I could say a lot of things about public education, but I will confine myself to one observation. Over the past decade or so, I have learned a few things about four successful Philadelphia public school programs: the neighborhood "open classroom" program my son attended; the public school "mentally gifted" program; the "back to basics" program in which the kids wear ties and other kinds of civilian uniforms, concentrate on reading, writing, and arithmetic, and submit to very rigid discipline; and Central High School, Philadelphia's high school for boys in the upper fifteen per cent of the academic population. All these programs work, and they all have two things in common: they are selective, and they can throw people out.

The open classroom program and the back to basics show may not look like they're selective, since they don't refuse people on the basis of grades or other standards. The fact that a kid is in one of those programs, however, means that his parents made an effort. They paid attention to the programs being offered by the school system, they investigated, and they arranged to have the kids transferred to those programs. The kids in those classes, in other words, come from families that care about their education. And their families know they can be tossed back into the regular school environment if they don't behave themselves. The normal classrooms in our public schools--and in most public schools, I suspect--are made up of the kids who don't have the family background, brains, or other advantages to be in a special program. Public school programs can work, in short, if they have the same advantage as private schools, parochial schools, and other competitors--if they can select their students, and throw out anybody who doesn't measure up. They can't work very well, however, if most of the students in most of the classrooms lack most of the qualities you need to get anywhere in modern society, and the authorities can't dismiss kids who won't behave, aren't willing to work, or don't have the ability to do normal classroom work.

I think NIEKAS is a great place to pick up information on the space program. I get Science News, Science 82, etc, etc, but the space stuff in NIEKAS has become an important source of information for me. Personally, I think the whole enterprise has been worth all the tax money our family has put into it, and that any sound accounting system would prove our

ventures into space have already returned a profit to the country as a whole. I don't mind paying my share of the cost and I don't have any qualms whatsoever about voting to tax other people to pay for it.

[Thank you, Tom. The space program is a very important enterprise indeed; it has returned something on the order of \$14 to every dollar put in. It is one of the few programs that the U.S. has made money on. It is time, however, for all of us to consider ways in which our capitalist system can take over the cost of space exploration and exploitation. It is evident from the present administration that the government wants out for at least the next few years. It will take another major jump by the Soviet Union to jar the U.S. into massive injections of money for space exploration. I don't see, at least in the near future, the Russians making any major steps. The reason being the same as ours, only more so: the Soviet Union is strapped for money. They are having problems feeding the country. It is very hard to make hungry people work efficiently.

Continue to support the space program; at this point it is for our children. We will continue to bring you as much information as we can get our hands on. sherwood]

The real political split in our society, I'm beginning to think, isn't the division between the people who oppose government and the people who favor it. It's between the capitalists and the consumerists. And the capitalists include those who favor state capitalist ventures as well as those who favor private capitalism. The consumerists are merely living off the private and state capitalism of the past and refusing to make their contribution to the future--including the portion of the future in which they themselves will probably be living.

Say, do you remember the good old days of science fiction? The days when we had hairychested writers who could turn out 10,000 words of pulp fiction in a day and a whole novel in a weekend? The glorious days of iron men and wooden stories?

me Braude
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I see that the Evil Speller plays no favorites: he/it turned Don D'Amassa's reference to Wilde's The Canterville Ghost into The Canterbury Ghost, spelled Susan Shwartz's name right everywhere except in the large-type heading to

her piece, and savaged me at least twice. In my discussion of Ellis Peters (NIEKAS 30, page 12, column 2), not only was The Knocker on Death's Door misspelled, but the middle of one sentence is omitted; it should read: "In Black is the Colour of My True Love's Heart (Murder at a folksong seminar), the plot of an ancient Scottish ballad is re-enacted; in The House of Green Turf, it is a German ballad set by Mahler in Des Knaben Wunderhorn."

Also, in the first sentence of my review of The Medusa and the Snail, I am made to use the vile and barbaric non-word "orientated," instead of "oriented," as my original had it. Since this usage rates high on my personal list of the Ten Worst Solecisms in the English Language, I feel hard done by. On the other hand, the changing of Susan Shwartz's footnote to Le Guin's essay "Dreams Must Explain Themselves" to "Dragons Must Explain Themselves" has a certain charm, as it likens dragons to the traditional master criminal in the old-fashioned thriller who Reveals All in the last chapter. (Come to think of it, a dragon is a master criminal in an old-fashioned thriller.) It seems that the least you could do by way of making amends is to have your proofreader fed to the moles. Not that I wish to establish a precedent...

It ill behooves me to comment on the dragon section, since I edited it, but I will say that I was very pleased with the response to our call for material on the subject, in both its quantity and its quality. Of the other material, I particularly enjoyed Langeveld's Catalog; I hope this feature goes on forever.

In response to comments in "Laikakai" on my romance piece, Buck Coulson is right in pointing out other Georgette Heyer heroes who can be called ruthless and domineering, but they differ from similar types in the writings of Heyer's many imitators in that in all the books he mentions the heroines are strong enough to hold their own against the heroes. In Regency Buck, the heroine is domineering herself, also a nitwit who is so busy not being dictated to by the hero that she never considers whether his edicts make sense or not, with the result that she makes a fool of herself. I come down hard on this book because it is one of the very few Heyers in which I dislike both hero and heroine. Other novels in which she features heroes and heroines who are both strong-willed but better matched are The Grand Sophy and Venetia.

Beverly Kanter felt I hadn't differentiated sufficiently between my own ideas and Northrop Frye's: to clarify, in the second installment, except where otherwise noted, the theory was entirely Frye's (I only simplified and summarized); however, the application of that theory to Tolkien and other individual writers was my own. I hope that this tidies everything up.

I want to applaud what Sherwood said about the effort to put so-called "creation science" into the schools along with evolution... We had a bill to that effect here in the last legislative session, but it was defeated due to overwhelming opposition. There's hope for Goldwater country yet. The current "scientific explanation" being put forward by the creationists to reconcile the Flood narrative with the actual fossil history we have is that the dinosaurs sank to the bottom because they were the heaviest and human remains are only in the topmost layer because people kept swimming until the very end! At least it's an improvement over the earlier thesis that God deliberately planted a false fossil record to test our faith. (And then they wonder why the rest of us don't admire their God wholeheartedly.)...

My basic quarrel with the fundamentalists is that they are clinging to the wrong fundamentals. Their theological antecedents are the more radical movements of the Protestant Reformation, extreme Calvinists, Anabaptists, and the like, who took the emphasis on faith and salvation by grace to the farthest possible extreme, rejecting the value placed on both works and reason by Catholic tradition. They were reacting to genuine abuses, such as the sale of indulgences (in effect, the Church was granting licenses to sin) and the nitpicking of medieval Scholastic theology (of the how-many-angels-can-dance-on-the-head-of-a-pin? variety); but they threw the baby out with the bathwater.

From its earliest beginnings, Christian theology had placed a high value on reason, even granting it equal status with revelation as a way to God; this was due largely to the influence of Greek philosophy on Paul and many of the early Church Fathers. Many argued that it was his reasoning ability that made man the image of God. (Others argued that it was Free Will, but it came to the same thing in the end: it was not possible to choose freely without a rational understanding of the alternatives under consideration.) Reason and revelation were both regarded as divinely given sources of

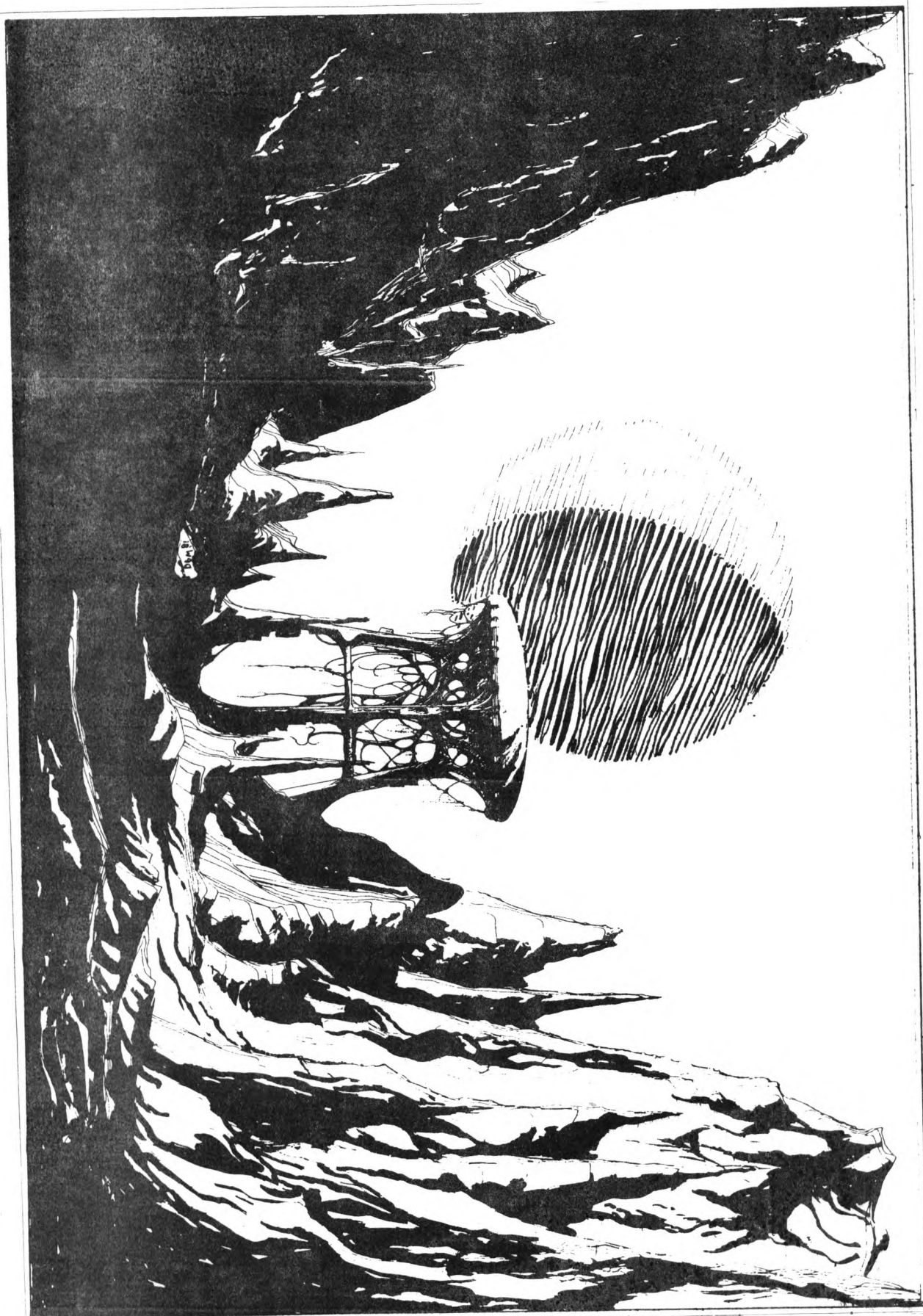
knowledge; we could benefit by reading both the Book of God's Word and the Book of God's Works--the universe. Eventually it came to be accepted that the domains of theology and philosophy (including natural philosophy, the precursor of science) were separate. Philosophers were free to use their reason to understand the physical world, leaving the moral and spiritual realms to the divines. This attitude made possible the rise of modern experimental science--not without a lot of setbacks, notably the trial of Galileo and the witch-hunting craze.

In the era following the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the great wars of religion, both science and religion observed these boundaries, chiefly by studiously ignoring each other. Science flourished, while religion was conservative and moribund, with the exception of the Wesleyan revivalist movement. The dispute became a shooting war again in the mid-nineteenth century, not only with the clash between Darwinism and literal interpretation of the Bible (an idea whose time had gone, as the notion that one could believe in the Bible without necessarily accepting every word as literally true had been suggested as far back as Dante) but perhaps even more significantly with the challenge of various movements for social, political, and economic reform, often allied with science, whose leaders denounced the religious establishment for its failure of Christian charity to the oppressed and abused. (To the eternal credit of Christianity, let it

be said that some religious groups, such as the Quakers and the Salvation Army, were in the forefront of the reform effort. Of course, the establishment churches regarded them as weirdo, beyond-the-pale cultist types.)

The net result was that the churches were no longer taken seriously either intellectually or morally. In the twentieth century, we have seen a revival of Christian social concern; but on the whole the establishment has preferred not to become involved. As a natural result, it has found itself very much on the defensive, as those annoying radical types were citing an awful lot of highly inconvenient New Testament texts in support of their positions. The extreme conservatives--Protestant fundamentalists and authoritarian Catholics--have become so defensive that they shut out not only modernism but science, reason, and even common sense, like so many paralyzed ostriches. The result is that reason, once venerated as the spark of Divine Light manifested in the human soul, has become the traitor within the gates; and science, the product of the operation of reason on the created world, has become The Enemy. (I would also point out, had I a few hundred more pages, the ways in which the fundamentalists/authoritarians hold pretty unChristian views and morality and ethics. But you can do it for yourself; just take any sermon of Jerry Falwell's and compare it to the Sermon on the Mount.) Sherwood is disturbed; I am depressed; and no doubt the angels are weeping.





BUMBEJIMAS

Continued from page 1

NIEKAS GOES TO CHICON

Mike Bastraw and I represented NIEKAS at Chicon. All in all it was a very good convention and I am glad I went. We had a table in the huckster room which we shared with Jane Sibley. We were supposed to have NIEKAS 31 AND our first chapbook ready to sell at the con but everything imaginable went wrong. We gave up on NIEKAS a month before the con and concentrated on the chapbook. NIEKAS 31 came out about 6 months late. As it was we came very close to not having the chapbook, either.

With NIEKAS and our chapbooks we print the interior and have our covers done commercially. We did not finish printing until Sunday Aug. 29. The book is digest sized, saddle stapled, 60 pages plus endpapers. It took several days to get the pages run through a folding machine and Mike did not get them back until Wednesday afternoon. We spent that night collating 200 copies for the con. In the meantime, our ever-suffering printer, John Bancroft of J & J Offset, was having a very hard time printing the covers. The artist had made some mistakes in preparing the copy and the two-color printing just was NOT working as it should.

When Mike went to bed at 4:00 AM they were still not ready. He got up at 7:00 and tried again. The first finished copies were just coming off the press so Mike grabbed one, put it on the chapbook, stapled and trimmed it. This way he would at least have a copy to show at the con and take orders. John Bancroft promised to put 200 copies together that morning, trim them, and ship them off express so that we would have them by Friday. And John WAS able to pull it off. Our package arrived at the hotel shortly after noon the next day.

The hundred-plus mile drive to Boston Airport went well despite Mike's extreme lack of sleep. There are three private parking lots a short distance from the airport which are a little bit cheaper and much more convenient than regular airport parking. We only saved \$10 or \$12 by using it, but a van follows you to your parking place, loads you and your luggage, and takes you right to the door of your airline. This way you do not have to haul luggage a half mile or so from your place in the regular airport garage.

We took the fannish special, the Piedmont Airlines flight at 10:45 AM, which went to Chicago by way of Virginia. This plane was at least \$100 cheaper than any direct flight and a little cheaper than one involving a plane change in Buffalo. Hal Clements and a half dozen other NESFAns were on the same plane, so our convention started early. I was again hassled by the airline over segregated seating (see my remarks in NIEKAS 28 on my Denvention trip).

We got separated from the Boston fen in the luggage area, for one of our bags was the last off the plane. The next bus was a half hour later, and it too, was FULL of SF people--and the con rolled on. My guide dog, Ned, and I sat in front of Catherine deCamp and I spent most of the trip talking with her. Hotel registration went smoothly and we were in our room and unpacked by 5. I fed Ned and we went down to relieve him and see about setting up our huckster table. The con committee wouldn't let us set up, but told us to come back early next morning. We registered for the con and headed for the con suite which opened at 6:00 PM. There they had a local beer, Rhineberg, on tap, and prezels and chips. The beer was a bit warm, but had a good strong flavor. (Two nights later they had colder but poor-tasting beer.) Mike and I sat with Alexei Kondrativ and Fred Lerner.

According to the program book F Gwynplane MacIntyre was going to do a reading at 7:00 PM across the hall. There was no time to run back to the room for my recorder so I went across without it. I had met him briefly at Noreascon 2 and we were on a panel together at Denvention, so I was looking forward to this. He read a long story just sold to Asimov's magazine, "Prisoner of Gravity," which was outstanding. I was VERY sorry I didn't have my recorder so I could re-hear it later.

Four of us shared a room. At first the hotel was out of rollaways so some had to take the floor, but the next night we had the two extra beds. The others in the room were Scott Green and Jane Sibley. Scott Green is a science fiction poet with numerous sales to AMAZING STORIES and various semi-prozines. He lives in Manchester N.H., about 40 miles south of Laconia. He has had a few pieces in NIEKAS. Jane Sibley you know... her art has often appeared in NIEKAS, and she is the creator of Varlak. She is active in Anachronists and Darkover fandom, and lives in New Haven CT.

What can you say about con suites and room parties? Talking to old

friends and new with or without a drink. That night I re-established contact with Joan Grazina Juozenas and her married sister Berute Apke, and we made arrangements to go to a Lithuanian Church Sunday morning and have lunch at a Lithuanian restaurant afterwards.

Friday morning Mike and Jane went to the huckster room to open our table while I fed and walked Ned. When I got to the huckster room I found that it would not open to exhibitors until 9:00 (Mike had been told 8:00 the previous afternoon).. and no sign of Mike or Jane. Also we could get the special huckster badges only from the loading area, and it was a case of 'you can't get there from here.'

They let me in without a huckster ID by escorting me to our table, where I waited for Mike and Jane. Since Mike had the materials I could not help set up until they arrived an hour later. Anyhow we were finally set up, Jane with her crystals, holographic jewelry, and Amber Tarot deck she was huckstering for a friend, and Mike and I with NIEKAS.

Huckstering has its advantages and its disadvantages. You get to see a lot of your friends by having a table which many pass. On the other hand, you are tied down and end up missing a number of items you might otherwise want to attend. Having three at the table alleviates matters. We always try to keep two people at the table but in a pinch one can watch it.

Jane had to be away most of the morning and early afternoon setting up her display at the art show and Mike had some errands to run, including retrieving the parcels shipped by John Bancroft and by Sherwood. I wanted to catch a panel at 4:00. When Jane learned that I had not had anything to eat in 24 hours she dragged me off to a late lunch, leaving Mike in charge of the table.

There was a very good, inexpensive restaurant called Stevens across the street from the hotel, but connected to it by a tunnel. We went there and had some very good Veal Parmesan. I noted on the menu that they served several cheese omelettes made with feta, so I knew where I would be breakfasting. While I am not fond of feta, I discovered during Denvention that it makes a marvelous omelette.

Jane had been contributing to NIEKAS for a year and a half now, but had dealt only with Mike, who makes art assignments. We had also shared huckster tables at several cons but I had never really gotten to know her. We spent a marvelous

hour together talking about Gilbert and Sullivan, Anna Russell and Tolkien, (she had been a member of the Tolkien Society of America during the last year I had been in charge and had planned to give a paper at a Tolkien Conference I had planned to have at Belknap College in 1972, but which I cancelled when I lost my sight and gave up the TSA).

Chicon had a new twist on panels.. at least to me. They had several panels in homage to major writers who, for various reasons, could not come to this convention, or did not attend conventions in general. The one I attended was on Andre Norton. Various panelists spoke about her works and the few who had met her gave their impressions. Andre Norton lived in Cleveland where she was a librarian for many years., but retired about 15 years ago and moved to Florida. A few correspondents have visited her in her home, and she attended , anonymously, one day of the World SF Convention in Cleveland in 1966. She had a breakfast meeting with a couple of dozen correspondents, which Juanita Coulson reminisced about. It brought back good memories for I too was one of the fortunate attendees. A woman in the audience, who didn't give her name, said she had completed a NORTON COMPANION which will be published by DAW in '83. Before turning to SF and fantasy Miss Norton had written historical and other fiction and has over 90 books to her credit. This companion volume covers all her published works and includes a character index. Many of her novels fit into a connected series and have minor characters in common. At the end of the panel the whole audience went and wrote personal messages on a long roll of paper which was shipped to her after the con.

That night the con held a party specifically for the old-time con attendees. There was no one checking credentials at the door, but when I got there I found quite a large suite with a catered bar with perhaps a hundred people there. It was full but not packed. I felt eligible since this was my 15th worldcon in 27 years. Many writers like Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle were there, as well as fans turned writers like Jack Chalker and just plain fans like Charlie Brown and Rusty Hevelin. I stayed at this party until we were kicked out, about 2:00, when I went on to some of the bidding parties.

It was nice to have a party like this put on by a concon. While I am a fairly old-time fan, I am nowhere near eligible for first fandom or even second fandom. (To be eligible

for first fandom you have to have been active in SF since the mid 1930's and for second fandom since the mid 1940's. My first contact with fandom was in the summer of 1955 and I attended my first club meeting and read my first fanzine that fall.)

Saturday was the usual huckstering meeting people, etc., but that night food fandom struck. We got up restaurant expeditions Saturday, Sunday and Monday evenings. We would meet in our room with anyone else we could gather right after the huckster room closed at 6:00. I fed the dog while we decided where to go and we took off. Saturday we went to an outstanding German restaurant,

Berghof, which brewed its own beer, both light and dark. We had 8 in our group including Fred Lerner and Dainis Bisenieks and his wife. (Fred's wife Sheryl couldn't make it to the con because she had to work.) While the food and beer were



excellent, I especially remember their Sachertorte desert. Chocolate so rich is more than sinful. By lingering over our meal we missed the masquerade but none of us had been particularly interested. You had to stand in line that morning for tickets, and the line had been a couple of hours long. I heard that the line to get in was as bad, if not worse.

When Jane and I got back to the room we had a call from Mary Lou Lacefield who was in her room. Mary Lou and her friend Bill Hedl have been publishing a bimonthly taped fanzine called Si Fi Cee for two years now. Bill is from Columbus, Ohio, and is legally blind but can see enough to walk unassisted and can read a limited amount of clear print. Mary Lou, who is from Louisville, Kentucky, has virtually no useable vision and has other difficulties. A few weeks after the con she went in for major spinal surgery involving inserting a steel support rod, and she will be hospitalized or home-bound for at least a year. For this reason she is not very

steady on her feet. Also she has a problem related to dyslexia, which runs in her family, so she is very easily disoriented, thus independent travel is very difficult for her. Bill had gone off to work at the masquerade and at that time she had not felt like joining Mike's and my group for dinner. She was lonely and isolated now, so Jane and I went to her room to visit for a while. After Jane left we talked about our mutual problems in producing taped fanzines and then went on to the con suite.

The Hyatt Regency consists of two towers, connected by several levels of underground arcade. The con suite, huckster room and program area were all in this underground arcade. In the north tower the elevators stopped at the lobby and then you had to use escalators, stairs or a freight elevator to get to the function areas. Guide dogs cannot use the escalators, and the stairs and elevators were hidden. (Stairs were next to some escalators, but not all of them.) It was always a hassle finding the stairs or elevators, and the freight elevator did not function very well. At times I stood in it for up to five minutes pushing buttons, trying to get it to move. Speaking of making hotels accessible to the handicapped, the function areas were particularly difficult for people in wheelchairs. Also, unlike most modern buildings, the elevator and room numbers were NOT Brailled. Only the emergency buttons in the elevator were labeled in Braille... nothing else.

I saw Joan and Berute in the con suite, as I did almost every evening, and we made our final arrangements for the next morning.

Mary Lou is very much into folk singing, so I took her to that, which was in three adjacent rooms on the third floor of the south tower. I heard many good songs but my favorite was to the tune of "Those were the days my friend, we thought they'd never end" whose lead line went something like "Those were the days, where there was no king on the throne", dealing with The Lord of the Rings. The next day I learned it had been written and sung by my friend Renee Alper.

Bill Hedl eventually found Mary Lou and me at the filk sing and took her back to her room. I continued to party for another hour or two.

Sunday morning I was to meet Joan (or Grazina) and Berute by the elevators, and while I was waiting I met Gene Wolfe's son, and then Algis Budrys. I was talking with Algis when Joan and Berute arrived.

Berute drove us down to the Garden Park area, one of several Lithuanian

neighborhoods in Chicago. We went to mass in a Lithuanian church where everything was done in the Lithuanian language. Unfortunately the acoustics were so lousy that I could make out less than one word in twenty. We then went to a Lithuanian restaurant, Meringa, on South 71st St.

There are half a dozen Lithuanian restaurants in a two or three block area, but this was the only one open on Sundays. Also all of them are only open for breakfast and lunch, but not for dinner. I find that very strange. Mike wanted very much to try a Lithuanian restaurant but this was the only time I could get a ride to one. Since the trip included church and involved being away from the hotel for at least three hours during prime huckstering time there was no way for him to come.

I ordered something called 'zeppelins' which were cigar-shaped dumplings... about 7 by 2 cm... filled with chopped meat. I had never had this before. It was all right but not really noteworthy. Berute had a combination of cheese-filled and meat-filled ravioli served with sour cream which was also adequate, but Joan had mushroom-filled ravioli which was excellent. We also had some very sour kraut soup.

Joan recently took a tour of Russia in the only manner permitted.. a highly structured whirlwind con conducted by the government. The tour included Moscow and Leningrad, and she did not think about the population of the cities until she read Heinlein's EXPANDED UNIVERSE. Heinlein had visited Moscow when its claimed population was three million but pointed out that the city was dead. There simply were not the crowds that three million people going to work, shopping, and entertaining themselves would involve. OK, the private auto might be virtually nonexistent, but still people have to get to work and vehicles must exist to move them. But there were few buses and subway trains. The crowds simply were not there. Leningrad, on the other hand, was a vibrant city with the expected level of pedestrian and vehicular congestion. Joan echoed Heinlein's wondering about the official population statistics of Moscow.

A number of SF writers and fans recently went on an official SF tour of Russia to see the sights and meet Russian writers. Charlie Brown is writing his impressions in LOCUS and Forry Ackerman in SF CHRONICLE. Forry spoke of his trip at Chicon and when Joan asked about Heinlein's and her observations, Forry dismissed Heinlein's (and by

implication hers) as the raving of a doctrinaire fanatic incapable of independent observation. I was really surprised when Joan told me of this, for I had always thought of Forry as such a gentleman. Now if something had been attributed to someone like Harlan Ellison....

That night about a dozen of us went to a Hunan restaurant a short walk from the hotel. The party included, among others, the Biseniekses, Joan Juozenas, Bill Hedl, Mary Lou Lacefield and Fred Lerner. The hot and sour soup was neither hot enough nor sour enough. My new discovery that night was 'orange beef'. I rarely get to Szechuan or Hunan restaurants and am only slowly getting to know their menus..

I missed the first few minutes of the Hugo awards ceremonies, but what I saw was very well and efficiently presented. It started on time, and Martha Randall moved quickly but with humor. A nice touch was a set of five 2 or 3 minute skits satirizing each of the nominated movies, which were put on between awards before the film itself was presented. They were witty and well presented.

I met Jane in our room and we went to Fred Lerner's to enjoy some Glen-Livett until I had to leave for a play I wanted to catch.

Renee Alper from Wilmont, a suburb of Chicago, edits a fanzine for a group called something like the American Hobbit Association. She has a circle of Tolkien-loving friends from her area who are active in the group and they wrote and put on a play called THE GREATEST GONDORIAN HERO, it is a takeoff on the current TV show, GREATEST AMERICAN HERO. A schmuck of a wizard is sent to Middle Earth by Elbereth to recover the Ring and teams up with a school-teacher from Gondor. He arrives too late at every point and yet does have a significant effect on the course of events as revealed in LotR. They play was very funny in performance but I do not know whether it would read as well. Renee published it in her zine but I still have to read it. The performance was supposed to be sponsored by all the Tolkien organizations and magazines and there was literature from each on a table. NIEKAS was considered an honorary member of this class and had its stack.

After the play we were all invited up to two adjoining rooms... Renee's and some other else's... for a cast party. I enjoyed meeting the people involved. I have corresponded off and on with Renee for several years and she has done some taping for me...

mostly of her own magazine. She is in her 20's and is an excellent singer. She has such severe arthritis that she is confined to a wheelchair 90 percent of the time, and can do virtually nothing for herself. She is, in effect, a quadriplegic. But she is trying to do professional singing under the name of Renee Arwen and had a tape issued of her songs. All are mundane and most are love ballads but they are very good. You can order a cassette from her for \$10 at 2436 Meadow Dr. Wilmont IL 60091. But I liked her folk songs even better and do hope she puts out a private tape of these.

Apparently the group amused itself by playing around with hypnosis. One member was a very skilled hypnotist and very quickly put one of the women under. He would give her a post-hypnotic suggestion of a false memory and then wake her up and get her into a conversation wherein she would elaborate at great length on this false memory. He would then bring her back under with two or three words and add memory after memory. Most of these memories involved visits to Middle Earth, or involvement with characters from LotR. At first it was amusing but after it had gone on for over an hour I got bored and became very sleepy. Taking Ned out, I woke up in the brisk air and visited the con suite and some bidding parties for a while. I wanted to try to catch one particular write... I forget who right now... and figured he might be at the Hugo Loser's Party. I was sure this would be a closed party but that I could get in this late, especially as I was looking for a particular person. He wasn't there but I was ushered in with a surprisingly warm welcome. At this party I finally met John Varley and his wife. It turns out she is a paraplegic in a power wheelchair. Anyhow, over the years I enjoyed a great many of his stories and I was very glad to finally meet him.

Monday afternoon I tried to go to a panel on reviewing SF in mundane publications but it was canceled because none of the panelists showed up. I went back to the huckster room and Jane took me on a tour of the other tables while Mike watched ours. I picked up a gift for my son, Stanley, and a few items for myself including a highball glass from Callahan's Place.

Mike and I then took off for a reading by Algis Budrys while Jane minded the store. We missed the first few minutes of it but Algis read a very good sword and sorcery novelette in the remaining

time he read his story intended for LAST DANGEROUS VISION (which is now scheduled by Houghton Mifflin) and an excerpt from an SF novelette involving the military use of manned kites.

Afterwards I asked him about the movie version of his novel WHO? and the TV movie of ROGUE MOON. WHO? was an odd mixture of good and bad movie making and disappeared after playing a few drive-in theaters for a day and a half. The Reagan Budget cuts have killed the TV playhouse that was supposed to do ROGUE MOON. He had done the video treatment himself and their rights to it would expire very soon. He said the teleplay should be available at bargain rates after that should anyone else be interested.

Monday was the first day of bad weather. It was raining the first time I took Ned out, and when we were ready for our dinner expedition it was no longer raining, but cold and damp. This time there were only five of us...Mike, Jane, Fred Lerner, Selina Lovett and myself. Jane had nothing warm to wear so she borrowed my raincoat while I wore my sport jacket. She is a big woman, but still the raincoat was very baggy on her. The restaurant wasn't very far away but we took a cab because of the weather. Mike rode up front with the driver and the other four of us shared the back seat very intimately with Ned across our feet.

We were in an Italian restaurant this time and unthinkingly started to tell Italian ethnic jokes, until we realized what we were doing. Then we switched to Martian Jokes, substituting Martians for all other ethnic references. Again an excellent meal with antipasto, Chianti and various main courses. Three took Veal Parmesan, Jane took chicken with garlic sauce, and I took the Italian version of Wiener schnitzel. We were too full to even think of dessert.

Later that night Jane, Mike, and I went up to Fred Lerner's room for drinks. Three of us had Glenlivet neat while Mike had a soda. (He does not like any kind of whiskey.) It was a long evening and we talked of many things. Three of us shared an interest in linguistics and Jane is very talented in both music and languages. She sang the New Zealand national anthem in Maori and "Finlandia" in Finnish.

The conversation turned to NIEKAS. Jane makes a number of cons that Mike cannot get to, and huckstering all of them. This fall she volunteered to sell NIEKAS and the chapbook for us at Cocon in Connecticut and

Darkover Con in Delaware. She also said she would come up to New Hampshire some weekend to help us work on getting the magazine out. Fred commented that NIEKAS is doing again what it had done in its last incarnation back in the 60s... getting its readers involved and to feeling that they are part of NIEKAS "family". As a further example Jane mentioned that after reading Anne Braude's contributions she felt she would very much enjoy meeting her.

Later that night in the con suite Jane and I met Denny Lien, a NIEKAS reader from Norway whom I had first met at Noreascon 2. Jane had lived in Norway for 18 months and had completed a significant portion of her college education at the University of Oslo, so the two of them took off talking in Norse while I went off looking for Joan and Berute to talk in Lithuanian.

Tuesday morning Mike and I had breakfast with a cousin of mine who lives about 50 miles outside of Chicago and who came in to see me. We ate at Stevens and then Mike went back to our room while Antanas and I talked for another hour. We sat in easy chairs in the lobby of the south tower because it was quiet, while there was always loud music in the lobby of the north tower.

When I got back to our room Jane had already left for the airport and Mike and I had an hour until we had to leave. We were all packed and thinking of going down to the lobby to see who was around when Joan Juozenas phoned to say she was on her way up to our room. As a going-away present she gave me 6 different loaves of various styles of Lithuanian bread from different bakeries around Chicago. We went down to the lobby and talked for a while, and then she saw us off on the bus.

Joan will be at Constellation and I am looking forward to seeing her again. Unfortunately our circles of local cons do not overlap...we are just too far apart. Berute and her husband Edward are not planning to go to Constellation. The Hyatt in Chicago had really messed up their reservations and Edward simply didn't want to risk a similar tangle with the Baltimore Hyatt. Joan had had problems with the hotel too... they had lost their record of her deposit and she and her roommate had to pay the \$100 again. Fortunately she does have the cancelled check at home and planned to bring it back soon after the con for a refund. Our group had no trouble with the hotel at all. And while we were there the

service was very good. The staff was always courteous and helpful. My only problems were due to the inconvenient architecture, and the lack of Braille labels on the elevator controls and elevator doorjams.

This time the plane had Hal Clements and a full dozen NESFAns. Again Piedmont tried to hassle me about inferior and segregated seating. I tried a new strategy. I said I would change my seat IF they put it in writing that I was absolutely required to do so and had the letter signed. They went away saying they would do so, and then sheepishly returned saying that the airlines policy strongly recommended but did not require the segregated seating. The trip ended on an amusing note when the stewardess welcomed us on board the line of the pacemaker. All I could think of was a creaky old plane with a cardiac pacemaker and I laughed out loud.

Well, I have been to 2 out of 3 Chicons. (I know it was called Chicon 4 but there was never a Chicon 2 as there was never a NYcon 2.) I came away with a very favorable impression of the con. There were glitches in a few spots, but this is to be expected. Ross Pavlack and crew did a great job.

At any large convention you have problems finding friends. I recently had my remarks on the 1963 convention in DC read back to me. That was when worldcons first started growing and had passed a thousand in attendance. I was sighted at the time and still I complained of not seeing my friends I knew were there. Chicon had four thousand in attendance, and my blindness complicates the situation. Unless I happen to recognize a voice I won't even know that a friend I want to see is near me. I usually have to rely on their spotting me and taking the initiative. I also know that some who want to talk find me in the middle of a conversation with someone else and they hesitate to interrupt, and of course I don't know that they are hovering nearby waiting to say something.

See you in Baltimore in 83 and probably in LA in 84. (I have to go to Phoenix for an NFB convention in July 84 and do not know whether I can afford two cross country trips in one year.) But I will not be in Australia in 85...both because I can't afford it and because Australia, like England, does not permit blind people to travel freely in their country.



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