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

WSFA JOURNAL Supplement: Book Review Issue #2 - - 1st April, 1971 (Issue #18)

In This Issue --

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In Brief --

In this issue we continue with the remaining reviews received for THE WSFA JOURNAL during 1970; the first lot appeared in SOTWJ #17 (March '71).

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-- DLM

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Wheaton, Maryland
U.S.A. 20906

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FIRST CLASS MAIL

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S. F. PARADE: Book Reviews

Warlocks and Warriors, an anthology of heroic fantasy edited by L. Sprague de Camp (G. P. Putnam's Sons; 255 pages; $4.95).

Whether or not you like the brand of swords-and-sorcery tales in this book, you have to admire the boundless imagination in quality fantasy--which this definitely is. De Camp has chosen well for this first hard-cover assemblage of heroic fantasy (although he has edited two previous soft-cover collections). Authors like Lord Dunsany, H.G. Wells, Robert E. Howard, Henry Kuttner, C.L. Moore, Lin Carter and Clark Ashton Smith represent the "old line" age of WEIRD TALES, Shambleau, and UNKNOWN WORLDS. Somewhat later but equally adept, are Ray Capella, Fritz Leiber abd Roger Zelazny.

In a way, Warlocks and Warriors is a curiously refreshing book to read in this modern age of emerging minority clashes, civil strife, campus unrest and indiscriminate bombings. In it each hero is pristine in the whiteness of his honor, prowess, cunning and valor; each villain is horrifically black in the menace of his malevolent magic, baleful wizardry and utter evil. But you know the hero ultimately will prevail (and save the kingdom, country, innocent maiden or any combination of these). Evil will be beaten back to the hell from whence spawned. And in between these foregone awarenesses--ah, here are the unabashedly extravagant adventures that make it all fun-reading. In the editor's words: "This is pure escape literature and makes no bones about it. Reading for serious purposes is fine, but even the most serious reader is better off if he sometimes reads something for the hell of it." I agree.

-- James R. Newton

Sea Horse In the Sky, by Edmund Cooper (Putnam; Book Club Edition).

In 1964, Edmund Cooper wrote a novel entitled Transit, in which a group of Terrans were snatched up, "Twilight Zone"-fashion, and deposited in an alien environment as guinea pigs in an experiment conducted by a super-advanced alien race. The group was held together by a somewhat pedantic 35-year-old English failure named Richard Avery, and ultimately won through all trials and tribulations. It was a rather good novel, and apparently Cooper thought so, too, because with Sea Horse in the Sky he has employed many of the same elements again. Avery is a few years older now, and Cooper names him Russell Grahame, but it's precisely the same character. The group of Terrans is larger, and there are a number of other complications, but both novels have been written from the same outline.

This is not a complaint, mind you, simply an observation. There are enough dissimilar elements to make them two distinctly different stories, and both novels are handled well and are worth reading. It is, though, a curious thing that, despite some outstanding segments dealing with the contact between the Terrans and two other groups inhabiting the area in which they are stranded, I would in general rate the earlier novel as the better of the two. One major reason for this is the quality of the characterization. In Transit, Cooper had only four real characters with whom to work, a quartet of Terrans sharing a Robinson Crusoe-type existence on an island beneath a strange sun. Sea Horse in the Sky has sixteen Terrans, plus several well-defined individuals from other worlds, which presents an awfully lot more ambitious field for character development, especially in a novel that is under 60,000 words. Inevitably, most of those sixteen Terrans are pasteboard cut-outs that stand around looking decorative and are arbitrarily moved from place to place by the author. It is surprising that Cooper achieves as much as he does with characterization: Grahame/Avery is a believable individual, as are a couple of the other Terrans and the three principal alien characters.

Cooper is an excellent writer, and this book is extremely strong in terms of smoothness and pacing through most of its length. It begins to fuzz around the edges toward the end, but never to the extent of seriously damaging it as a novel. There are a couple of annoying points, such as the fact that the planet on which the action takes place is supposed to have two-thirds Earth gravity, but after being mentioned once, very early in the story, this fact never has the slightest effect on the physical activity of the characters. Still, while it is not as exceedingly good as Transit or as Cooper's major novel to date, Five to Twelve, Sea Horse in the Sky is well worth reading.

-- Ted Pauls

Five Fates, by Poul Anderson, Frank Herbert, Gordon Dickson, Harlan Ellison, and Keith Laumer (Doubleday; 256 pages; $4.95).

Each of this quintet of top s-f writers was commissioned to extrapolate from a common story-hook: a man voluntarily selects death at the Euthanasia Center. The resultant pentad of individual visions make up the "Five Fates" of William Bailey.

Poul Anderson's "The Fatal Fulfillment" is a mentonymic parable in which Bailey hears a God who counts off various fateful combinations--only the whole thing turns out to be a computer simulation. Poor by usual Andersonian standards.

Frank Herbert, in "Murder Will In", concocts a battle for survival faced by the Tagas/Bacit (whatever it/they are) occupying Bailey's body. The author of Dune has proven he can do better that the story included here.

"Maverick", Gordon Dickson's contribution, introduces Bailey in the parallel world concept, where he gets a body with wings. Characterization is a little condescending, but otherwise good identity-change fare.

Harlan Ellison ought to be ashamed for "The Region Between". Ringing in a Succubus (?) is bad enough, but using sophomoric writing devices like staggered, sidewise, upside-down and interlocked sections--and even one page printed completely in a spiral--makes the effort muddier than the story already is. I didn't like the vermiculations of this so-called story when it appeared in the March 1970 issue of GALAXY MAGAZINE; it doesn't appeal a bit more in hard cover. Very poor on two counts.

Keith Laumer's tale, "Of Death What Dreams", is the best of the lot. He injects logic into the very limiting parameter built into this assignment and weaves a futuristic Horatio Alger kind of tale set in a chillingly realistic might-yet-come urban setting. Very good under the circumstances.

All in all, if it's novelty you look for in an s-f book, get this. But if consistent quality is what you like, then you're fated to be dissatisfied with Five Fates.

-- James R. Newton

The Zero Stone, by Andre Norton (Ace 95960; 60¢).

It feels good, after some of the things I have read recently, to find a book that doesn't revolve around sex. I am fascinated, however, by the fact that a woman author can manage to write a book in which practically the only female is a ship's cat who has a "kitten" by immaculate conception.

The "kitten" is Eet, an e.t. (she calls 'em X-Tees) intelligence who sounds more or less like a lemur with the mange. Eet has more ability, intelligence, and knowledge (not to mention personality) than any of the people in the story--and, in general, seems to run things to suit himself. Especially his human pet, Murdoc Jern.

The story is in A.N.'s usual secondary universe, that of the Free Traders, the Thieves' Guild, the Wyverns, the Zacathans, and the Patrol; but the Patrol seems a little less nice than usual. Which fact makes me wonder if the current plague of Fuzz Fever hasn't reached her as well.

Murdoc Jern has received, as a legacy, a strange ring that everybody wants, but he doesn't know why. So he tries to find out. And he does. But everybody finds him. Only he's already found, or been found by, Eet. And Eet comes through in the clutch. The story is pretty much what Ted White calls "Andre Norton's Standard Plot A", with a few more pretensions than usual. Good adventure for us juveniles, and an excellent change of pace after Bug Jack Barron.

-- David A. Halterman

One Step from Earth, by Harry Harrison (Macmillan; $5.95).

What effect would the ability to scan a solid object (including man), convert it to a signal, send that signal out, and reconvert it to original form at the receiving end have on man and his institutions?

Consideration of matter transmission is the common thread that runs through this collection of nine utterly fascinating tales.

The answer to the question posed can only be, as it was for each of the preceding transportation plateaus (foot, sail, internal combustion, rocket) that every facet of life would be altered: language, social customs, business, medicine, war--nothing would be immune to the effects of a transport system that makes the greatest distance imaginable (within practical material limits) no farther away than a step through a matter transmitter.

The possibilities are endless. The nine-element MT-oriented universe Harrison presents here reflects a shrewd understanding of the human attributes that will surely obtain in the vast future ahead. Thus, his characters relate to their hypothetical worlds with a logicalness that rings true here and now. One Step is delightfully smooth reading.

More, Harrison has that rare ability to tailor words in such a way that the diversity of individual storylines attains an imaginative wholeness that hangs together like a many-faceted jewel. He gets my highest accolade: I literally hated to put the book down. You will, too.

-- James R. Newton

The New Adam, by Stanley G. Weinbaum (Avon V2288; 190 pp.; 75¢).

I liked the cover; compared to the atrocious cover on The Black Flame, this one is fabulous.

Edmound Hall is the new Adam, a mutant superman, the first of a more highly evolved species of man. He is as far above man on the ladder of evolution as is man above the Neanderthaler. The story traces his life among man, the "primitives", in very much the same manner and style as Olaf Stapledon's Odd John.

In the end, Hall, torn in his love between a "primitive" woman and a female of his own kind, and having a sense of futility in all things, commits suicide.

In a book review in the first issue of SUPER SCIENCE (March 1940), Donald A. Wollheim condemned TNA partly because of this act. He then went on to praise Odd John. In Odd John, however, the whole race commits suicide with perhaps less provocation than Edmound Hall. The other point on which Wollheim condemned TNA is: ". . . unaware of the infinite possibilities inherent in himself, hopelessly

incapable of arising above a despondent futility that even we 'primitives' have outgrown." This, however, is the main point of the novel which makes it distinctive. Weinbaum is simply extrapolating a possibility for the reader to consider: an iconoclast's view of the proposition, superhumanism is a better state of things. (You don't have to agree; just consider it.)

The New Adam, like many superman novels (except Van Vogt's), is slow reading. It is not as good as Odd John because it lacks the same emotional power. If you liked Odd John, read TNA; if you've never read Odd John, read it first and then decide.

-- Michael T. Shoemaker

The Future Is Now, a science-fiction anthology compiled and edited by William F. Nolan (Sherbourne Press, Los Angeles; 248 pages; $6.50).

This melange, Nolan's sixth s-f anthology, presents twelve stories by top writers in the field appearing in print for the first time. By and large it's a readable book.

But Nolan has included some froth amongst much more meaty tales. For example, Terry Dixon's "Hate Is A Sandpaper Ice Cube with Polka Dots of Love on It" may have been written as "a put-on and put-down of certain undesirable elements in the New Wave. . .", but his sophomoric use of mechanical type-setting gimmickery leaves me unimpressed, even though aware of the sarcasm intended. Nolan himself contributed "Toe to Tip, Tip to Toe, Pip-Pop As You Go", one of those frothy little satirical ramblings that usually turn me off about half-way through; this time I lasted one-third of the way.

On the other hand, contributors like Robert F. Young, the late Anthony Boucher, Tom Purdom and Ron Goulart turned in their usual solid, meaningful kind of pieces, each of which has a cogent, understandable comment on the Status of Man.

Which, after all, is the whole purpose of literature, science-fiction included.

-- James R. Newton

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the demon breed
james h schmitz
ace books
book club edition

yngvi again
yngvi the cockroach
who is not a louse
this book was
first printed in
analog
and its analogous
i liked the other title
better
it reminded me
of a song
by the kingston trio
tuvela
tuvela
tuvela
yo ho ho
its the type of story
that if
eric frank russell
wrote it id be too busy
laughing
to write this
one girl
against the might
of the parahuans
but boy
is she sneaky
the other guys
had been stomped
pardon the profanity
by earth
and they thought
miss nile
and other earthlings
were supermen
it sounds better
at least
than the
jewish communist
conspiracy
for lack of
any better ideas
miss nile decides
to play the role
she has the help
of some smart alec
otters
and some gadgets
she happens
to have with her
its good
adventure
but it needs
a little more
sarcasm
so say i
yngvi the cockroach
who is not a louse

-- yngvi

I Sing the Body Electric!, by Ray Bradbury (Alfred A. Knopf; 305 pp.; $6.95).

Readers who want the books they read to contain adventurous action won't like this book; Bradbury doesn't swash a single buckle. But if you enjoy fiction with a faint aftertaste, like fine wine, that lingers long after the reading's done, this 18-story volume is well worth the price.

Haunting, that's the word. Bradbury, author of more than 300 stories over the last 25 years, plots the bizarre and the normal, the fantastic and the believable, the real and the unreal so skillfully, so subtly, that what results is always a gentle, feather-light fusion of fable, science, humor, suspense, and--above all-life.

Take, for example, a house sullied by the excesses of its owner. When it burns down and is rebuilt exactly as it was before the fire, its innocence returns and it rejects its sinful owner. Impossible? Not the way "The Haunting of the New" paints the poignancy of a wastrel's discovery that so-called pleasures of the flesh are, after all, just so much dust in the mouth.

Or take the book's title story, which tells of the wondrous humanoid-genre mini-circuited, rechargeable, AC-DC Mark VI Electric Grandmother, obtained to replace a mother recently dead. Before you scoff, read Bradbury's nostalgia-stirring treatment of how love, even from a fantastic more-than-machine, fills the void in young lives.

As a matter of fact, "beautifully haunting" is a more apt description of Ray Bradbury's I Sing the Body Electric! It'll mist your eyes more than once.

-- James R. Newton

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The Year 2000, ed. by Harry Harrison (Doubleday, Book Club Edition).

Harry Harrison is rapidly developing a reputation as an editor of not quite first-rate anthologies. This is the third I've reviewed in the past year. With Brian Aldiss, he edits the Best SF series; commenting on the 1968 volume in TWJ #71, I suggested that it might better have been titled "Some Pretty Good SF, Including a Couple of the Best of 68". Harrison's problem appears to be that he is an indiscriminate anthologist; seizing upon an idea for an anthology, he rushes out and corrals the first dozen stories he sees that fit into the proper category. In Nova 1 (reviewed in TWJ SUPPLEMENT 72-1), he proclaimed the originality (two years after Dangerous Visions; more years after the birth of the Orbit series) of an anthology of never-before-published stories, offering fifteen selections the majority of which will probably have the dubious distinction of also being never-again-published stories. Now he has produced The Year 2000, and doubtless there will be another one along by the end of spring.

This, as the title indicates, is a "theme" anthology, in which the unifying factor is that all of the stories are set in the year 2000. In the words of the jacket flap, "In compiling this unique anthology, Mr. Harrison asked some of science fiction's most noted writers to contribute an original story, the only stipulation being that the story be set in the year 2000." Thirteen writers (including the editor himself) sent in stories. Some of them are good stories. Some of them are mediocre. All of them are published in this volume. The indiscriminate anthologist has struck again.

Four of these stories are top-flight works of speculative fiction. Chad Oliver's "Far From This Earth", like several other of the selections in this volume, is not essentially an SF story, except that it is set thirty years in the future. It is an extremely well-done and sensitive story about a Kenyan torn between traditional African and modern Western culture, and as such could have been written about an individual anywhere in the "Third World" any time after 1960.

"Black Is Beautiful", by Robert Silverberg, is a somewhat parallel story, set in an all-Black New York City. Here the problem for the central character, a 17-year-old named James Shabazz, is not the collision of two cultures, but the collision of the romance of revolutionary struggle with the reality of the revolution's achievement. In Silverberg's tale, told with his usual smooth skill, Black Power has become a reality; but Shabazz, imbued with the emotion of a centuries-long struggle, can't accept the idea that there is no longer any white oppression against which to struggle and that the black establishment which runs America's cities has become as conservative and status quo-oriented as the white establishment always was. David I. Masson's "Take It or Leave It" is an utterly extraordinary two-track story which shows an English family in two radically different societies, one primitive (post-catastrophe) and one advanced, each nightmarish in its particular respect. It is an extremely New Wave piece, in which the author never bothers to explain anything or provide any background, but it is superbly done. Masson's prose, particularly his use of an oddly grammatical vernacular in one of the tracks, cannot really be described; it must be experienced to be appreciated. Finally, there is Harrison's own contribution, the last selection in the volume, "American Dead", an excellent story about the racial guerilla warfare that some observers see in this nation's not too distant future.

The other nine stories range downward from the competent, interesting but unexceptional to the dull and mediocre. The lead story, Fritz Leiber's curious, muted "America the Beautiful", fits into the former category, along with "Judas Fish", by Thomas N. Scortia, J.J. Coupling's "To Be a Man", and Keith Laumer's "The Lawgiver". Daniel F. Galouye's "Prometheus Rebound" is a dull, conventional "hard SF" tale that might have appeared in a Gernsback magazine 35 years ago. "After the Accident" is Naomi Mitchison attempting to be an SF writer again, while "Utopian" is Mack Reynolds being Mack Reynolds: a clever but minor one-punch story. Brian W. Aldiss' "Orgy of the Living and Dying" is, like Oliver's story, only marginally science fiction. Its background includes some SF elements, but the basic story is a human one set against famine relief efforts in India, and might as easily have been placed in 1967 as 2000. It is interesting, but over-long. "Sea Change", by A. Bertram Chandler, is twelve pages shorter than the Aldiss story but seems longer. It is Chandler writing a Hemingwayesque story about a sea captain who employs the Old Methods and wins the respect of his young upstart officers. Its SF element is that the captain has been in suspended animation (the deep freeze idea).

Except for Galouye's anachronism, there isn't really a downright poor story in the lot, but one cannot and does not judge anthologies by the same standards applied to magazines. A predominance of stories that are competent without being in any way exceptional makes a mediocre anthology, and The Year 2000 is the latest in a series of mediocre anthologies edited by Harry Harrison. It's worth borrowing for the four really worthwhile selections, but I wouldn't recommend anybody actually buying the book.

-- Ted Pauls

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I Am Legend, by Richard Matheson (Walker & Co.; 122 pages; $4.95).

Vampires belong in fantasy, right? Maybe, but Matheson's 1954 story neatly bridges the normal gulf between science-fiction and fantasy. It is thus a rarity well worth the reading.

Warner Brothers liked it so well they recently announced they will film the story, starring Charlton Heston as Robert Neville, the last man in the world still uninfected by vampirus bacillus. Earlier, in 1964, Vincent Price played the same role in American International's version titled The Last Man on Earth.

By any title, this book contains edge-of-the-seat writing too seldom encountered in any genre. More, Matheson's impeccable craftsmanship

breathes a life into his characterization of Robert Neville that makes him more real on the printed page than are many faceless strangers one passes in the flesh every day. Even the hideous pseudo-living undead are drawn with a scary realism that will touch the most deeply-buried core of terror. His vivid portrayals are not for the squeamish, though his artistry, once sampled, is almost impossible to reject, even if long-checked superstitions refuse to remain quiescent.

Neville's search for a clue to Man's chance of survival amid the black aftermath of a plague that left Earth swarming with the damned gives some very logical answers. Yet as the pieces of the puzzle fall heartbreakingly into place, despair deepens. The arrival of a girl briefly spurs some hope, but....

But it wouldn't be fair to disclose the stunning climax and the horrid insinuation that Man's salvation may not be, after all, anyone's idea of a paradisiacal destiny.

-- James R. Newton

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The Pussycat Transplant, by Ted Mark (Berkley S1625; 75¢).

This review is justified on all grounds for a science fiction fan magazine. The story hangs on a straightforward scientific extrapolation, and, frankly, anyone who doesn't feel that Ted Mark's stories aren't pretty fantastic literature hasn't read any.

Penny Candie has always had a warm womb in her heart for one Studs Levine who is, at the start of the story, in Viet Nam, but who has left her with a momento of his love. Since she hadn't gotten married yet, she suddenly finds herself with a strange dislike for rabbits and an interest in abortionists. After finding herself on pins and needles for a while, she finally finds one who, as it happens, is a frustrated brain surgeon. Penny gets somewhat hot and bothered, but finally wakes up on the operating table with a small problem in the shape of things that come. Through a slight failure to communicate, her body has been cooked to a turn, but her brain is undamaged; a certain young man, the son of one of the wealthier patients the doctor treats, has blown his brains out. The doctor adds one and one together and comes up with what could have been, under other circumstances, the perfect heaven for a transvestite. In other words, Miss Penny Candie is now Mr. Pennington (Penny) P. Potter.

After getting the hang of things, Penny reconciles her(?)self to the situation. She(?) finds the biggest problem a simple but prickly sort of problem which presents itself for elimination. With the help of his(?) loving Mommie and other helpful onlookers, he(?) finally gets to the point.

Meanwhile, we learn that Penny is suspected of having stolen a large sum of money from the place where he(?) works, the Fuller Lawn Manure Company, whose motto is "Six Pounds of Fertilizing Power in a Five Pound Bag" (Don't you blivit). She (?) feels that he(?) may really have done it, because of a woman in his life, so she(?) proceeds to investigate. She(?) first comes across his(?) girlfriend, Clytemnestra, in the ladies' room. After a certain amount of confusion, they decide to empty the rest of the money out of the safe, and take off. So Penny and Cly steal a Model A Ford and ride off into the sunset, with the cops hot on their tails.

And so it goes, with a lot of the book still to go.

Ted Mark is quite possibly the master of this type of story, combining bawdy humor, pornographic techniques, and a reasonable amount of action in a beautifully coherent sort of way. He follows the pattern of Candy, to its ultimate, uproarious, and quite literate climax. As a writer, he follows in the best traditions of the burlesque come-

dians, by making fun of one of America's most sacred of all sacred cows. In his Man from O.R.G.Y. series, he pastiched and parodied James Bond more completely than anyone has done since the Schlock Homes series.

Heartily recommended for all fans who like that sort of thing. Heh, heh.

-- David A. Halterman

The World Shuffler, by Keith Laumer (G. P. Putnam's Sons; 185 pp.; $4.95).

Save your money. Unless you enjoy purposeless literary meanderings that arbitrarily begin on page one, vermiculate tortuously through a meaningless series of monotonously similar actions, and tediously end on the last page in precisely the same spot they began--nowhere.

Along the way the "science" in this turbid tale is supposedly supplied by the hero's titubant passage between separate but similar universes which exist side-by-side in a continuum of different dimensions. The continua concept is neither new nor unique. But seldom have I read a story in which it was so poorly handled.

Plot isn't the only shortcoming. The hero (though there's little heroic about him) is a naive, bumbling incompetent, improbably named Lafayette O'Leary, who consistently fails to learn anything from one misadventure to the next. His personality remains consistently inept at each shift to another universe, although everyone else's, including his wife's, alters to varying degrees.

All in all this is a most unsatisfactory story. More, considered as a candidate for inclusion in the science-fiction literary genre, it's a fraud.

Laumer should know better. He's proven in the past he can do better. Let's hope he does do better in his next effort.

-- James R. Newton

Masque World, by Alexei Panshin (Ace).

This is another of the Anthony Villiers adventures, and as such does not quite meet the quality of the first two books (Starwell and The Thurb Revolution). As always, there is a good deal of action in the story, although it is cleverly disguised. More information is given about Torve the Trog and Villiers, who is criticized as much as ever by Panshin. There is not quite as much humor in Masque World as there was in the first two books and, because of the style Panshin uses, it is for this reason less enjoyable.

It does begin to look as if a new series is being planned, since this book is positively ridden with material for future stories. Unfortunately, to accomplish this, Villiers is in our opinion given an omniscient air which detracts from the characterization.

The story itself takes place in what we estimate to be about eight hours, and there are few if any irrelevances presented considering the style used. We were introduced to several new characters quite as fascinating as any we have met before, such as Charles the robotic butler, a table, Annie Parini, and Slyne (an Orthodoxou). If only for his characterizations, Panshin is well worth reading, and we do sincerely recommend Masque World as worthy of your august attention.

-- Robert Weston

Nebula Award Five, ed. by James Blish (Doubleday & Company; 215 pp.; $4.95).

This selection of best science-fiction stories of 1969, ballot-chosen by the members of the Science Fiction Writers of America, includes winners in best No-

vella, Novelette and Short Story categories, plus three Runners-up. All are by established authors in the field: Harlan Ellison, Samuel R. Delany, Robert Silverberg, Ursula K. LeGuin, Larry Niven and Theodore Sturgeon. They represent quality writing, but choice of subject matter reflects the often brutal, usually impersonal and frequently hopeless elements of man's nature as seen in today's volatile social matrix projected into a speculative or fantastic set of circumstances.

-- James R. Newton

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Worlds of the Wall, by C. C. MacApp (Avon V2308; 75¢).

Zeke Bolivar lands on a planet that isn't all there. Half of it is somewhere else, on the other side of a wall that divides one continuum from another. Or was it six continua, or seven, or....

This story starts out simply enough, but soon develops more wheels within wheels than A.E. Van Vogt ever thought of. It involves a little swordplay and a lot of sorcery, the magic being of a type I don't believe I've seen very much of. Even time ends up more than a little out of joint.

The story does make one good point. Most stories of this type tend to make the interloping hero master of all he surveys. In this story, Zeke ends up a slave, which is probably the safest place in any primitive society for an alien. The visitor has no problems adjusting; he is adjusted. He doesn't have to worry about money; he doesn't have any. He obviously doesn't have to worry about a job.

The story is sword-and-sorcery, but an odd lot. There are no beautiful princesses, no broadswords, no kingdoms to conquer. But the scenery is good, the characters are believable, and the book ends up a little more surprisingly than most. I enjoyed it. RATING: B.

-- David A. Halterman

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Indoctrinaire, by Christopher Priest (Harper & Row; 227 pages; $5.95).

The British author of this first novel has brushed in a plot with broad strokes--from the Antarctic to Brazil to England; from 1979 to 2189 and back again; from peace to World War III--his extrapolations from problems facing us now to chillingly logical future probabilities inject an immediacy that manages to bridge a few minor literary deficiencies.

The biggest obstacle to real believability is, of course, the use of time travel as a story-telling device. Almost everything else is credible: an under-ice research lab, mind-affecting drugs, nuclear weapons, VTOL aircraft. Only the time displacement field marks this as fantastic science-fiction.

A research scientist experimenting with mind-affecting drugs beneath the Antarctic ice is taken to Brazil 210 years in the future to help develop an antidote for a personality-disturbing gas. The gas had resulted from his own research, and is now affecting the whole world. He is subjected to a wide variety of harassment, imprisonment and terror by the insane behavior of the very men who want his help.

Along the way he displays an incredible lack of natural reaction against the incidents which befall him. Otherwise the author has given him credible enough characterization and placed him in believable enough situations to make Indoctrinaire pleasant, if not great, science-fiction fare.

-- James R. Newton

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