

The trees got shorter and shorter, became gnarled and stunted little shrubs, then gave way to grass and moss, then to bare rock. The two climbed up precarious slopes, the fog clinging around them, as if the mountain wore it like a night-shirt. At last they came to the summit, and to a tiny hut. Inside was a bare table and two chairs. The stranger ushered the King in and motioned for him to sit.

Anahai looked around at the bareness of the dwelling. "There is a pestilence in the land," he said doubtfully, "and I will give you anything you desire if --"

A long, flat box was placed on the table.

"Play this game with me."

Anahai nodded, and regretted he had spoken rashly. He knew to wait, to expect but not to ask, and hope that what he had requested of the God of Mysteries would be granted.

Inside the box was a notched board painted in black and white squares, and some glowing balls. With these they played a game, the King keeping his balls on the white squares and the other keeping his on the black. When those of one were surrounded by those of the other, they were taken, and when the stranger captured one he placed it in his palm, and the light of it would go out, leaving it a dull brown. But when Anahai took one it would glow all the brighter. He won some and he lost some. Over this game the man in the grey cape showed emotion, gloating as he hoarded each new acquisition, scowling each time Anahai made one brighter. For a time the King feared he would not win, and played on with the resignation of a general fighting a hopeless battle in which he cannot surrender, but then the tide turned, and the room glowed with his winnings which he piled on one side of the table. It seemed to go on forever. Sometimes he felt as if he were asleep, and the motions of his hands were being made by the hands, independent of his will, and at times his mind was very clear, and he schemed and made strategies and practised diversions.

At last dawn came. The sun began to melt through the uppermost mist, and the gloom inside the hut was somewhat lessened. For the first time Anahai saw that there was a window. Through it he could see the dull orange glow of the morning, diffused in the fog.

He felt confused, exhausted, irritated at having spent the whole night doing this meaningless thing.

"What happens now?"

The other spoke for the second time. His voice was deep and hollow, as if coming from far away, from beyond the form that stood before Anahai.

"You have won. You hold more worlds than I."

"Will you then drive the pestilence away, if this is within your power?"

"Do? It shall be done! It is done! Know! Recognize! See, as was randomly pre-ordained!"

"See what? Recognize what?" The King's bewilderment was now mixed with terror.

The other made a sweeping gesture with his arms, his cloak flapping out like wings. He went to a corner, picked up two things, threw the door of the hut open and stood silhouetted, the rising sun behind him.

He smiled. For the first time Anahai noticed he had a long white beard.

"Do you not know me?"

And there in the doorway, with his scythe in one hand, his hourglass in the other, and his satchel of Years slung over his shoulder, the young King knew him.

In the middle of a day measured variously according to various calendars, one dressed in rich but ragged garments wandered into a village. He called all the people around him, and some came, while others went on about their business, and when they would not bow before him he grew angry, saying, "I am your king! I am your king!" And he mentioned certain names, and the people laughed, and went away. He stood alone

in their square until a very old woman came up to him and said she had heard those names before in tales told to her long ago, but that the place he spoke of had passed away ten times ten generations ago.

And on hearing this King Anahai began to weep, for he knew how his request had been fulfilled and who had done it, and he knew the answers to all the questions that had come into his head that morning, when he descended the mountain and found himself in a strange country. Somewhere the God of Mysteries was laughing perhaps, or perhaps not. Perhaps things could not have turned out any differently.

Time had driven the pestilence out of Rembathene.



THE UGLY AVOIDED PLACES

By Joseph Payne Brennan

There are ugly, avoided places
where vibrant words
turn into chaff,
places we pass,
places where we look the other way,
where we don't want to stay.

There are empty, ambiguous places
where crevices smoke,
where the winds poke,
places far within,
too far beneath the skin,
where the mind-wrenching questions begin.

OF SWORDS & SORCERY No. 3:

Brak the Barbarian by John Jakes
Prester John by Norvell Page
The Warlock by Larry Niven
The Leries Mecca by Gene Lancour

If we can believe the prefatory notes and brief interviews via which fantasy authors enjoy tantalizing their readers, John Jakes is an old Conan fan from way back who always longed to add another Conan-like hero to the sword & sorcery genre but never quite got around to it. Until one day, he was asked to write a 5,000 word short story overnight to fill an editorial hole in the first issue of a magazine that never saw the light of day. In a burning flash of inspiration, Brak the Barbarian was created.

Even if it isn't true, it sounds nice.

Out of the chilly northern steppes of his world wanders Brak the Barbarian on his quest to reach fair Khurdisan in the far south, a living Valhalla-like land of wonders, riches and eternal peace of mind. Naturally, along the way, he runs into a number of obstacles not the least of which are damsels in distress and wicked sorcerers worshipping the evil god Yob-Haggoth. All in all, it's a nicely woven fabric on which any number of tales can be hung. Unfortunately, Jakes hasn't taken to hanging many of them in recent years.

Brak is a big, brawny barbarian who wears his blonde hair in a braid hanging down his back. Disregarding Frazetta's cover illustration to the first paperback, his favorite weapon is the sword and he has never used a battleaxe (Frazetta even faked out the blurb writer on that one). Although it seems just a wee bit incongruous, he always rides a pony (unlike the monster of a horse Frazetta created for one cover) and he's always losing them. In one story his pony gets eaten!

Jakes unabashedly admits the influence of Robert E. Howard's Conan, but except for the Conan-like paperback covers and the fact that Brak is indeed a barbarian, all similarity ends there.

In the earlier stories -- those written for Cele Goldsmith's **FANTASTIC STORIES OF IMAGINATION** in the mid-60s -- Brak comes across a basically dumb, naive, good-natured barbarian; willing to help out anyone in need and equally willing to be gulled by anyone wanting to take advantage of him. Nevertheless, he always manages to triumph, help out the good guys, punish or eliminate the bad guys and get back on the road headed south to Khurdisan.

These traits do lead to some awkward plot situations at times that tend to stretch to the breaking point the reader's willingness to accept. On the other hand, it is at times a refreshing change from such somber, moody and violent heroes as Conan. Brak is more peaceful in nature, more at ease and more trusting of his fellow man, and less prone to react violently when antagonized. In short, he'll put up with a lot of guff before doing something about it.

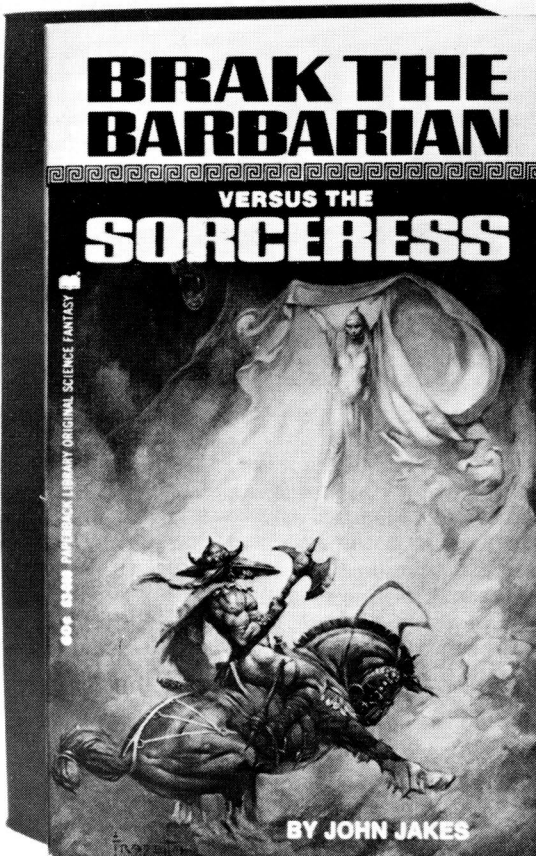
The 5,000 word short story Jakes wrote overnight appeared as "Devils in the Walls" in the May 1963 **FANTASTIC**. Internal evidence supports the story that Jakes did indeed create Brak on short notice. Khurdisan -- the fabric running throughout the Brak stories -- is not mentioned and vague references to Christianity tend to place the story on Earth sometime during the first few centuries A.D. Jakes later rewrote and slightly expanded the story from inclusion in Robert Hoskins' **SWORDS AGAINST TOMORROW** (Signet, 1970). In addition to making Brak just slightly less naive, he also placed the story in its proper context in the saga.

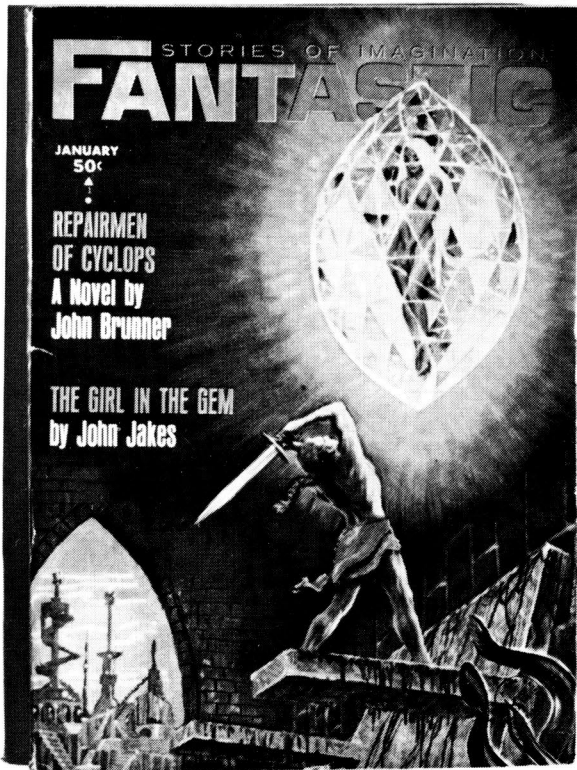
Fortunately, Brak doesn't come off as overly naive in "Devils" -- chalk it up to youthful inexperience -- and by no means is he portrayed as a weak character. The story opens with Brak on the auction block. In the second paragraph, he is beating the auctioneer's brains out with his slave chain. Later in the story, he dispatches his sorcerous opponents with great finesse and skillful efficiency. Nevertheless, he's not another Conan and differs greatly from a host of other Conan imitators. For an overnight assignment, Jakes put together an enjoyable story.

I wish I could say the same for the second story in the series, "Witch of the Four Winds", a short novel published in two parts in the November and December 1963 issues of **FANTASTIC**. In this story, Brak is not only naive, he's downright clumsy, inept, slow-witted and totally unable to take decisive action. It is more an experiment in frustration than anything. Brak stumbles his way through 107-digest size pages to a denouement hardly worth the effort made in reaching it on the part of the reader. For me, the story was a severe disappointment; the plot is sadly lacking and the hero comes out looking like a complete schmuck.

Fortunately, Jakes made some major improvements in rewriting and expanding the story for publication as **BRAK THE BARBARIAN VERSUS THE SORCERESS** (Paperback Library, 1969). In **SORCERESS**, Jakes drastically changes Brak's antagonists, making them more formidable. He also throws in some additional action, makes Brak look a little less naive, and alleviates the feeling of clumsiness by providing some much needed justification for some of Brak's actions (or lack thereof). The story is a tighter one and the hero more believable. Although an improvement, I thought the plot still dragged heavily in places. Undoubtedly, my opinion of **SORCERESS** remains tainted by the bad taste of "Witch".

"When the Idols Walked", another two-parter in **FANTASTIC** (August and September, 1964) is a return to the Brak of "Devils". The plot is weak in several places, but it's a fairly enjoyable, fairly well-written story. Still, it lacks the 'in-





spiration' or whatever it was that made "Devils in the Walls" a better story. "Witch" and "Idols" probably would have been much improved as novelettes. For some reason, Jakes was going after more wordage; he failed disastrously with "Witch" and barely succeeded with "Idols".

Perhaps Jakes noticed a difference, too, because the next three Brak stories to appear were short stories: "The Girl in the Gem" in the January 1965 *FANTASTIC*, "The Pillars of Chambalor" in March and "The Silk of Shaitan" in April. I enjoyed all three and I also noticed a subtle change beginning to take place in Brak. He progressively becomes a little less gullible and a little more wary of strangers. While the change is not a drastic one, he becomes suspicious of people's motives earlier in the game and is more prone to decisive action. "Girl", by the way, was later reprinted in L. Sprague de Camp's *THE FANTASTIC SWORDSMEN* (Pyramid, 1967) and "Pillars" appeared in *SWORD AND SORCERY ANNUAL* No. 1 in 1975.

With the departure of Cele Goldsmith from *FANTASTIC*, it appeared that Brak's adventures had come to an untimely end. Fortunately, in 1968, Avon paperbacks revived the cycle with the publication of *BRAK THE BARBARIAN*, a collection of five loosely-connected short stories and novelettes. The titles are: "The Unspeakable Shrine", "Flame-Face", "The Courts of the Conjuror" (a reprint of "Silk of Shaitan"), "Ghosts of Stone" (a reprint of "Pillars of Chambalor"), and "The Barge of Souls." It is in this book that Jakes introduces Septegundis and his daughter Ariane, worshippers of the evil god Yob-Haggoth, who threaten to plague Brak throughout his journey to Khurdisan. Incidentally, it is they who comprise the more formidable antagonists in *BRAK VERSUS THE SORCERESS*.

Shortly after *BRAK THE BARBARIAN*, the first issue of a new fantasy magazine, *WORLDS OF FANTASY*, appeared on the stands (summer of '68). It was edited by Lester Del Rey and for fans familiar with Del Rey's earlier work with the ill-fated *FANTASY MAGAZINE* of 1953, it had to be a thrill. Included in the first issue was a new Brak story, "The Mirror of Wizardry". And evident in "Mirror" were still further signs of change. Brak

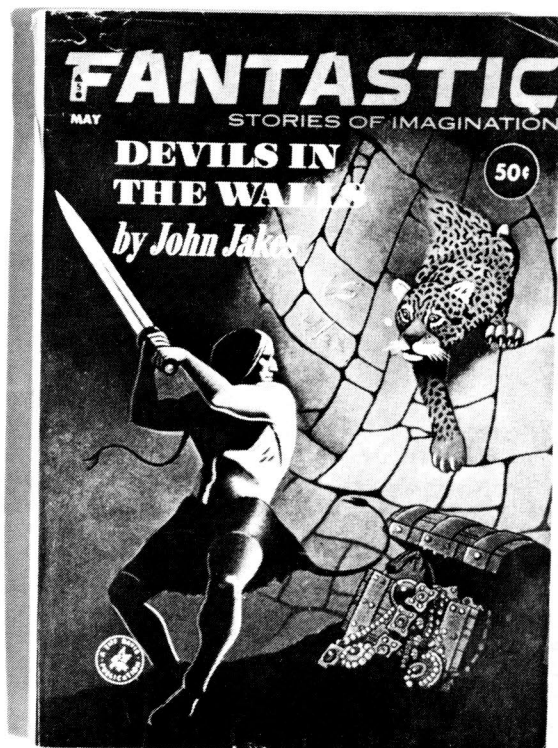
had begun to age and mature; no longer is he the good-natured, somewhat simple-minded barbarian. He's had a gut full of the ways of civilized people by now and is beginning to show signs of cynicism. At the very least, his attitude toward life is much more realistic.

In early 1969, Jakes switched to Paperback Library for publication of *BRAK VERSUS THE SORCERESS* and quickly followed it the same year with another novel, *BRAK THE BARBARIAN VERSUS THE MARK OF THE DEMONS*. In *DEMONS*, Brak is now a fully mature, adult barbarian. Gone are all signs of the younger, more naive youth. He is now openly cynical of civilized people, more quickly and easily angered, swifter to react violently and more openly antagonistic. By contrast, the Brak of old appears almost weak-livered and wishy washy. Some people may not like this change because it brings Brak closer to being a carbon-copy of Conan. I do like it because I think Jakes has matured along with Brak in his approach to writing the stories. From a technical viewpoint, *DEMONS* is more tightly-plotted and better written than any of the earlier stories and Brak definitely comes across as a more believable character.

A final Brak novelette, "Ghoul's Garden", appeared in Lin Carter's *FLASHING SWORDS* No. 2 (Doubleday and Dell, 1973). Those who objected to the somber, almost Solomon Kane-like tone of *DEMONS* were probably relieved with *GHOUL'S GARDEN*, which is considerably lighter in tone.

Jakes has always claimed that he enjoys writing the Brak stories; yet "Ghoul's Garden" is the only new Brak story that has appeared in the last seven years. + If he does enjoy writing them, he's missing a golden opportunity to hit the currently burgeoning sword & sorcery market with some new stories. Currently, Jakes is authoring a number of bicentennial novels for Pinnacle paperbacks which probably pay better. However, he has written a few sword & sorcery stories around other characters and I'll be covering them in future columns.

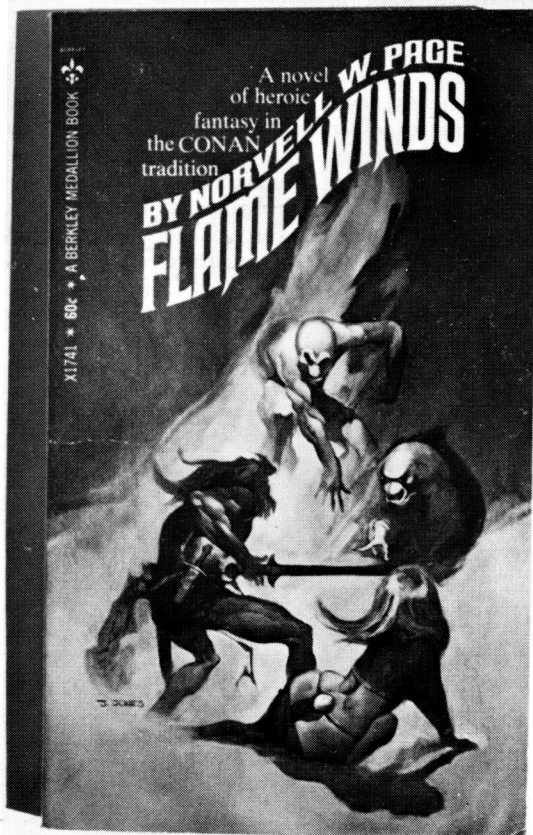
+A footnote for Brak completists: It's not my intention to cover



comic strip adaptations in this column, but one story bears mentioning. "Spell of the Dragon", an original Brak story, was plotted by Val Mayerik and scripted by John Jakes in Marvel's **CHAMBER OF CHILLS** No. 2 for January 1973. It was later reprinted in **SAVAGE TALES** No. 5 for July 1974. Incidentally, Jakes has scripted a number of other sword & sorcery stories for Marvel comics.

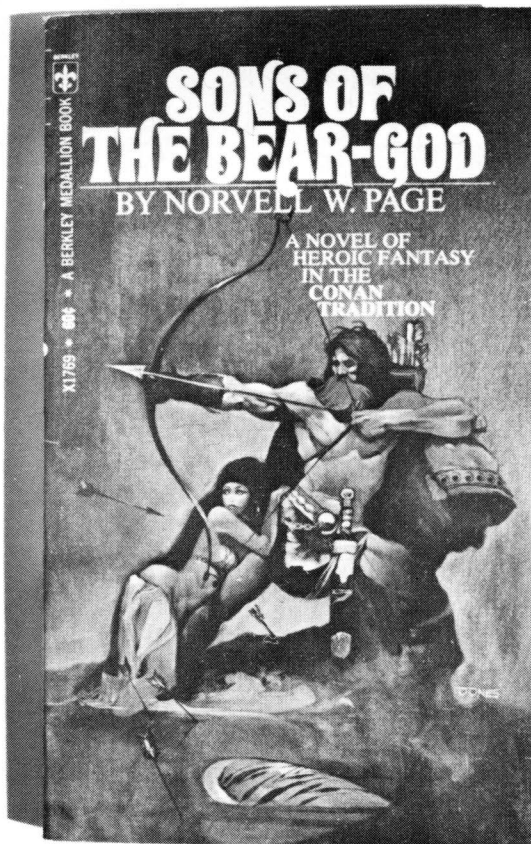
Picture if you will, a red-headed, bearded Conan, a follower of Christ, who wanders Asia during the first Century A.D. conquering cities; if successful, Christ gets another 50,000 followers and our hero gets all the wine, women and loot he can handle. Sounds like a pretty wild premise for a sword & sorcery story, but it worked for Norvell Page back in 1939. And the stories turned out pretty damned good.

A former newspaperman turned freelance pulp writer, Page was one of the more prolific pulp writers of his time. During his prime in the mid-30s, he claimed to be writing (and selling) as much as 120,000 words a month to a variety of pulps under a variety of pseudonyms. Probably his most famous hero was the pulp character, The Spider, written under the Grant Stockbridge byline.



In 1939, Page decided to give the sword & sorcery genre a try and wrote two short novels about a Conan-esque hero named Prester John, or, as the Asians called him, Wan Tengri. According to recorded history, the real Prester John lived and reigned in the 12th Century A.D. and died on the battlefield around the year 1200 fighting the hordes of Ghengis Khan. In fact, it's written that the great Khan wanted to marry Prester John's daughter. John replied to the effect that he would rather set his daughter in the fire than give her to Khan in marriage; which sounds like a polite 12th Century way of telling someone to go to hell.

Apparently, all of this wasn't exciting enough for Page, so he rewrote history and placed Prester John somewhere in the 1st Century, a former gladiator in Byzantium and early follower of



the new god Christos. According to Page's history, Prester John has wandered most of the Mediterranean area, including Egypt and the Middle East. As the first novel opens, he is somewhere in eastern Asia, planning to circle up north and then back west, eventually to his homeland. A circuitous route, but necessary due to the enemies he made wandering the Mediterranean. In each of Page's two novels, Prester John conquers a city only to lose it in the end and wander on in search of another city to conquer. He has been told in a prophecy that he would conquer three kingdoms, presumably keeping the last one. Unfortunately, Page never chose to chronicle the third novel of what might have been an excellent trilogy.

According to pulp expert Bob Weinberg, Page cared about the quality of his writing, despite his enormous output. Many of his stories underwent numerous rewrites prior to submission until Page felt happy with them. Offhand, I'd have to agree with Weinberg after reading the two Prester John novels. The first one, in particular, is written with gusto -- a real old-fashioned, rip-snorting, fun reading experience. Obviously, Page enjoyed writing them, although the pace of the second is somewhat slower.

Stated simply, Prester John is another Conan; perhaps not as complex a character and certainly not as memorable, but fun to read about nevertheless.

Page's first Prester John novel was titled **FLAME WINDS** and appeared in the June 1939 issue of **UNKNOWN** magazine, only two months prior to the appearance of Fritz Leiber's first **Fafhrd** & the **Gray Mouser** tale (see **OS&S** No. 1). The second, **SONS OF THE BEAR GOD**, appeared five months later in the November issue.

In 1969, Berkley re-issued both novels in 60c paperbacks with attractive Jeff Jones covers. Both are now out-of-print but not all that hard to find in the used bookstores. If you don't already have them, I think you'll find the search a rewarding one.

Larry Niven is most well-known among fantasy and SF fans for his stories of hard science. After debuting in the December

1964 issue of *If*, he went on to SF stardom largely by centering his fiction around some scientific theory and then exhausting that theory via one or more stories. Although the vast majority of his output has been hard SF, Niven has proven himself to be a capable sword & sorcery writer with only a few such tales to his credit.

His first published S&S effort was a short story entitled "Not Long Before the End" in the April 1969 issue of *MAGAZINE OF F & SF*. It relates the ultimate confrontation between a swordsman and a sorcerer, named simply the Warlock.

Niven's purpose for writing the story was again to present a theory -- hardly one we would call scientific, but an intriguing one nevertheless. Magic requires power. That power is "mana". When the Earth was young, it was rich in mana, but the gods ruling the Earth used up most of it...to the extent that it brought about their collective demise. Fortunately, what remained was sufficient to permit the practice of sorcery by mere mortals. Thus: sword & sorcery. Presumably, there is no (or precious little) mana left in our world today, and, as a common practice, sorcery died out at least several hundred years ago.

New sources of mana are rare. Mana can be collected from meteorites. It can also be artificially produced via animal or human sacrifice. However, these sources produce quite limited amounts.

Mana was discovered around 12,000 B.C. by our friend the Warlock prior to the events in "Not Long Before the End." In addition, he discovered the finite nature of mana -- the fact that it was constantly being used up and could not be replenished. The swordsman in the story carries an enchanted sword that repels any sorcerous attacks. The Warlock sets into motion a disc that doesn't stop spinning until all of the mana in the region is used up. The enchanted sword is eliminated and the opponents reach a stalemate.

All in all, it's a nice solid little piece and if you enjoy playing around with theories such as this (and it should be obvious by now that I do), you'll probably love it.

I can't really think of many stories I've read by Niven that aren't solid. He says what he sets out to say, does it extremely well and then ends the story. Along the way, he manages to sprinkle a few other theories, pseudo-historical information and a variety of gimmicks to tease the reader. Some of the latter are cute while others come across as ineffective puns.

An example of his pseudo-history is how Atlantis sunk, which I am not going to reveal here. You'll have to read about it in the second and third stories dealing with the concept of mana. The second is a novelette in the September 1972 *MAGAZINE OF F & SF* entitled "What Good is a Glass Dagger?" (Compleatists take note: Actually, there is another Warlock story in between these two. It is a half-page anecdote entitled "Unfinished Story" that appeared in the December 1970 *MAGAZINE OF F & SF*.) The story features the return of the Warlock and takes place shortly after "Not Long Before the End." The secret of mana is now out and knowledge of it has become a potential weapon in sorcerous conflict. It's a typically good, well-constructed Niven story with the emphasis on sorcery rather than swordplay, a trait evident in most of his sword & sorcery tales. Unfortunately, it ends on a horrible twist that I didn't think was any too novel or exciting. Chop off the last two paragraphs, though, and you still have a hell of a good story.

"Glass Dagger", by the way, was later reprinted in Ballantine's *THE FLIGHT OF THE HORSE* in 1973. The volume is a collection of time-travel stories and "Glass Dagger" has nothing whatsoever to do with the series; Ballantine apparently wanted to make the book thicker.

The final story in what I call the "Mana from Niven" series (go ahead and groan) is "The Magic Goes Away", a novella in the second issue of Roger Elwood's *ODYSSEY* (Summer 1976). The Warlock once again returns along with a couple of leftover sorcerers from "Glass Dagger" and a couple of new sorcerers. The story takes place about twenty years later and the Earth's

supply of mana has continued to run down with no hope of any major form of replenishment in sight. The Warlock -- who must be getting senile by now -- comes up with the madcap idea of dragging the Moon down to Earth to replenish the supply of mana. Beyond that, I refuse to discuss the plot -- read the story.

I should mention that the reason for the fall of Atlantis is only hinted at in "Glass Dagger". In "The Magic Goes Away" he actually sinks the island -- and that's only for openers in order to introduce the barbarian hero who accompanies the sorcerers on their zany quest. And if you think that's bad, wait'll you read how the Rocky Mountains were formed!

The only other major sword & sorcery work by Niven -- and it's probably his only well-known one -- is *THE FLYING SORCERERS*, written with David Gerrold (Ballantine, 1971). It originally appeared in novella form as "The Misspelled Magician" in (2 pts., May and July, 1970). "Magician" is a tragicomedy about a first encounter between a primitive society on an alien planet and a one-man exploratory expedition from another planet (presumably Earth). Shoogar, the village sorcerer, considers the visitor an interloper, is awed and affronted by his 'high sorcery' and takes him on in a duel. The results, as you might expect, are humorous and highly entertaining. However, the story does end on a more somber note reflective of the futility of man's endeavors, both primitive and modern.

"Magician" comprises roughly the first quarter of *THE FLYING SORCERERS* and, with the immediate continuation of the story, the more serious ending of "Magician" carries little or no impact. Shoogar meets up with the visitor again and the remainder of the book is primarily concerned with getting the visitor back to his mother ship, orbiting the planet. In *SORCERERS*, the humor continues unabated and Niven's motive becomes more apparent as an attempt -- and a damned good one -- at world building. The novel contains virtually no swordplay, but if you enjoy the humorous styles of Fritz Leiber and Jack Vance, you'll love this one. I wish Niven would take a break from his hard science stories again and team up with Gerrold for another one of these.

Until purchasing *THE LERIOS MECCA*, I'd never heard of Gene Lancour, or Gene Fisher, under whose name the book is copyrighted. Although Fisher did have a short story in *ANALOG* once, he appears to be a newcomer to the sword & sorcery field and quite a talented one. According to the jacket liner (Doubleday, 1973) Lancour is a pseudonym and the author -- I assume Fisher -- is a graduate student in history and working on a sequel.

MECCA takes place on another world and the hero, Dirshan, is an atypical barbarian in a typically barbarian society. While Dirshan has all of the physical characteristics and fighting prowess of a first-rate barbarian, he appears to be well-educated and more intelligent than the run-of-the-mill semi-literate barbarian. He is capable of keeping his cool and, unlike Conan, can do more than merely hack and hew his way out of tight situations with the abundance of empty-headed Conan imitations available these days, Dirshan comes along as a refreshing change.

For that matter, so is Lancour (or Fisher, or whomever). The book is deceiving in one respect: it seems longer than it is. The plot seems to move at a rather sedate pace for a sword & sorcery novel, but it doesn't drag; there's plenty of action and the novel is in no way boring. While thud and blunder purists may be a little disappointed, I found more than enough cleaved skulls, spilled entrails and general swordplay to keep the average sword and sorcery fan happy. Perhaps one reason is that Lancour doesn't dwell on gory details. He describes the splitting of a skull, for example, in about the same amount of time as it takes to happen and then gets on with more important matters.

One of those more important matters is the development of his characters and their environment, and Lancour does an ex-

cellent job at that. In addition to Dirshan, Lancour creates an outstanding heroine in the person of Karinth, a member of the Family, and a member of the nobility in name only. With loving care, Lancour develops Karinth into a marvelously complex creation: at times exhibiting all of the frailties of nobility and the 'weaker' sex and at other times more brains, strength and leadership ability than most men.

As the book opens, Dirshan is the only survivor of a raid on a village by desert barbarians. In his youth, he fled his homeland as a fugitive for wanting to leave the Order, a mystical religious cult dominating his world. Arriving at another city, he is captured and imprisoned by members of the Order. To free himself of his fugitive status (not to mention a death sentence), he accepts a mission on behalf of the Order. In the course of his novel-length mission, he meets up with Karinth; uncovers an incredibly ancient, mysterious city; encounters desert barbarians again; becomes involved in a battle at sea led by Karinth; discovers a prophet older and more knowledgeable than the highest member of the Order; and learns a good deal about that same mysterious and somewhat awe-inspiring Order. As I said earlier, there's plenty of action. As far as sorcery is concerned, it borders more on the mystical. And if you enjoy the sense-of-wonder in discovering lost cities, you'll like Telhawa.

I didn't read **THE LERIOS MECCA** in one sitting. In fact, it's the kind of book you can easily set down when necessary and enjoy coming back to again and again. It has not been reprinted and I'm pretty sure the Doubleday edition is now out-of-print. Any paperback publisher would do well to pick it up. . .and, hopefully, the sequel, too.

OS&S UPDATE -- "The Frost Monstre", Fritz Leiber's latest Fafhrd and the Gran Mouser tale (see OS&S No. 1), has appeared in Lin Carter's **FLASHING SWORDS** No. 3 (**WARRIORS & WIZARDS**, Dell). It's a welcome return to the novelette length after a rash of tantalizingly short stories. A short humorous F&GM vignette entitled "Fafhrd and the Mouser Say Their Say" also appeared in the first issue of **THE DRAGON** for June. An earlier novelette, "Under the Thumbs of the Gods" has been reprinted in **THE YEAR'S BEST FANTASY STORIES** No. 2 edited by Lin Carter (DAW, No. 205).

Chuck Miller has published his limited hardbound edition of Jack Vance's **THE DYING EARTH** (see OS&S No. 2), lavishly illustrated by George Barr and lavishly priced at \$15.95. A super deluxe edition sold out at \$25.

Andrew J. Offutt's sequel to **SWORD OF THE GAEL** (OS&S No. 1) has appeared from Zebra entitled **THE UNDYING WIZARD**. It's as good or better than its predecessor and, judging from the ending, it's likely a third volume will be coming. Offutt's introduction was omitted from the paperback and has been published as an article in Wayne Warfield's **PHANTASY DIGEST** No. 1. And people interested in still further adventures of R. E. Howard's heroes will want to pick up Karl Edward Wagner's continuation of Bran Mak Morn: **LEGION FROM THE SHADOWS**, published by Zebra last April. While their writing styles are quite different, both Wagner and Offutt have turned in excellent performances on these novels.

Speaking of Wagner, "Sing a Last Song of Valdese" is a new Kane short story appearing in **CHACAL** No. 1; from the same people that brought you **REH: LONE STAR FICTIONEER**. They have a collection of Kane stories on file which they will hopefully be publishing one of these years entitled **NIGHT WINDS**. Meanwhile, a Kane novel, **DARK CRUSADE**, is due out from Warner this December. Next Spring will witness a Kane bonanza as Coronet paperbacks in Great Britain reprints the entire series including the uncut **DARKNESS WEAVES** (see OS&S No. 2) and **NIGHT WINDS** (thanks go to Karl Wagner for that information).

Upcoming is a new Brak the Barbarian novelette in **PHANTASY DIGEST** No. 2 that I learned about too late for inclusion in this issue's column.

Two Views of Bob Howard

Stygian Isle Press has commissioned two different biographies of Robert Ervin Howard. They will be written by two of his closest associates: Harold Preece and Tevis Clyde Smith. Portions of the biographies will first appear in FANTASY CROSSROADS. This issue we present a chapter from each biography. Harold Preece has contributed Chapter 5 of his work titled: "Quest for Books". Tevis' chapter follows immediately and is titled: "The Magic Name". We hope you enjoy these added insights into the life and environments of the creator of Conan. One last note, please do not write and inquire regarding the availability of the biographies. They are a long way from completion and have not yet been titled let alone priced. Information will be forthcoming once the books are completely typeset and ready for printing.

CHAPTER 5

QUEST FOR BOOKS

By Harold Preece

For a wordsmith the need to read parallels the need to write. A beginning writer's initial efforts will often be cast in the mold of favorite authors - as Bob Howard's first fantasies reflected the strong influences of Arthur Machen and Don Byrne with both of these being, coincidentally, Celts. A good book or a good story is a natural incentive to write something comparable. Even though wish may not become tangible result till far in the future.

Like all of us who concoct scripts, Bob would have many spiritual progenitors. What they produced would set his mood of a lifetime - that ineluctable mood of the writer forever binding us to what we seem or dream or realize through experience touched by imagination. Through these expressions of other men and women we are able to formulate what the Welsh novelist, John Cowper Powys, called "our mythos." These enable us to answer those plaguing questions haunting every craftsman of script:

Who are we? What are we all about? Where are we going and for what reasons?

Through his professional work and his voluminous correspondence with friends like H. P. Lovecraft, E. Hoffman Price, and myself, Bob groped for the answers throughout his brief life. So that his vividly stated doubts and resolutions carry some architectonic quality which I have never been able to define fully through the standard techniques of literary criticism. Yet whatever my always incomplete approach to the large volume of published Howardana, I realize that every paragraph reflects Bob's ceaseless quest for books.

He could have hardly found any large collection in Callahan County. For the past few years, there has been a public library at Clyde which I recall as a pretty little town with loaded apple trees growing in neat back yards. But in Bob Howard's day, few rural Texas counties would have had these indispensable adjuncts of a fully literate society. Which does not mean that this first Post-Frontier generation of Texans were stupid dolts as caustic cosmopolitans like to assert of everybody in our country's grassroots areas. It was rather that Bob's native people were still in the process of building a developed civilization and hadn't gotten much further than erecting public schools.

But some of those schools did have small collections of books - probably consisting of various individual donations - in addition to the regular texts studied for pupils. So that the book-hungry Howard boy helped himself through his own system of borrowing.

During summers when classes were suspended, he would mount a horse, visit the unoccupied schools and carry away whatever seemed worth reading. Entry was not accomplished by break-ins since few schools or, for that matter, few homes, were ever locked in Texas country communities where the other fellow's honesty was taken for granted.

We have no list of the titles that Bob borrowed from this or that one or two room center of education. From recalling the reading tastes of that period with its strong victorian hangovers, I can imagine he found a number of sweetly-written pietistic novels like Charles M. Sheldon's **IN HIS STEPS**, distributed in millions of copies throughout those last naive generations of America. Still another might have been a fictionalized life of Jesus, **THE PRINCE OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID**, written by Prentiss Ingraham who had originally won his literary spurs through counties lurid dime novels forbidden by proper parents to their growing boys. Still another might have been **ST. ELMO**, a syrupy classic about a "great sinner" turned "great saint" through a woman's love written by the incredible Augusta J. Evans, Georgia born, but Texas raised.

Small shelves of books might also have been graced by the romantic secular novels of Mrs. Evans, a patrician Southern dowager never quite believing that the Confederacy had surrendered at Appomattox - a complex also shared by certain Texans of her time. Other chaste lady romantics might have shared honors with her including Mary J. Holmes and Mrs. E.D.E.N. Southworth (whose initials spelled Eden). Or more mercifully Gene Stratton Porter whose novels of the Indiana Limberlost area were well written and carried a certain decorous charm. Her books were worth reading if you didn't expect too much.

There is no evidence that Bob Howard was purified by any of this exalted stuff. Though out of filial obligation, he still attended the Baptist Church with his parents, Bob probably would not have read more than two chapters written by estimable paragons of righteousness-like Mrs. Evans and Mrs. Southworth. He would have delighted in the early day adventure novels of James Fenimore Cooper, generally accepted despite the author's sometimes carelessness about historical facts. More importantly to concerned parents and teachers Mr. Cooper, a Nineteenth Century country squire, had never breathed a cuss word in any of his extensive works.

Bob likely found some gems among all the truffles and trash during his book hunting. There might have been some fair fact historical works and biographies worth his intensive study. But it is scarcely possible that he would have found anything by any of the later authors who would so influence his own style - (Harold Lamb, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Jack London, Talbot Mundy and others of the adventure genre. These he would have found in literate pulp magazines like **ARGOSY**, **ADVENTURE**, and **BLUE BOOK**. They would leave lasting impacts upon a reader of his imaginative temperament.)

Within one of the schoolhouses he might have found a copy of Jane Porter's excellent work for its time, **SCOTTISH CHIEFS**, dealing with Scotland's 13th Century War for Independence against the English. This work, also approved for youngsters, was very popular during its time. It would remind Bob of what he considered his finest family tradition--

One of his far off ancestors had been armor bearer to heroic Scottish King Robert Bruce leading a Celtic country in a struggle against a Sassenach (Saxon) one. Ever since that time Robert had been a family given name with Bob, already preoccupied with Celtica, being the latest to possess it.

Bob - that unconventional patron of schoolhouse libraries - always returned "faithfully" every book lent him. Additionally his own home had an intellectual cast symbolized by books.

There would have been other works besides Dr. Howard's medical reference ones around the family home. Bob's father had a particular interest in the lives of authors. His mother was a poetry buff.

All this interest in literature undoubtedly encouraged their son's ambitions to become a writer. But whether the Howards would have wanted him to have followed full-time such a precarious craft seems debatable.

For all their admirable interests in culture, they were conservatively-minded folk conditioned by what is called the Protestant work ethic of steady pay for steady occupations. Within that Texas of the early Twentieth Century, most authors were either college faculty members or middle-class ladies with ample leisure and husbands to support them. Probably there were not more than a dozen daring souls trying to support themselves by straight freelance writing in that whole mammoth state. I never knew but one and he finally died of virtual starvation - after having been a well-known fictioneer for the **SATURDAY EVENING POST**.

I think it likely that the Howards wished for their odd boy a successful career in some "educated" occupation plus marriage to the proverbial nice girl. In that sort of context, writing might have been a pleasant, occasional hobby for him with the whole Howard-Ervin kinship connection being muchly pleased whenever their gifted member published something.

Of course, these observations are not made to reflect upon parents naturally concerned for the future of an only child. Quite simply, agrarian societies like the Texas one are not conducive to the full development of bold, independent souls like Robert Ervin Howard. Otherwise the various heartlands of America would not lose so much fine native talent to the big cities where cultural skills are marketable.

Time marched on to the slow rhythms of Cross Plains. Bob Howard kept right on being Bob Howard because he couldn't be anything else. During this time he joined briefly the only organization to which he may have ever belonged.

The Lone Scouts of America it was called. A rival movement to the larger Boy Scouts of America, founded by a Chicago publisher, W. D. Boyce, who had helped birth the BSA but had pulled out after feeling that the latter, with its expensive, elaborate, regimented setup did not meet the needs of rural boys.

A beautiful bonnie for individualist kids, rural or urban, the Lone Scouts became with its annual dues of five cents a year. You didn't have to wear a uniform or be bossed by a scoutmaster when you might already be chafing under too much adult authority.

Moreover you could be a scout all by yourself if you wished - hence the term: Lone Scout. A lonely boy might correspond with still other lonelies around the country. Five or more Lone Scouts, living within a common area, could form what was called a "tribe" since the organization's emblems and rituals commemorated the American Indian.

But the magnet drawing so many boys was a juvenile magazine whose likes had never been seen before in America and will never be seen again. **LONE SCOUT** was the title of that publication whose well-written fiction and articles were entirely produced by youngsters. Contributors were awarded successive medals and corresponding titles for their efforts. Profits - such as they were of **LONE SCOUT** - were used to finance this unique gazette created by smart kids.

Robert Ervin Howard would be one of many later prominent authors who'd worn the arrowhead badge of the Lone Scouts. He seems never to have written for the magazine since his name does not appear in any index compilation. He probably did no more than read it for a few months before losing interest.

Yet for the rest of his life and throughout his writing career, some of his most significant friends would be present or former Lone Scouts.

THE MAGIC NAME

(To Glenn Lord)

By Tevis Clyde Smith

It was a day much like today--cloudless, pleasantly warm--probably in early April, if not late March, 1923 that I asked Truett Vinson if he knew Robert E. Howard. We were on the school grounds at Brownwood High, and Truett said "Yes, there he is now." I told Truett that I'd like to meet Bob, and he called Bob over, introducing us to one another. We shook hands, if it could be called that, for Bob extended a limp palm and executed what was known as "a dishrag shake". I hadn't wanted him to break the bones in my hand, but I was a bit surprised at such a greeting, though I soon found that he was warmhearted, and we became good friends before the school term ended. We became well acquainted before Dr. Howard came to take Bob and his mother back to Cross Plains. It should be mentioned that Cross Plains, in 1923, had a ten year high school, and that Brownwood went one grade further, bringing many students from surrounding towns just as men and women now leave home to attend colleges and universities.

Dr. Howard had rented a furnished house at the corner of Wilson and Hawkins Streets for Mrs. Howard and Bob. This lot is now vacant, and I suppose is the property of The Presbyterian Church. It was about a half-mile from the old Senior High School, which at that time took care of all four high school grades. It was in the same block with The First Presbyterian Church, then being constructed, and a block away from the First Methodist Church, which was also under construction. When the men were off from work we would sit in the sand in front of first one and then the other of the churches, and carry on long conversations while the traffic went by, for Bob was an enchanting talker, and also enjoyed what I had to say. This enjoyment was increased, for him, by my recital of the events of a fight which I had about ten to fourteen days before I met him. There was a bullying group which gave flathanded rabbit punches to anyone who would take them. I got fed up with this type of treatment and made up my mind that I had taken all I intended to take. At the time, we had two senior colleges here, and both had good baseball teams. I was sitting high in the stands, and one of the bullies was sitting beside me, watching Howard Payne play one of the T.I.A.A. teams. In the midst of my engrossment the bully delivered a jarring blow but I did not turn quickly enough to be certain he was the one. I looked behind me and saw no one I felt I could suspect. I turned back around, pretending to watch the game, but ready to wheel at a moment's notice. The blow was soon repeated, and this time I moved fast enough to see the tormenter straighten out his body and jerk his right arm back to his side. A red haze surrounded me as I removed my glasses and handed them to a friend. Then, as Breckenridge Elkins would have put it, my language was awful to hear, though I wasn't talking only. I drove three hard blows to his nose and he began to grapple with me. I lost my footing, and began to bounce from step to step, fortunately clearing the barrier at the foot of the stands as I nosedived to the cinders below. I was in a daze as I waited for my friend to hand me my glasses, and for my opponent to decide whether he wanted to go with me, or not. Apparently he did, for he came down about the time an officer came up, and ordered us out of the park. We left the field with some six or eight followers who had evidently decided that any chance of future action from us promised more than they would find at the game. We walked for four blocks and had another setto, a repetition of the first except for the fact that it was fought on solid ground. From there, we walked another block and had at it again. I got in some more punches. My part of the fight was good both offensively and defensively. I don't remember him getting in a single punch, and I hammered his nose through all three stages of the battle.

As a result, life became more pleasant.

Our discussions always included history, and Bob was ex-

cellent in his presentation of this subject. He had picked most of it up through his own personal reading, and not in school. One woman told me that Bob accompanied his father on a visit to her parents, spotted a set of history books and looked through it the entire time his father was there. I don't know whether this was a professional or a social visit, but it evidently lasted long enough for Bob to make a rather thorough examination of the books. I tried to get this lady to write an article for **THE HOWARD COLLECTOR**, but she was not literally inclined, and would dislike it if I revealed her name, so that will not be done.

Another friend, very, very close to Bob, declined to write a biography. He said, "No, you are the one to write it--you were closer to him than I was." So, much valuable information will be lost, but I respect this man's wishes, and will not reveal his name, or keep asking him to do something which he does not wish to do.

As for myself, Robert E. Howard was a magic name to me before I ever met him, and before he became a magic name to his thousands of readers. I had known him but a very short time before deciding that I would make plans to some day write about him. A certain amount of this has been done: "ADVENTURE IN PULP", in **PECAN VALLEY DAYS**; "REPORT ON A WRITING MAN", in **THE HOWARD COLLECTOR**; several poems in the same magazine, later included in **IMAGES OUT OF THE SKY**; an introduction for a collection of poems published by George T. Hamilton; some book reviews for various newspapers; an introduction to a co-authored book, **RED BLADES OF BLACK CATHAY**, which Donald M. Grant brought out; a ballade, introduction, and completion of Howard work which Jonathan Bacon published under the title of **THE GRIM LAND**, with additional material now in the hands of Jonathan. Not a great volume of work when one considers how prolific Bob was, but it is factual, in case the reader wants unembellished writing.

In talking with Jonathan Bacon, I stated that I would rather not start with the first time Bob ever put a toe in his mouth. I thought it best to begin with my first meeting with Bob, and, if needed, to make a flashback, though I should mention some things I've talked about a number of times: I had a 6X9 Kelsey hand press, I published a small paper along the order of the Lone Scout tribe papers, Truett Vinson was assistant editor, and Bob and I wrote a fragment, never completed, called **UNDER THE GREAT TIGER**. This fragment was published in the amateur journal, and should probably have never been mentioned, as some people seem to have the impression that a rare work of art is being kept out of the reach of humanity. If anyone feels this way, now is as good a time as any to disillusion him. However, I might dust it off, do a lot of research, and see what could be done with it one of these days, if I get sold on the idea, and Glenn Lord feels it is worthwhile.

This little paper was a follow-up to **THE ALL-AROUND CLUB**, which meant that a group of boys banded themselves together to have a literary program, followed by a game of sandlot--or in this case front yard--football. Our rules were strict, if one sided. For instance, if you took part in the program, you had to take part in the football; on the other hand, you could play football without being a club member, or attending a meeting of the society. Our treatment of one boy who was very brilliant, but adamant about participation in anything other than the society programs, was very callous. We requested his resignation. I feel rather bad when I think about it, and often wonder if he is alive, or dead. A mutual friend ran across him in the lobby of a New York City theatre in 1929. I haven't heard from him since that time. I say **from** because the mutual friend and I had discussed this episode, and I had mentioned that I would like to see the offended party. He sent back word that he would like to see me, too. I felt better after this apology, even though it was by proxy. This club was disbanded before I met Bob.

Once again it seems in order to mention that Volume 3,

Number 7, of **THE TATTLER**, dated December 22, 1922 carried two stories by Robert E. Howard. Both had a western setting. One was serious, the other humorous, and each story showed talent. **THE TATTLER** was published twice a month by the Senior Class of Brownwood High. Claude Curtis was Editor-in-Chief, C. S. Boyles was Associate Editor, Ilene Embrey was Society Editor, Harry Boyer was Joke Editor, J. Hervey Mayes was Sports Editor, Miss Maedgen was Censor, Alton Dorsett was Business Manager, and John Friley was Assistant Business Manager. I knew all of them, but they are scattered far and wide and how many of them are now alive is a question I cannot answer.

Claude Curtis came from a newspaper family. His father was the owner-editor of **THE RISING STAR X-RAY**, a paper which was published in a small town thirty miles north of Brownwood. A short article appeared in **THE TATTLER** about my publication and Travis Curtis, Claude's brother, invited me to go home with him and pick up some items I needed for my small magazine. I gladly accepted. The entire Curtis family was very hospitable. Travis went back to Brownwood the next morning, and I stayed over until that night, spending the day in the newspaper plant. I rode home on the bus--that is to say, back to the business part of Brownwood--and the bus was an old Reo Speed Wagon, with seats the length of the vehicle on each side, from which the passengers rode facing one another. The country was much prettier then than it is now, as none of the native trees and shrubs had been bulldozed down, and the unpaved sandy road ran past rustic churches and farmhouses. The country, especially around Rising Star, was dewberry and blackberry country.

There was a motion picture on that night at **THE LYRIC** which I wanted to see. It was **SHERLOCK HOLMES**, with Clive Brook and Gustav Van Seyfertitz. As well as I remember, I delivered my composing stone and other equipment to the residence, and went back to town to see the show. The last part was without melody, as the musician left at 10:00 o'clock. The picture seemed odd without the music, as I was used to getting there in time to enjoy the benefit of the score. The performance was disappointing to some extent as a result. It looked like it would pour down rain when I got out, and the pavement was all ready damp, but I made the mile and a half home by foot without any inconvenience.

Claude Curtis went to New Orleans to take a Linotype Operator's course, and Bill Stewart and I ran into him in that city in 1925. That was my last meeting with him, but I talked with Travis Curtis a number of times in 1957-1958-1959. He was President of a bank in a town where I had clientele. I understand that his father sold his newspaper, entered the real estate business, and was joined in this venture by Claude. Glenn Lord tells me that C. S. Boyles writes westerns under the name of Will C. Brown. As far as I know, every member of **THE TATTLER** staff moved from Brownwood, some of them soon after graduation.

Bob had an embarrassing few minutes while walking with two of the staff members, one male, the other female, when he discovered that the seat of his britches had split open, but was able to laugh about the incident by the time he told me of the occurrence.

Bob and I went swimming in a small stream on the edge of town in late March, or early April. It was several days after this activity before Bob returned to school. He stated that he took the intestinal flu from the swim, and had spent three days in misery. Both of us may have been lucky not to take typhoid fever.

At the period of which I write, Bob was a Senior and I was a Sophomore. One of his classmates killed himself a few weeks before graduation. Bob was 17 at the time, and I was 15. The suicide had an impact on him, and, as the years went by, he became more constant in defending the right of self destruction, dropping hints of the value of such an ending. How much effect he had on others is a question I am unable to answer. It may

have been more far reaching than any of us realize.

Anyway, Bob graduated, and returned to Cross Plains. He visited me for a few days during the middle of the summer. We spent the time swimming, going to shows, visiting the library, taking short hikes, and talking. There was a train from Brownwood to Maytown, as we called it, in those days, and Bob took the train to May, rode the mail hack from there to Rising Star, and transferred to another mail hack from Rising Star to Cross Plains, making what is now a short trip by modern means into the greater part of a day's journey. Once home, he went to work at a series of jobs, and it was months later before I saw him again.

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REH Zebra Cover Blurbs vs Reality

By Brian Earl Brown

Neicer and I were at Midwestcon, in the huckster's room, sharing the wealth in the traditional fannish way. Neicer expressed some interest in finding out what this Robert E. Howard was all about and could I suggest a typical book. I was silent for a while, trying to decide which of the many available paperbacks best typified Howard. I could come to no simple answer. So she made a choice of her own, **THE IRON MAN**.

"Ah, Neicer," I said, somewhat embarrassed to have to mention it. "That's not typical Howard."

"It's not?"

"Boxing stories. Straight boxing stories." Later I lent her my copies of **THE DARK MAN** and **WOLFSHEAD**, which probably reprint the best of Howard's non-Conan fiction.

However, I wonder how many people are not so lucky to have a Howard-expert at their elbow.

I would dearly love to read about "a magic that turns men into jackals, wolves and vultures. . ."

Or "The Iron Man ((who)) can be struck down by a thunderbold -- or can kill, like lightning in a world ruled by savage instincts."

Or take "A mythical magical foray into the inscrutable, indestructible Orient, where echoes of the hordes of Genghis Khan send tremors through the land."

Indeed I would love to read those stories, but you won't find them in the pages of, respectively, **THE VULTURES OF WHAPETON**, **THE IRON MAN** or **THE INCREDIBLE ADVENTURES OF DENNIS DORGAN**, three books all published by Zebra.

The publication of **THE SOWERS OF THUNDER** in an inexpensive paperback format was easily the most exciting thing to happen to Robert E. Howard fandom since -- the publication of **CONAN THE ADVENTURER** by Lancer in 1966. This Zebra edition of **SOWERS** ended a virtual five year drought of readily available REH material.

Between 1966 and 1969 some 14 books of Howardania were published (including non-Howard Conan material). A further two volumes of short stories appeared in 1972 and after that nothing -- that was readily available. What Howard fiction that was appearing was either scattered about in numerous fanzines or in expensive, limited edition, Collectable hardbacks. Tracking down the former and affording the latter was beyond the greater bulk of REH fandom.

So we all applauded when Zebra published their illustrated edition of **SOWERS**. And well we should for they had carefully reproduced each page of the hardcover original exactly, only trimming the generous margins in the Grant edition so the text would fit in the narrower paperback format. Lost were only some page decorations Krenkel used on those pages where no other art appeared. The Zebra edition had a new Jeff Jones painting, but for some that was as much a plus as a minus for others.

It hardly seemed sinister that "Conan" appeared with the largest lettering on the cover. Zebra had to hype the book didn't they? Establish reader identification, right? After all, Zebra was sticking its neck out by publishing these books (with five years of inactivity the market could have dried up). And it was doing us a favor by making **SOWERS** and **WORMS OF THE EARTH** and **TIGERS OF THE SEA** and **A GENT FROM BEAR CREEK** readily available, so did it really matter that "Conan" was so much more visible than the actual title?

Unfortunately, the answer is -- yes!

The editors of Zebra had presumably determined that it was Conan and what Conan stood for that sold books, therefore every book had to be willinilly, a Conan book, no matter how distantly they may be connected. Thus andy offutt and Karl Edward Wagner get small credit lines while "Conan" and Robert E. Howard hulk larger and more visible than the title. And something like **THE VULTURES OF WHAPETON** is outright and deceitfully blurbed as a "Fantasy Adventure."

Zebra has labeled only three of its Howard books by this phrase "Fantasy Adventure," **VULTURES**, **DENNIS DORGAN** and **THE IRON MAN**.

VULTURES' cover features a skeleton riding a horse with a vulture perched on its arm. The blurb on the back begins (in bold type "There is a magic that turns men into Jackels, Wolves, and Vultures. . ." The implication is that this is going to be a volume of weird tales about werewolves, etc. Far from it. This is a volume of realistic westerns and the only 'magic' present is gold--a metal that has made men act like animals but certainly has no magic in the sense one associates with Conan.

THE INCREDIBLE ADVENTURES OF DENNIS DORGAN'S cover shows a standing, empty suit of armor with snakes crawling about it. The blurb on the back, already quoted above, invites us on a "magical forey" into the Orient. What sounds like a description of "Red Blades of Black Cathey" is, in fact, a collection of humorous boxing stories set in this century, and as often as not, in this country.

The cover of **THE IRON MAN** shows a golem-like creature of primitive splendor rising above a sea of clenched hands. The blurbs on the back vaguely talk of men "forged out of steel, hewn out of granite, sculptured out of oak." What it doesn't say is that this is a collection of realistic boxing stories.

Even Zebra's **THE BOOK OF ROBERT E. HOWARD** a book to display the wide range of Howard's writing, is blurbed to only mention "sword and sorcery; trembling tales of horror; fantasies so weird they defy description." Which conveniently forgets to mention the two mysteries, the two westerns, one fight story and one spicy adventure that makes up half of the material in this book.

I do not mind Zebra publishing Howard's westerns, or boxing stories, or his spicy adventures or his mysteries, but I do mind the deceitful way in which they have been packaged. Blurbs have always been exaggerated but this goes beyond poetic license.

That Zebra is deliberately attempting to mislead the public is most evident in an ad carried in **THE SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN** No. 14. Here is a full page ad, displaying nine different titles. It is a wonderful place to boast of Howard's variety. Here's a chance to say that Howard excelled in many fields of literature and here are some of his best works in these fields, works rivaling his Conan material. (Not that I think these stories are that good, but it's no more than typical cover blurb exaggeration.)

Instead we are told that **THE BOOK OF REH** is a collection "of horror, fantasy, sorcery. . ." and that **DENNIS DORGAN** is a mythical, magical forey. and that in **VULTURES** "a magic from deep within the earth turns men into jackels, wolves and vultures." (my emphasis).

Zebra doesn't want the truth known, they just want your money. Which brings up another point. **THE BOOK OF ROBERT E. HOWARD** and **PIGEONS FROM HELL** carry a \$1.95 price tag. At first this seems reasonable as these three books run 350+ pages in length. Only this great length is achieved through the use of a very inflated typesize. The size of typeface in a paperback varies to a considerable degree and for as many reasons. A page of 'average' sized type will contain around 400 words. A page of small type might carry around 450 words. Zebra's pages run around 300. In short these books are running a fourth again as long as they need be. We're paying \$1.95 for books that have the thickness and heft of a \$1.95 book but the contents of a significantly smaller book. We're being overcharged by as much as twenty-five cents for these three books. A 384 page edition of **TROS OF SAMOTHRACE**, with small (for Zebra) type is priced at a mere \$1.75. If Zebra can afford this low a price for Talbot Mundy, surely they could afford the same for Howard, who's been dead as long as Mundy.

Oddly enough, this whole tirade was inspired by the publication of **PIGEONS FROM HELL**. I had snapped this book up, excited at the prospect of a new collection of REH fiction and had already paid for it before I thought something funny was going on because the title story had been reprinted only a couple months before. The book seemed even more familiar when I examined it closely at home. The contents looked familiar, but not half as familiar as the copyright page. It looked just like a Lancer copyright page. So I checked it against my Howard bibliography. It has every story, no more, as **THE DARK MAN** and others, with one exception. It didn't have the title story. I got back my copy of **THE DARK MAN** from neicer (you remember Neicer from the start of this article, don't you?) for comparison. Not only were they the same stories but they were in the same sequence, with the exception of the missing **THE DARK MAN** and "The Voice of El-Lil" was moved to the end of the collection. "The Voice of El-Lil" still appeared first on the copyright page, tho.

It looks for all the world as if Zebra simply took the old, out-of-print Lancer edition, cut out the title story and sent the book to their typesetter "as is". Which makes it all that much harder to justify its \$1.95 price.

It seems a rather dubious way to get some of the REH material that's been tied up in the Lancer bankruptcy back into print, but I suppose we shouldn't question gift horses. And for once it is some of Howard's better material.

The latest thing from Zebra, as of this writing, is a new edition of **TROS OF SAMOTHRACE**. This is a massive historical set in the days of Julius Caesar. In fact, Caesar is the continuing villain of the series. **TORS** was printed in the 60's as a four book serial by Avon. Zebra seems intent on doing it in three volumes this time. Two further books **THE PURPLE PIRATE** and **QUEEN CLEOPATRA** continue the action. It has bearing here

Howard and the Races

By L. Sprague de Camp

As I have written before, many of Robert E. Howard's views would today be stigmatized as "racist". He followed the example of most American authors of popular fiction of the period, in whose tales ethnic stereotypes were stock in trade. Hence Scots were always thrifty, Irishmen funny, Germans arrogant, Latins lecherous, Jews avaricious, Negroes childish, and Orientals sinister. He agreed with Lovecraft's rhapsodies on the non-existent "Aryan race" and his rant against non-Nordic immigrants.

On the other hand, Howard was, if a racist, a comparatively mild one by the standards of his time. He noted the superior qualities of the industrious Bohemian immigrants to Texas. He sympathized with the Confederacy and expressed what one of his memoirists calls a "deep distaste" for Abraham Lincoln. He voiced conventional Texas views of Negroes and Mexicans whom he admired, as well as Jewish prizefighters whom he had known. His story "Black Canaan" has gallant white men dashing about the Deep South to forestall nigger uprisings; while in "The Dead Remember," his sympathies are with a Negro couple abused and murdered by the narrator, a drunken, vicious cowboy.

One of his early story synopses, never transformed into a finished story, was called "The Last White Man." In this racial fantasy, the white race has become "decadent" from "idleness and pleasure," so the black Africans, "a new, strong race," rises up, conquers, and exterminates them with the help of the Orientals. The Orientals are then wiped out in their turn. But the blacks are "destroyers, not builders", who soon "revert to savagery." (1)

Howard's racial views, however, were not static, any more than those of his pen-pal Lovecraft. Both seem to have evolved away from the crude tribalism, which they obtained in much American thinking of the early twentieth century. Later, as "John Tavel," Howard wrote a prizefight story, "The Apparition of the Prize Ring," published in *GHOST STORIES* for April, 1929 (2). While no immortal masterpiece, this story has an interesting feature. It emphasizes the mildness of Howard's racism, for the author made a Negro prizefighter his hero. Ace Jessel, the "ebony giant," is described as clever, brave, goodnatured, noble, indomitable, and unselfish. How many virtues do you want?

True, Ace speaks a "dese and dose" dialect. His antagonist, a "full-blooded Senegalese," is closer to the hostile stereotype of the Negro, being thickset, with a "small bullet head. . . set squarely between gigantic shoulders" and on his chest "a thick grizzle of matted hair."

My colleague Charles R. Saunders tells me that Jessel may be based either on Peter Jackson or on Harry Wills, black heavyweights of the 1890s and 1920s respectively. They were denied a chance at the world title when the then champions, Sullivan and Dempsey, drew the color line. Perhaps both suggested Howard's fictional character.

The Senegalese boxer (says Saunders) is probably based upon the Senegalese light-heavyweight, "Battling Siki," who held that title from 1922 to 1932. Siki was commonly called "a gorilla" in the press, and he "abetted this image with stunts like walking a pet lion down Broadway." (3)

Howard's handling of dialect, like that of his fellow pulpsters, was crude. His Senegalese shows the peril of writing about exotica with neither personal acquaintance nor intensive research. Most Senegalese are rather slender, and pure Negroids have practically no hair on their chests. But at least, the story shows that Howard was a lot less ethnocentric than many of his contemporaries.

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- (1) *THE HOWARD COLLECTOR*, No. 5, Summer 1964, pp. 22-29.
 - (2) Recently reprinted in *STORIES OF GHOSTS* (Evergreen, Colo.: Opar Press). A second story about Ace Jessel was apparently never sold.
 3. Letter from Saunders, Nov. 26, 1976.

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THE NIGHT BOB HOWARD DIED

By John Rieber

Once I sang on her silver knee.

A dreamer cries to the moon-seared skies;
The skulls in the stars murmur to his shade.
From nighted gulfs, red shadows rise;
Black orchids stare with sightless eyes;
A dead god lives while an infant dies;
Grey slabs grow cold in a silent glade.

Plague shriveled her in sullen glee.

Dark tendrils thrust through the soul's thin crust;
The Snake holds sway in the hell He made.
Supple strength crumbles to graveyard dust;
Worms mock the beauty of mortal trust;
Ashes burn to ashes, dust sifts to dust:
At the kiss of the Master, the fairest fade.

Thunder rumbles; my chains fall free.

because, once again, the name "ROBERT E. HOWARD" stands out in lettering larger than either TALBOT MUNDY or the title. It's a darn good book and I recommend it, tho it's not "in the tradition" of REH -- more like Kwa Khan Caine. The cover, by Tom Barber, is of exceptional beauty, even if it is about a thousand years off with its depiction of a Viking Landing.

A book's blurb must answer, often usually in 25 words or less, the question: "why buy this book?" And considering that these 25 or less words are perhaps the only thing standing between a considerable profit and a considerable loss, it is no wonder that blurbs are often more fantasy than fact.

Yet in a survey of dozens of paperbacks in my personal collection, I find few cases of blurbs as misleading or as cluttered as Zebra's. The Lancer covers for *THE SLEEPING SORCERESS* and *THE DREAMING CITY*, both by Michael Moorcock, are cluttered. The "Family D'lembert" series by "Doc Smith" is in fact being written by Stephen Goldin from notes by the late E. E. Smith. A crop of Clifford Simek reissues are blurbed "Hugo Winner" and while Simek has won the Hugo award, it wasn't for any of these books.

Yet, the vast majority of books-90-95 percent of them-clearly and distinctly identify the title and author over and above the blurb. Zebra's blurb policy is way, way out of line.



ARIEL No. 1, Autumn 1976, \$5.95, 80 pages, Morning Star Press, Ltd., PO Box 6011, Leawood, Kansas 66206. Four issue subscription \$21.00.

Reviewed by Arnold Fenner.

As unfortunate as it is to say and realize, the first issue of **ARIEL** from the Morningstar Press people is, in a way, a sad commentary on what portions of the amateur publishing field has evolved into over the past few years. While it's only natural for an editor to wish to improve his product and reach the largest possible audience, one shouldn't lose sight of the readers' wants and needs---we purchase the item, we suggest and criticize, and we should get our hard-earned money's worth out of that item, especially when we remember that without us, said products would simply be collecting dust in someone's basement. And perhaps, just perhaps, that's where **ARIEL** No. 1 belongs.

Which isn't to say that **ARIEL** is not an attractive magazine: it most certainly is. Reproduction is sharp and clean while the lay-out and design qualities are first class; in fact, the issue is a top-notch example of a commercial venture, much like the numerous picture-movie volumes that constantly find their way to the "Remaindered" table at the local B. Daltons. And that, in a nutshell, is the major flaw with the publication.

Editor Armand Eisen has collected an interesting list of contents for his first issue: fiction, articles, interviews and art. He also has collected a healthy \$6 per magazine---which he can hardly be faulted for. Announce and proclaim the names of Frazetta, Corben, Hogarth, REH and company loud enough and you're sure to have eager fans beat a path to your door. A wise move, to say the least; but that's where the deception comes in. The potential buyer isn't told what to expect from such blurbs: "Color front and back covers by Corben and Frazetta!", "Corben's 'Den'", "Hogarth's last Tarzan Art!". Tantalizing, of course, but where are we told that it's all a reprint in some form or another? We're not. "Den" comes from the underground comics, Hogarth's art from his latest Tarzan book (**JUNGLE TALES OF TARZAN**), The Corben front cover from the splash page of his second "Den" story from **METAL HURLANT** and the **RICHARD CORBEN FUNNYBOOK**, and the Fritz backcover from the **CONAN OF CIMMERIA** book cover, poster, album jacket, and several other places. Hmmm. Maybe your thoughts ran along the same lines as mine when I bought **ARIEL** No. 1: "I thought I was going to get something new."

Other contents include an excerpt from the other Morningstar Press product, **BLOODSTAR** (which, while good in its original form, suffers because it is nothing more than an excerpt and it is another reprint), two fairly good poems by Howard and a ridiculous article by Charles Hoffman digging into the identity of REH and his creation, Conan. It was done much better

several years past in an article by George Scithers appearing in **AMRA**.

Also featured in the magazine is a short story by John Pocsik titled "The Fiend Within." Mr. Pocsik may be remembered for several original short stories that appeared in an Arkham House anthology during the early '60s and for his ghastly rewrite of Robert E. Howard's Solomon Kane adventures, "Blades of the Brotherhood" (Pocsik's title: "The Blue Flame of Vengeance"). Which might explain why "The Fiend Within" is essentially nothing more than a bastardization of the Kane series, with the main character's name being Isaac Grail, "the Puritan swashbuckler" set in the time of the Spanish Inquisition! Come, come, Mr. Pocsik; leave the dead in peace.

Hard as it may be to believe after reading my previous statements, there are some worthy aspects to **ARIEL**: the Frazetta interview, though a bit silly in parts, is an interesting look into the thoughts of the most influential artist working in the fantasy field today. And Hogarth's comments on his past accomplishments are intriguing reading, to put it mildly.

ARIEL is seemingly aimed toward the general public, rather than the regular fan of the various genres, yet it is not professionally distributed and the only people who'll get the opportunity to see and buy it are the fans. Which is why I feel that Mr. Eisen and company should take another look at the market they are reaching, re-evaluate their values and outlooks, and listen to what their readers would like to see. It is possible to produce a commercial item without compromising your integrity. Collectors might not really care about what goes on their shelves so long as it does find its way into their hands; but those of us that read, look at, and enjoy the works of various contributors within and outside of the field deserve something more for our time and support. It's possible that **ARIEL** will eventually provide what we're looking for (though more reprints are forthcoming---the cover for the next issue is the painting for the Ace ERB book **THE MOON MAID**, but as it stands, the first issue falls sadly short of its potential. I'd suggest that you save your \$6 to help pay your Christmas bills, or use it to buy several of the other fanzines the field has to offer---I believe you'll have a greater feeling of satisfaction.

((Editor's Note: When I hand out a review, I never place restrictions on the reviewer. I aim for honesty and intend to portray that image. All publishers submit review copies to Stygian Isle Press and receive no advance guarantees of favorable review. If I don't like an item as a reviewer I have a right and responsibility to tell readers my opinion and what that opinion is based upon. Arnold Fenner has fulfilled that right and responsibility admirably, but I can't help adding a postscript to his review. It's not that I disagree with Arnie, it's just that I'd add a further perspective on **ARIEL**. Much of Arnie's criticism of **ARIEL** is based upon the heavy reliance on reprinted material. That becomes a handicap to the buyer ONLY if the buyer has the original appearance of the work in his collection or has seen the original presentation of the material. Corben's "Den" was new to me. I loved it and anxiously look forward to the next installment or I did until I bought **THE RICHARD CORBEN FUNNY BOOK** which included the sequel segment of "Den". The cover of **ARIEL** appeared in **FUNNY BOOK** too but then I enjoyed it first on **ARIEL**. The Frazetta illustrations throughout the book (appended to the Frazetta interview) were all old hat to me, but it was nice seeing them again. But again, it depends upon the buyer's exposure. **ARIEL** No. 1 provides some nice graphics by Frazetta unless you're an avid Frazetta collector, in which case you've seen it all. The Frazetta interview was rather trivial in parts but overall it was an interesting expression of the man and artist. The REH verse was new and I would have bought the mag for that alone, but then not everyone has the completist bug that I have. I guess I'd recommend **ARIEL** with reservations. It depends on your bookshelf. I found enough new surprises to make it worth my money.))

UPON THE WINDS OF YESTERDAY AND OTHER EXPLORATIONS the paintings of George Barr, Donald M. Grant Publisher, West Kingston, RI, 140 page hardback, \$25.00, limited to 2500 copies

Reviewed by Jonathan Bacon

UPON THE WINDS OF YESTERDAY has a brief forward by Tim Kirk and an introduction by Stuart David Schiff. It contains approximately 48 color plates, ten black and white plates and a page featuring color reproductions of six convention name tags created by Barr. Those are the technicalities of the publication, but what is the book really like?

UPON THE WINDS is a journey into a mythical, mystical fantasy world that stirs the soul. "Fantastic" is too mild a generalization for this publishing venture. Barr's women are more beautiful than life ever intended women to be. His Hobbit is a creature of distinction and intellect, perhaps more admirable than Tolkien ever envisioned. Barr's Pooh Bear is more loveable and affectionate than any stuffed animal could ever be. Thru Barr's work, I see the Gollum for the first time as a truly tragic figure. And I'm delighted by George's visualization of a "Thingamajig".

I keep returning to this book, time and again, to view thru the portals into Barr's world of fantasy. It's a beautiful book, a priceless addition to any library. Many of the paintings in this edition have never before seen print. For that we owe Don Grant our undying thanks.

Quite frankly, I've tried to restrain myself from listing my personal group of favorites. . .but I just can't do it. I have no "favorite" only a group of "favorites". Look over any of the following and tell me they're not masterpieces: "Your Hair Wants Cutting", "Butterfly Garden", "What has it Got in its pocketses?", "The Hundred Acre Wood", "On the Trail", "Beauty and the Beast", "The Bride", "Winter Walk", "The Last Package", "The Enchanted Thingamajig", "Cookout", "Vigil by the Violent Sea", and the list goes on and on. How do I find the right words to convey the fantastic amount of pleasure this book has given me? I guess I just say: Explore **UPON THE WINDS** at your own risk, you may never again want to return to reality.

THE DEVIL IN IRON by Robert E. Howard, Donald M. Grant publisher, West Kingston, R.I., 154 pages, hardback, \$15.00, illustrated by Dan Green.

Reviewed by Jonathan Bacon

This latest in the deluxe Conan series includes both Conan tales: "**The Devil in Iron**" and "**Shadows in Zamboula**". The exciting part of this series is the opportunity it affords new artists to have their work come before the REH audience. I've only seen Green's work once or twice before but never in work related to the Howard canon. His work has a touch of the Jeff Jones flavor and yet it's grossly unfair to compare the two. I would in fact prefer Green's work over much of Jones' more recent illustrations. I know there will be a great deal of disagreement over the artwork in this volume. Many fans seem unable to appreciate anything unless it's signed by Frazetta, Fabian or Barr. I hope buyers won't be trapped into such narrow mindedness. Once again, in this reviewer's opinion, the strength of the Grant deluxe Conan series lies in the diversity of artists and Grant's refusal to submit to fannish pressure to go with the "in" names in Howardian illustration.

This series is, in all honesty, geared for the Howard enthusiast or the collector of fine books. \$15 is a high price to pay for two short Conan tales that could be read via a second hand copy of

the Lancer Conan editions. I enjoy and treasure finely wrought books. Grant's publications qualify EVERY time. They're works of art and anyone who doesn't recognize that. . .should save his \$15 and spend it elsewhere.

THE DYING EARTH, 224 pages, published by Tim Underwood and Chuck Miller, cloth edition of 1000 copies, \$15.95 with full color DJ and interior illustrations by George Barr. 239 North 4th Street, Columbia, Pa 17512.

Reviewed by Jonathan Bacon

I have a favorite publisher. Anyone who cannot guess that Donald M. Grant holds that position, hasn't yet read this issue. I judge new books by the high quality standards that Grant has set and maintained for several years. How does that tie in with a review of **THE DYING EARTH**? The team of Underwood and Miller have, with their first hardback book venture, established themselves in the league of publishers which Don Grant epitomizes. This small group takes great pride in EVERY aspect of their publication. Typestyle, illustrations, Djs, text content and every phase of bookmaking is carefully thought out and followed thru. **THE DYING EARTH** is a beautiful production well worth the \$15.95 price. The only regret this reviewer has is that the book is probably out of print. Some dealers and maybe Miller may still have copies but they're very nearly gone. If you can get a copy. . .get it.

It's hard to know where to begin the praise. George Barr's DJ is beautiful, a real visual delight. The end papers are maps of Vance's "Grand Motholam" in the "latter days". The black and white interior illustrations are extremely appropriate to Vance's text, not a single weak illustration in the lot. And of course, **THE DYING EARTH** sage is delightful, funny, tragic, whimsical and intriguing all at once. I only wish Vance would do more work in this vein. His hand is needed in the field.

CONAN-DE CAMP LP, \$6 unsigned, \$7.50 signed, Moondance Productions, Box 425, Wilmington, Vt. 05363

Reviewed by Wesley Kobylak

Picture a skinny little kid, weird by nature with brooding bitterness inflicted upon him by the harshness of youth. It's a hot Texas night -- a sweltering plains night when even the stars seem to give off heat -- and the times are not good. This young man, who by day beats his body into a shape that cannot be taunted, is sitting in the parlor of his family home. Recently one of his few friends let him listen to a crystal set wireless. Out of nowhere, with bits of ceramic and wire and crystal (oh that beautiful tiny crystal through which all of life had sprakled!), this slightly bitter, very sensitive youth had heard a sound -- voices, music, static -- from hundreds of miles away. His name was Bob Howard and he was thinking of that colossal event as he sat writing a fantasy story.

Picture also a powerful animal of a man, stalking naked down a primitive road of carriage and chariot ruts. He carries a sword, hacked with chips, and a dagger in his boot. The countryside is chill with spring air and blemished by smoking rubble from the dawn's sacking. As the man walks north he passes faint moans that soon gag out; he quickens his stride to be gone. Always there is dying and horror -- it sickens his barbaric instinct for freedom. Outside of what was once a village he stops, and faces a cross roads. One is as fateful as the other; he wishes Crom would point the way. This young, steeled man, Conan, by name, wants done with the pettiness of life. Suddenly, from down one road he hears -- so faintly, like a wisp -- the strings of a

lyre. It's beautiful. If it opportunes evil, so be it: he strides toward the sound.

And now picture finally, a young man returning home from work, stultifying work that breeds creativity and destroys it in one blow. He sheds the day's uniform, fills his pipe, and sits to listen to music. The times are not good. In his hand is a book picked up a week earlier, something he meant to read. With the music, the pipe, the day's relaxing end, he reads the book. It puts him at a cross roads; his name is Alan B. Goldstein and he takes the path toward the sound in his head.

That imaginary sound became CONAN, produced by Alan B. and his Moondance Productions. That record offered Robert E. Howard a reverent token of respect in the form of Conan dramatizations in the old-radio tradition of Orson Welles -- updated 40 years by modern technology; it attempted to "go where no man has gone before" to provide living aural color to the starving ears of fantasy audiophiles.

Alan B. has now produced a second Conan album featuring R. E. Howard's post-humous collaborator, L. Sprague de Camp. The prodigious effects of studio-made sound evident on the first album are subdued here to give de Camp room to move. Nevertheless, Alan B.'s artistic handiwork is present throughout the productions, wafting around de Camp's voice. At times the voice becomes hypnotic. The listener finds himself losing the trail of the drama and sinking into the subtleties of Aural-Vision.

The two stories presented are "The Bloodstained God", a de Camp-Howard piece from 1955, and "The Curse of the Monolith", a de Camp-Lin Carter work of 1968. Like the first album, this one presents two very different stories to fit either of your Howardian moods.

"The Bloodstained God" is traditional Howard fare, with treachery, deceit, loyalty and final victory -- an empty victory as so many of the Conan tales have. It is full of pitched battle and remorseless gore; it is full of the flowing imagery and pounding rhythm so characteristic of Howard -- with a touch of tightness provided by de Camp. The spectre of the ruby red god-monster haunts the story.

"The Curse of the Monolith" is a different sort of mood. There is a certain expansiveness in it that allows the listener to take a breath and enjoy the atmosphere. It is my favorite, just as "The Frost Giant's Daughter" was my favorite on the first album. Both "Tower of the Elephant" and "The Bloodstained God" share a forcefulness that I like, but "Daughter" and "Curse" provide that wonderment that I crave. In the latter, Conan is as usual partly deceived, partly never deceived, into foraging for treasure. He is led to a black monolith of solid lodestone whose magnetic forces entrap Conan and his mail armor while a slithery ooze promises death. And, like "Daughter", it ends with Conan back in camp among his comrades, sharing the barbaric spirit of fellowship.

De Camp's dramatization is obviously the focal point of the album, although due respect is made by Alan B. for evoking realism with vinyl ghosts. It is always interesting to note how an author interprets his own character. Here, de Camp shows us a hulking, slow-stalking Conan, willing to trust anyone, at the point of a sword. It is an ingenuous Conan, far removed from the first album and yet easy to get accustomed to. On the first album, Conan's force was in his voice while here his brawn is left to the imagination -- and all the better since imagination was what that young man from Texas was aiming at. De Camp works his voice from narrative to action and, unlike a mere spoken word recording, takes upon himself various accents and characters. Besides Conan, de Camp uses an odd mixture of voices from his own imagination. One character becomes a Scottish rogue, very effective in the presumed dark age of a millenia ago. Another voice has the characteristics of a New England Yankee-British aristocrat. It is an amusing voice and appropriate. For the most part, de Camp keeps his voice on an even register; thus the hypnotic effect. To hear de Camp use

such Howardian terms as "Khitai", "kaffia", "Kezankian", and "Zuagir khilat" is worth the price of the record alone.

Alan B.'s first Conan LP has sold out the first pressing of 1500 numbered copies and is well into sales of the second pressing of 1000. If it were a fanzine with a circulation of 2500 it would be noticed. And so it has. Tentative offers have come from on high; the de Camp production was a result of such growing notice. More Conan stories will be finding their way through the studio and out to the public. The initial success of Moondance Productions is due, apart from the intrinsic worth of the Howard stories, to the integrity Alan B. has for pure sound. (His license plate spells: AURAL.) And that success is all the more dramatic for its lack of commercialism in a world of conglomerate record companies. These records are available only by mail order, a handicap that, like little Bob Howard's scrawny body, is being overcome with tenacity.

Business -- if you can call being a fan a business -- has expanded at Moondance to include Tim Conrad posters of the first album cover (devastating!), Howard paperbacks, and relevant "graphic novels" ("comics" to the non-afficianado). The process of transforming oneself from a paying fan to a paid-for fan is a story in itself, one Alan B. will be glad to share with you at the next Con.

Until then, listen carefully: are those feet coming toward you from your speakers?

THE DRAGON, published bi-monthly by TSR-Periodicals, TSR Hobbies, Inc., P. O. Box 756, Lake Geneva, WI., 53147. Subscription rate is \$9.00 for 6 issues. Single copy and backish at \$1.50. **THE DRAGON** is edited by Timothy J. Kask.

Issues reviewed: June, Vol. 1, No. 1; August, Vol. 1, No. 2
Reviewed by Michael Clagett

Have you ever wondered about, or tried to play those fantasy quest and war games you see advertised by flyer or resting on the game shelves of hobby or department stores?

Have you thought about how they are played and how many different variations are available? And what about those metal miniatures of Gandalf and Frodo and other characters and historical figures you see and hear about, but don't know where to get?

THE DRAGON is devoted to those questions and a number of other items which may surprise you in a magazine of this type. **THE DRAGON** is published by those people who bring you **STRATEGIC REVIEW**; only this magazine is primarily concerned with the fields of Sword & Sorcery, Fantasy, Science Fiction, and Role Playing gaming. **THE DRAGON** is available through subscription, some bookstores, but most readily found at better hobby stores.

The June Premier issue (No. 1) presented a Fritz Leiber, Fahrd and Grey Mouser dialogue article on a new board game called **LANKMAR**. Also included is a Lin Carter and Scott Bizar article on game variations and additions for **ROYAL ARMIES OF THE HYBOREAN AGE**.

Other articles include the uses of magic, science and language elements in the games, plus notes on books and other magazines explaining or adding to board games. Mind you, I found the articles very interesting in themselves. One need not play the games to enjoy the features.

There is also fiction in **THE DRAGON**, to wit, "The Gnome Cache", a two part story by Garrison Ernst. Also a short story by Jake Jaquet called "The Search for the Forbidden Chamber".

General information on Wargame Conventions, hobby dealers, future issues, and similar magazines may also be found.

The August issue (No. 2) presented similar articles on board games and new variations, plus new games forthcoming, among them a new **LOTR** game. Also included is the second part of "The Gnome Cache" and a complete Gardner F. Fox story

introducing Niall of the Far Travels in "Shadow of a Demon".

The best article of the August issue is "The Feathered Serpent" by Lynn Harpold concerning Quetzalcoatl. (Neither stories nor article are game oriented.) The August issue's art work, by E. Otus, Mike Symes, P. Jaquays, Lynn Harpold and others is much better than the June issue.

Printed on slick paper with color covers, and black and white and color art work throughout, **THE DRAGON** comes off as a certainly unique and different publication. Should you follow or take part in fantasy gaming in all its myriad, thoughtful, and thinking aspects, then **THE DRAGON** will be a useful, interesting, and enjoyable publication to read.

THE LAST CELT

Edited and compiled by Glenn Lord

Donald M. Grant, Publisher, 1976; \$20, pages: 416

Reviewed by Loay Hall

THE LAST CELT is without doubt one of the most exciting and long-awaited books to appear in some time. It is a volume which will probably prove to be as controversial to REH fandom as de Camp's biography of Lovecraft was to HPL fandom. It is a fascinating and valuable contribution to REH scholarship.

Robert Ervin Howard (1906-36) is a writer who, in recent years, has commanded the enthusiasm of a legion of fans, who continually clamor for more fiction and greater detail into his life and ideologies. Glenn Lord, forever alert to REH's fans wishes, and desiring to publish the definitive bibliography of REH's work, has at last published what should amount to the greatest bit of Howardian scholarship yet attempted: a bibliography. Howard fans will eat it up!

The volume is divided into four categories--autobiography, biography, bibliography and miscellanea.

The autobiography section is made up of four papers--"The Wandering Years", "An Autobiography", "A Touch of Trivia", and "On Reading--And Writing"--written, obviously, by the inimitable Bob E. Howard. It also contains an insightful letter to **WEIRD TALES** editor Farnsworth Wright. In this segment Robert E. Howard, the man and the writer, are clearly bared for the reader to see.

The biography portion is made up of five appreciations of REH by Alvin Perry, H. P. Lovecraft, Glenn Lord, E. Hoffmann Price and Harold Preece. All are interesting discussions of Robert E. Howard and his work, but, in my opinion, Harold Preece's "The Last Celt" is the best of the five. The Lovecraft and Price essays were recently reprinted in **THE SKULL-FACE OMNIBUS**.

The bibliography of REH's work--241 pages in length--is a massive and staggering thing. Lord has done an impressive job, and should be commended for his herculean efforts.

The miscellanea, in this reviewer's opinion, alone is worth the price of the book. It contains a story fragment, letters, pages reproduced from REH's fanzine **THE GOLDEN CALIPH**; an article by HPL; A Howard photo album; a holograph of one of REH's school papers; a sample of **WEIRD TALES** covers based on REH tales; and many other curious items. Even REH's funeral notice.....

The volume, of course, is not without its flaws. The bibliography is a full three years behind on published Howardiana; the Price and Lovecraft appreciations are too well-known and accessible to warrant reprinting so soon after the **SKULL-FACE OMNIBUS**; there is actually less biographical material in the book than appears in de Camp's **THE MISCAST BARBARIAN**; and Glenn Lord's discussion of REH is in reality nothing more than a rehash of his introductions to the various Howard paperbacks. But these are minor peccadilloes in comparison to its innumerable merits. It is, after all, the first major attempt toward a definitive bibliography of Robert E. Howard's writings, and REH fans should appreciate Glenn

Lord's efforts. To Glenn I offer my personal thanks for such a remarkable book!

The controversy, of course, of which I mentioned in the first paragraph of this review, will no doubt stem from the question of whether or not **THE LAST CELT** is worth the \$20 price tag. That is a point which the individual reader must decide for himself. If he is not a sincere Howard collector or just new to the writings of Bob Howard, it is doubtful if he would wish to hand out so much. But if he is a Howard collector or avid REH fan, it is a book he will grab up immediately, little caring about the cost. It is highly recommended!

VIRGIL FINLAY: AN ASTROLOGY SKETCH BOOK

Donald M. Grant, 1975, 148 pages, 2000 copies, \$15.00.

Reviewed by Stephen Riley

This book is the second volume in Donald M. Grant's projected trilogy of Finlay art volumes, the first being published in 1971 and out-of-print for just about as long. Considering the rapid sales of other Grant books, why this volume is still available a year after publication amazes me, particularly with Finlay's soaring popularity and his escalation to revered status of Grand Master of science-fantasy art.

Physically, the book is the same size as Grant's Conan series, and features the same quality, three-piece maroon and gray binding. The paper is first-class and the printing is flawless.

The book's contents are no less in keeping with Donald M. Grant's quest for quality: an introduction by Beverly C. Finlay (the artist's widow) that explains Finlay's connection with the field of Astrology (closely allied with fantasy in its mythological symbols), and offers informative highlights of Finlay's working methods and relationships with art directors. A second and shorter introduction by Robert Prestopino, Art Director for Popular Library (who publishes the Astrology magazines Finlay did covers for) acknowledges the artist's contributions to the field.

The rest of the book is divided into twelve sections, each concerning itself with a particular Zodiac symbol. Introductory comments for each section explain the meaning of the symbols and give a brief commentary on each of the drawings for that sign.

But the cream of the volume is in the illustrations, ranging from loose preliminary sketches to the tightly-polished pieces that are Finlay's trademark. For those of us who were previously familiar only with Finlay's finished work, the sketches offer an interesting glimpse into the artist's working methods and construction of a drawing. Three color reproductions of studies (for paintings?) complete the artistic offerings, of which there are plenty.

This is a book that rightfully belongs in many a book collection, be you interested in Finlay's superior craftsmanship, art illustration, Astrology, or if you simply love beautifully produced books. I unreservedly recommend this volume.

FANTASY: BOOK ILLUSTRATION 1860 - 1920

By Brigid Peppin

(British edition: Studio Vista, L8.95) (192 pages.) Hardbound
(American edition: Watson-Guptill, \$25.00)

Reviewed by Stephen Riley

I sometimes receive the impression that many fantasy fans think most quality fantasy art was produced mainly within the pages of **WEIRD TALES**, **UNKNOWN**, **FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES**, etc., and that the most notable practitioners of fantasy illustration have been Virgil Finlay, Hannes Bok, Frank Frazetta -- to name three who have a high fannish popularity.

Yes, these men have produced some outstanding work, but they are hardly alone. Fantasy illustration, like fantasy fiction, has a long, proud tradition.

Ever since books have been produced, fantasy has been involved to some degree as far as illustration goes. One early example I can think of is Hans Holbein's **DANCE OF DEATH**, published in 1538. In spite of an occasional lone artist like William Blake, who produced lavishly illustrated editions of his own work in the late 1700s to early 1800s, it wasn't until the middle of the 19th century that fantasy book illustration started to blossom, particularly in England and Europe. (America produced many notable illustrators during this developing period, but their output was directed more toward adventurous and down-to-earth subjects. Maxfield Parrish is one of the few exceptions.)

This period (1860 - 1920) produced many fine examples of fantasy art. Indeed, between the Romanticists and Classicists of the early 1800s, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in the middle of the century, the Symbolist painters, (heir to the Pre-Raphaelites), who lasted into the early 20th century, and the *art nouveau* movement of the 1890s, the 19th century was a veritable feast of fantasy art in many forms.

The ever-increasing technological developments in printing led to an increase in the number of periodicals and books produced. This in turn led to a demand for more artists to illustrate all those columns of text. The Golden Age of book illustration, a period of lavishness in books, had begun. The opportunities for artists had never been greater.

Brigid Peppin's book explores this splendid period in England and Europe, as she rightly should, considering the proliferation of fantasy there in contrast to America. Her sixteen-page introduction takes the reader on a guided historical tour through the ranks of the great illustrators and the not-so-great. Each is put into perspective, while Ms. Peppin discusses the various influences that shaped the period and the societal role the varying aesthetic movements played. Not only are the artists themselves discussed, but the role fantasy played in the Victorian era through its literature is brought into account: the boom in children's books, fairy tales, the Arabian Nights, Arthurian romances and so forth. (Interestingly, William Morris, the fantasy author, had been influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites. In 1861 he founded the Arts and Crafts Movement, which gained acceptance and gave birth to *art nouveau*.)

The remaining text of Ms. Peppin's book concerns itself with a capsule biography of each artist, a list of the books he illustrated, and an excellent bibliography of related books.

The balance of **FANTASY** is about 160 pages of illustrations selected from this period, 250 in all, 64 of them in full color. Representation is fair for the artists involved. Those of greater popularity, influence and talent are designated the most space. Some of the artists will be familiar to readers: Beardsley, Charles and W. Heath Robinson, Gustave Dore, Arthur Rackham, Edmund Dulac, etc. Others, such as Rene Bull, H. J. Ford, John D. Batten, Laurence Housman and Edmund J. Sullivan may not be as well known. All artists represented are of importance in fantasy illustration, regardless of their stature.

There are almost 50 different artists featured in this book. I am thankful that Ms. Peppin kept inclusion of Gustave Dore to a minimum. Dore's work is beautiful but he has had plenty of exposure elsewhere and much of his work does not reproduce well unless special pains are taken in printing. I wish Beardsley had been given less space in spite of his importance -- there are already several collections of his work available. On the brighter side, Sidney Sime and Harry Clarke, two long-neglected artists, are both given ample space.

Arthur Rackham and Edmund Dulac are two of the foremost giants in this field and as you'd expect, both are well represented. Although both artists have been subject to increasing popularity in recent years, many of the color plates devoted to them have been rephotographed from the original

drawings rather than from a printed image in a book. The reproductions are breathtaking -- the plates look almost like originals themselves!

To try and locate and purchase an old book illustrated by any one of these artists would in many cases cost more than **FANTASY** itself. Most are rare collectors' items and lucky is the person who can locate such a book. I recommend collectors try to locate the British edition of **FANTASY** first. It features a different dustwrapper than the American edition, but the cost is several dollars cheaper. (The edition is supposedly not for sale in the U.S. or Canada, yet I ordered my copy from England without any problems.) If this fails, then purchase the American edition by all means.

FANTASY is an interesting, informative book, a feast for the eyes and imagination. This has been a lengthy review but this is quite a book -- you'll be repaid by the treasures within many times over.

THE ART OF FRANKLIN BOOTH

Nostalgia Press, Inc., 1976, 60-plus pages, \$8.95

Paperbound

Reviewed by Stephen Riley

Roy Krenkel acknowledges his debt to Franklin Booth. After looking through I can understand why. (My respect for Krenkel has only increased as a result.) Booth was an American illustrator early in the 20th century. He worked exclusively in black and white and must surely rank as one of the greatest artists to ever hold a pen to paper.

The first thing one notices upon looking at Booth's work is...well, you don't notice just **one** thing. The man simply overwhelms you in awe. His use of line is nothing short of incredible. Making very little use of stipple or "dash" lines, Booth created living, breathing pictures in a tight yet sweeping manner, putting Charles Dana Gibson's mastery of the technique to shame in comparison. By varying the length and width of his pen strokes, Booth etched upon the paper clean, sharp delineations, crisp contrasts in tonality, patterns, texture, and most importantly, **believability**. Booth's work is uplifting, inspired -- he imparts a sense of spirituality to his subject matter as if it were not merely enough to make the drawing recognizable.

"...after turning the leaves of this collection, I am moved to remark that Nature probably intended Booth for a poet of the contemplative order, but, in a perverse mood, changed her mind and bade him exercise his talents in line rather than in rhyme and meter." This statement from the book's introduction by Meredith Nicholson probably comes as close as words can to describing where Booth's genius lay.

This volume features 60 pages of reproductions of aspects of Booth's work in a facsimile of a rare 1925 edition. It's all here -- hauntingly beautiful forests, quiet shady streets steeped in nostalgia, exquisite works of fantasy that rank with Finlay in conception and execution, flying cities in the night, mysterious scenes with looming dark emotion and inspiring vistas. One thing you can put into words regarding Booth is that art is not uninteresting!

Anyone who loves finely crafted art in a tradition seldom seen anymore deserves to have this book on their shelves. Run out, buy it, run home and settle into your favorite chair. And then lose yourself in one of the most beautiful private universes ever created on paper. Nostalgia Press deserves our thanks for making this volume available.

NEWS NOTES

Our general policy is NOT to blurb items until we've received review copies, that way our readers know the items listed are NOW available. If you order material, please mention that you read about it in FC. That keeps the news flowing in and enables us to keep you posted on happenings in the fantasy field.

Dark Eagle (1202 East 13th Ave., Denver, Colo. 80218) has released a new high quality poster measuring 15 x 20" and printed on heavy 80 lb textured cover stock. The full color print is entitled "The Emperor's Leave-Taking" by Tim A. Conrad and features Michael Moorcock's Elric. This edition has been authorized by Moorcock and is limited to 500 signed and numbered copies signed by the artist at \$5 plus an un-numbered edition at \$3. Add 75c for postage on either edition.

Conrad's work is always straight out of a fantastic universe that could never exist. His men are too lean and grotesquely sad. His women are grotesquely beautiful. He's exactly the type of artist I enjoy. This Dark Eagle poster is Conrad at his best... he utilizes that impossible feeling of fantastic emotions that can only exist in the head and on the canvas of a talented artist. His subtle use of color with meaningful departures for emphasis creates an excellent wall piece for lovers of fantasy.

XENOPHILE Vol. 2, No. 12 was just issued in August and Nils Hardin's mag (Box 9660, St. Louis, Mo 63122) continues to be one of the outstanding aids in locating out of print AND in-print books for your collection. A sample copy costs \$1 or a 1st class sub (one year) in US or Canada is only \$12. Bulk rate in the US is only \$6 or 3rd class (Canada only) is \$8. Overseas airmail sub (one year) is \$18 or by Surface mail the cost is \$6.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW (formerly **THE ALIEN CRITIC**) edited by Dick Geis PO Box 11408, Portland, Ore 97211) has always been one of my favorite zines. Geis has that knack for controversy that makes every issue interesting reading. If you read last issue's interview with REH editors, you know that FC was heavily influenced by and patterned after Geis' **SFR**. In light of that I'm extremely pleased that Geis has seen fit to favorably pluf FC in the recent issue of **GALAXY MAGAZINE**. I consider that a real compliment from an editor—writer I admire. **SFR** is available at \$1.25 for a single copy, \$4 for one year or \$7 for a two year sub.

Scribners has two fantasy related 1977 calendars on the market. The one I've seen is the **SCIENCE FICTION CALENDAR 1977** which includes 13 full color paintings by some of the biggest names in SF illustration: Frank R. Paul, Virgil Finlay, Hannes Bok and Howard V. Brown. The selection of artwork was made by noted SF historian Sam Moskowitz. The spiral bound (10¹/₄ x 13¹/₂) calendar retails for \$4.95.

The second calendar (which I haven't seen) is **THE 1977 BEASTLY RIDDLE CALENDAR** featuring twelve pages of riddles and full color illustrations of beasts both real and fanciful. It is also spiral bound (9 x 11") and retails for \$3.95. These should be available at your local bookstore.

WANTED: Any issue of **THE HOWARD COLLECTOR**, **REH: LSF** Nos. 1 and 2, **FANTASY CROSSROADS** No. 1, 4 — 5, 8 and the Fabian **ALMURIC PORTFOLIO**. Bob Bull, 315 Meadow Ct., Ft. Atkinson WI 53538.

I just received a copy of the 3rd mailing of The Pulp Heroes Amateur Press Association (PHAPA). The Official Editor is Lester Boutillier (2726 Castiglione St., New Orleans, La 70119). PHAPA is a quarterly apa with \$1 dues and a copy count of 20. Membership is at nine and there's room for more. For more information write Lester.

Simba Reproductions (Cliff Bird, 616 Livingston, Hurst, Texas 76053) has just issued a sorcery theme print (based upon a Frazetta illustration) by Cliff Bird. This is an extremely nice

print available in black & white from Simba at \$1 postpaid.

THE FANTASY BOOK No. 1 (\$1.00 per copy from Larry Herndon, 1830 Highland Dr., Carrollton, TX 75066) is one of the most unique publications I've seen lately. It's produced in tabloid format on newsprint (a medium I usually dislike). **TFB** No. 1 includes two comic strip adaptations of fiction by Robert W. Chambers. The strips utilize concepts and themes from **THE KING IN YELLOW** by Chambers (1895). The first strip in this issue ("The Shadow in the Starstone") is excellent. The introduction of Hastur, Koriah, the King in Yellow and a myriad host of others is handled well. The script is tightly written and the art is generally far superior to most fan strip adaptations. My only negative observation is in regard to the use and non-use of the air-brush in adjacent panels where the same characters are pictured. It gives the story an odd variety. The second strip in this issue was wasted on me. I just couldn't get into it. "A Vision of the Black Stars" is an attempt to graphically picture action which is not easily rendered in a visual medium. It is an unsuccessful attempt BUT the first strip is well worth the cover price and I urge you to support **TFB** No. 1 with your \$1 to Larry Herndon.

SKULL-FACE OMNIBUS: VOLUME 2 (subtitle "The Valley of the Worm and Others") is now out from Panther Books Ltd., Frogmore, St. Albans, Herts AL2 2NF, England. The paperback volume sells from 60p (Canada \$2.50). Overseas buyers must add 20p for the 1st book and 10p for each additional one ordered from Panther. Volume 2 includes: "The Fire of Assurbanipal", "A Man-Eating Jeopard", "Worms of the Earth", "Kings of the Night", "The Valley of the Worm", "Skulls in the Stars", "Rattle of Bones", "The Hills of the Dead", "Wings in the Night", "Robert Ervin Howard: A Memoriam" by H. P. Lovecraft, "Which Will Scarcely Be Understood" and a "Forward" by August Derleth. The cover is mediocre at best. It's by Chris Achilleos and frankly doesn't compare with other recent covers he's done for British REH volumes.

I just received a price list (No. 1) from Star Treader Books, 4325 West 10th, Vancouver, B. D., Canada V6R 2H6. The list includes for sale items by HPL, REH, Derleth, Blackwood, Farley, Ellison, Moskowitz, etc. 145 books are offered for sale and Star Treader offers free search service with no obligation to buy.

Larry also mentioned the following in his letter: I've recently unearthed a box containing back issues of **REMEMBER WHEN MAGAZINE**, a fan-magazine produced by Nostalgia Inc. several years ago. While they last, I'll be selling these back-issues at \$1 each. Issues available include No. 3 (containing, among other items, an article on Ralph Milne Farley and his "Radio World" Novels), No. 4 (an in-depth examination of ERB, including the novels, comics, films, radio show, etc., and featuring a new, exclusive interview with Johnny Weissmuller), No. 5 (containing, among other items, a long **WIZARD OF OZ** feature), No. 9 (featuring material on **THE MARK OF THE VAMPIRE**, **FLASH GORDON**, **THE WEREWOLF OF LONDON**, & an article on sf shows on tv), and No. 12 (with **KING KONG** material as well as an in-depth examination of the fantasy film **THE THIEF OF BAGDAD**). Each issue contains much OTHER material... I just touched on the high-points, above.

Last issue, I listed those dealers who carried FC. I failed to complete the address of William Scoville. His full address is 1124 N. Jefferson Street, Arlington, Va 22205.

Sphere Books (England) are planning new editions of the Conan REH titles. They'll be out in January 1977 and differ from previous volumes in that they'll have white instead of black bindings.

Neville Spearman Ltd. (PO Box 75, Normandy House, St. Helier, Jersey, Channel Isles, UK) are issuing a hardback volume titled simply **WEIRD TALES** for 3½ pounds. It'll include work by CAS, REH, HPL, Whitehead, Leiber, Quinn, Kuttner, Bloch, Wellman and several others. The book is a facsimile reproduction of the actual pages from **WEIRD TALES**.

Roy Squires (1745 Kenneth Road, Glendale, CA 91201) has announced the publication of **THE MARRIAGE OF SIR JOHN de MANVILLE**, a single poem by Frank Belknap Long. The poem was first published in Long's collection **A MAN FROM GENOA AND OTHER POEMS** back in 1926. Squires' small press publication is a 50th Anniversary edition retailing for \$6.50. I don't know the print run, but Squires seldom prints over 200-300 copies. All of his publications are hand press printed, numbered and published on fine quality papers. If you've not experienced truly fine printing, send off for **SIR JOHN**. The discerning collector will NOT be disappointed.

Chuck Miller (239 N. 4th Street, Columbia, Pa 17512) has published a set ten different fantasy theme Holiday Greeting cards illustrated by Bot Roda. The black & white cards measured 5 by 5¾ inches on good card stock. There's something in the collection for everyone: Star Trek fans, the Lovecraftian, the S & S fan, Burroughs fans and the general fantasy fan. My favorites include the Barsoomian Christmas card that reads "On Barsoom it's not easy to find something green with limbs that is taller than 8 feet. . .so we borrowed Tars Tarkus for an evening" or another that states "Merry Christmas" and "Have a Merry Christmas or I'll. . . Check one: a. burn your village b. plunder your temple c. rape your women d. stave in your skull e. snap your spine f. splatter your guts g. all of the above h. none of

the above." Well you get the general idea. They're clever, well drawn and ideally suited for the fantasy fan. You may order a box of ten different cards (one of each design) for \$5.50 (including postage) or order 10 of one design in a box for \$5.50 postpaid. If you want to see a flyer with pictures of all ten designs send Chuck an SASE.

DARK HORIZONS No. 14 (Summer 1976) is now out. It is the official journal of the British Fantasy Society. Membership in BFS entitles the member to a year's sub to **DARK HORIZONS** plus a year sub to the **BFS Bulletin** with news from the continent & America. Membership is 2 pounds or \$6 and checks should be made out to Brian Mooney, Secretary, British Fantasy Society, 447A Porters Ave., Dagenham, Essex, RM9 4ND, England. DH No. 14 is a special tribute issue to Brian Lumley. It includes a bibliography, fiction by Lumley and an interview. LOCs, articles and artwork by Fabian, Pitts, and the reincarnation of Virgil Finlay (Stephen Jones) fill out the issue. I strongly suggest you join this fine organization.

MACABRE No. 13 (from Joseph Payne Brennan, 26 Fowler Street, New Haven, Conn. 06515) is still available for \$1.25. This verse magazine includes work by W Paul Ganley, Brennan, and others plus a short fiction piece. **MACABRE** deserves your support. Fantasy verse is a very precarious portion of the genre. There aren't too many practioneers because the market for verse is so slim. Help out a dying art form. OK?!

Hyperion Press Inc. (45 Riverside Ave., Westport, Conn. 06880) has issued a series of books composing the Classics of Science Fiction: Series II. Works in this series include landmark fiction by John W. Campbell Jr., Erle Cox, George Allan England, William Hope Hodgson, Thomas McClary, John Munro, H. G. Wells, S Fowler Wright, Philip Wylie and others. The books are available in both paperback (quality sized books) or cloth bound editions. Sam Moskowitz is the editor of the series. His criteria for selecting the nineteen titles was 1) the work had to be either long out of print or hard to find, 2) must have been unusual or significant in it's own right, and 3) it had to be literate or highly readable and entertaining. The volumes range in price from \$3.95 to \$6.95 for the paperback editions to \$10.50 to \$16 for the cloth editions. A sampling of titles include **CLOAK OF AESIR**, **OUT OF THE SILENCE**, **THE BOATS OF "GLEN CARRIG"**, **THE GHOST PIRATES**, **THE NIGHTLAND**, **SAURUS**, **REBIRTH**, **THE SEA LADY**, **THE IRON STAR** and **THE HOUSE ON THE BORDERLAND** to name a few. Write Hyperion Press for a complete listing of books and prices.

ART & STORY No. 2 is now out and available from editor James Denney (32692 Black Mountain Road, Tollhouse, Ca 93667) for \$2. No. 2 includes a short tale by C. S. Lewis titled "Ministering Angels" (the story of the first men and women on Mars), the continuation of Denney's own excellent strip "The Black Star" (a combination SF, heroic fantasy strip with a flavor of Tolkein about it), an article on **SPACE 1999** (with plenty of photos), a new story by Alan Dean Foster (illoes by Clyde Caldwell), part two of L. Frank Baum's "The Enchanted Isle of Yew" and an article on Arthur C. Clark which touches on the scientist/fictioneer's views on everything from SST to "Why Explore Space?". It's a good solid issue for fantasy — SF fans.

DARK PHANTASMS No. 1, Summer, 1976, VW Studios, 1515 Argonne Rd., Tallahassee, Fla 32303, contains "The Black Hound of Death" by REH, a comic adaption of Wagner's "In the Lair of Ys1s1", a Kane portfolio by Bill Black and a few other ditties (editorials, plugs, etc). \$3.50, covers by Krenkel, Fabian illoes to the REH tale, 48 pages, 8½ x 11".

This is put out by Bill Whitcomb and really is a rather nice publication. The "Ys1s1" adaption is average or better visually



"DORIAN
HAWKMOON"
D. HERRING
12-75

and the diverse hands who composed it have done an exceptional job on putting into the comic format, a very difficult piece of fiction. Fabian's interior two illoes are very nice indeed. He's captured the mood of the fiction very well. Wes Smith and Hoberg have collaborated on a comic strip titled "Arbada-Fetex". The graphics are adequate and considering that I've pretty much been turned off by S & S strips of late...that's sort of a compliment. I hate continued adventures but this one does seem to be ripe with interesting possibilities.

SIMBA No. 1 (Cliff Bird, Simba Reproductions, 616 Livingston, Hurst, Texas 76053) has just appeared with a gorgeous Steve Fabian cover. The 46 page (8½ x 11") magazine is printed offset with wrap around binding and costs \$3. The bulk of the mag is a presentation of Bird's "The Sands of Nakhlah"...the adventures of Simba. The story is amply illustrated as well as written by Cliff. Besides Cliff and Fabian, other artistic contributors include Arnold Fenner, Ken Raney, William Black, Clyde Caldwell, Russ Manning and Paul Schliesser. Charles Saunders has contributed a short (illustrated) article "Imaginary Beasts of Africa". One very interesting development is that Andrew J Offutt has edited **SIMBA** No. 1 for Cliff. Andrew has written a very interesting and very personal introduction to this issue. I think you'll enjoy this mag from Simba Reproductions.

PHANTASY DIGEST (Hall Publications, Box 326, Aberdeen, Md 21001) is one of the newest additions to the fantasy genre mags. This initial issue costs \$4 for an 88 page (5½ x 8½") mag. Reproduction wise and binding wise this is a step in the right direction for Hall Pubs. Their previous glue bound zines were a more expensive form of binding but less utilitarian than the simple staple binding now used. Binding is secondary to contents of course. This issue includes "Graveyard Rats" by Robert E. Howard, "The Place of Stones" an Imaro origin tale by Charles Saunders, "The Final Solution" by Wayne Hooks, plus fiction and verse by John Bredon. Andrew J Offutt also has made available in this issue an article which was to have prefaced his **THE UNDYING WIZARD** published by Zebra. News notes, plugs and review of Lin Carter's "World's End" novels fill out the issue. Artists represented this issue include Caldwell, Jim Pitts, Gene Day, John Stewart and David Reisman.

MIDNIGHT SUN No. 4 published by Gary Hoppenstand (2014 Mackenzie Drive, Columbus, Ohio 43220) has appeared. This 48 page (5½ x 8½") zine sells for \$2.50 or a year (6 issues) sub may be had for \$12.50. This issue features work by Basil Copper, Richard Lyon, C. L. Grant, Joseph Payne Brennan and artwork by Andrew Smith, Bob Love, T. J. Buckingham.

MARVEL WORLD No. 1 (1116 S Jefferson, Olympia, Wash. 98501) is really a comic strip zine meaning it includes primarily comic stories and an emphasis on Marvel comic titles. It does include an article on the Marvel **CONAN THE BARBARIAN** comic. The article is pretty old hat if you've heard most of the criticism aimed at Marvel. No price listed on the zine.

Reed S. Andrus (226 E. 4800 So. Murray, Utah 84107) publishes a personal-zine with SF—fantasy overtones called **HARBINGER**. No. 4 is available for \$1.25 or contribution. The zine includes verse, comic strips, fiction, reviews, LOCs and some nice art (notably by Rick McCollum and a nice cover by Gray Lyda). Give it a try, then write Reed an LOC. He'd love to hear from ya!

NYCTALOPS Volume 2, No. 4—5 (whole number 11—12) is now in print from Harry Morris Jr. (500 Wellesley S. E., Albuquerque, NM 87106) for \$4. This 126 page (8½ x 11") volume is a stupendous bargain. Compare page size, cost and printing quality with ANYTHING else on the market (including FC) and you'll see that Morris has produced a real bargain.

NYCTALOPS is not a bargain just because of page count. Those pages include some of the finest graphics (by Riley, Tiani, Pitts, Cox, Wenske, Stewart, Huber and many others) plus fiction, verse and articles related to HPL and the weird fantasy tradition. Darrell Schweitzer conducts an excellent interview with Frank Belknap Long, E Hoffman Price wrote "A Letter in Regards Lovecraft", plus, LOCs, reviews and a great deal more. Beyond what I've listed, the greatest portion of **NYCTALOPS** No. 11—12 is a series of articles, fiction and verse about or by Donald Sidney-Fryer. Fryer is a poet and gentleman who is past due for this type of recognition. The poet himself has written (and appear in this issue) "The Cosmic Troubadours", "The Spenser Experiment", "A Defense and Illustration of One Poetic Method", "Arthur Machen and King Arthur: Sovereigns of Dream" and "The Atlantis Fragments". I heartily recommend this most recent issue of a distinguished journal from Silver Scarab Press.

I bet you never expected to see a blurb for **MUSCLE MAG INTERNATIONAL** in FC! But here it is. Vol. 2, number 2 includes an article titled "The Tarzan Blueprints" by Denie. This should be of interest to Burroughs fans since the article is illustrated by sixteen different photos of the various actors to portray Tarzan on the silver screen. The same issue includes an article titled "The Steve Reeves Cult". All of this is approached from the Muscle Mag standpoint but makes for interesting reading and background on some giants in the fantasy film genre. Each issue has featured an article regarding men like Reeves, Reg Park and Gordon Scott, i.e. the greats and the movies that featured them as Hercules, Goliath, Samson, Thief of Bagdad and Morgon the Pirate. The mag is available from Robert Kennedy, c—o Health Culture Publications, Unit 1, 270 Rutherford Rd. South, Brampton, Ontario, Canada L6W 3K7. Cost is \$1.25.

SPACE & TIME No. 38 is in print and includes fan fiction by Christopher Kelly, Ira H Herman, and E R Lovick. The bimonthly mag is edited by Gordon Linzner (138 West 70th Street, Apt. 4-B, New York NY 10023) and a single issue may be had for \$1. A six issue sub runs \$5.00. This issue includes a cover by Gene Day, and interior illoes by Tim Lynch, S. Scott Sater, Allen Koszowski and Jim Garrison.

Steven R Johnson (16385 Two Bar Road, Boulder Creek, CA 95006) and Hendrik Sharples (Serendipity Corner, 1401 S.E. Division Street, Portland, Ore. 97202) have issued **THE BRUNNER MYSTIQUE** at \$4 per copy and available from either co-editor. The booklet runs 36 (8½ x 11") pages on coated stock. Both front and back covers are full color reproductions of Brunner work. In addition to an interview with Brunner, a Brunner bibliography (which includes comic book appearances, fanzine work, book covers and art prints), the booklet also includes (exclusive of covers) 35 pieces of artwork by Frank. It's a beautiful booklet for Brunner fans!

ERB-DOM No. 88 and No. 89 are now out from Caz (that's Cazedessus Jr., PO Box 507, St Francisville, La 70775). Issue No. 89 contains the astonishing news that C. E. Cazedessus Jr (Caz for short) will no longer continue editing one of the finest magazine around. **ERB-DOM** No. 90 will be Caz's last issue. No. 88 contains the usual excellent fare for **ERB-DOM** including photos from **AT THE EARTH'S CORE** (movie with McCiure, Munro and Cushing), color Tarzan strips, reviews and articles. Caz goes in for lots of artwork, too. No. 89 begins a huge Burroughs sale. In addition to giving up **ERB-dom**, after over 20 years of collecting, Caz is selling his entire collection including several original manuscripts by **ERB**. No. 89 also includes lots of art and a 1968 proposal by Star Trek's Gene Roddenberry on how to make a Tarzan movie. In issue No. 89, Caz states: **ERB-DOM** will be sold to the highest bidder after the publication of

No. 90 or it will stop there. . .Whoever takes over this magazine will get all applicable files, artwork and over 1000 back issues with which to keep up the momentum." It will be sad to see Caz leave the ERB scene, but I do hope someone carries on with ERB-dom. Nos. 88 and 89 are available at \$2.50 each

COMPASS is published by Tony Scialis, 1100 Cutspring Rd., Stratford, CT 06497 and is available at 12 issues (monthly) for \$3. The issue I have (vol. 1, No. 2, Oct 11-Nov. 7) is 8 pages (8½ x 11") and deals primarily with comic book news including an interview with artist George Perez. This issue of **COMPASS** does include an article on **SPACE 1999** also. Tony writes that he's interested in a columnist on sword & sorcery or fantasy. Anyone out there willing to help?

BLACKLITE No. 1 is a new zine out from John DiPrete (PO Box 8214, Cranston, RI 02920). The 32 page (8½x11") mag sells for \$1. Gene Day has done a SF cover (space ship and astronauts) and a very interesting comic strip titled "Starlorn the philosopher". No. 1 includes fiction and reviews, columns, etc by DiPrete, Darrell Schweitzer, AK Molnar, Jon Inouye and others. Art credits include Ken Raney, Mark Gelotte, etc.

Issue No. 2 is also available with a continuation of the Gene Day strip, fiction by Charles Saunders (of Imaro fame), Gordon Linzner, etc. Either issue is available for \$1 each.

GALILEO is a new SF mag available from 339 Newbury Street, Boston, MA 02115. The premiere issue includes work by Arthur C Clarke, Ray Bradbury, Robert Chilson, Andrew Whyte, Ruth Berman and several others. Tom Barber has done two extremely nice color covers for this issue. This issue shows a great deal of promise and certainly should be supported. Single copy price is \$1.50, 4 issue sub, only \$4 or 10 issues at \$9.

CARTOONNEWS is billed as an education publication for students, pros and fans. Issue No. 11 is before me and retails for \$1 from Bill Sheridan, 330 Myrtle St., Redwood City, CA 94062. No. 11 includes "The Cartoonist and Murphy's Law", "The Face Behind the Laugh", "C.W. Kahles and Hairbreadth Harry", plus spotlights on the editorial cartoons of several contemporary cartoonists. One section deals with "Cartoonists on the World Economy. Very interesting mag even for non-fans.

SIGN OF THE SALAMANDER by Karl Edward Wagner is the first booklet in the John Chance vs Dread series. It's new pulp-villain adventure by the creator of Kane. **SIGN** is available from Gary Hoppenstand, 2014 Mackenzie Dr., Columbus, Ohio 43220 for \$1.98.

QUANTUM is one heck of a nifty little zine. Issue No. 4 features a very nice cover by Mike Streff. David Kyle, the editor of **A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF SCIENCE FICTION**, is interviewed. LOCs, fanzine reviews, fiction and book reviews fill out the issue. **QUANTUM** has six editors, my understanding is that everything printed must be approved by a majority of the editors. Knowing human nature, I'm surprised they've got to issue No. 4! Single issues are \$1 while a six issue sub is only \$5. Recommended.

De Danann Press has issued **CELTIA: A Collection of Posters and Drawings in the Celtic Style** by Jim FitzPatrick. **CELTIA** was reviewed very favorably in the last issue of **FC**. It's truly a breathtaking collection of prints by Northern Ireland's most outstanding young artist. To give you an idea of FitzPatrick's style, the cover of this issue of **FANTASY CROSSROADS** is from the **CELTIA** collection. The soft bound volume measures 8½ x 11¾" and has a color cover that is truly beautiful beyond words. Stygian Isle Press has purchased copies of **CELTIA** which we now are making available to our readers. No other dealer has

them in stock in the USA. Cost is \$5.50 (no discount on this item). We recommend you add 40c for insurance. We are not responsible for un-insured packages. Oh, one final note, one of the prints folds out of the book to a size of 15½ x 11¾". A second fold out poster measures 23¾ x 11¾". The book can easily be taken apart so the prints may be framed. If interested, write us today for your copy.



THE DIVERSIFIER is a bi-monthly fanzine of fan fiction, verse and art. Pro contributors are not uncommon either. Recent issues include work by Steve Fabian, Gene Day, Gary Winnick, Carl Potts, A B Clingan, Jon Inouye, Richard Tierney, Vic Kostrikin, Wayne Hooks, C C Clingan, E C Tubb, Brian Crist, Greg Nicoll, Neal Wilgus, Gordon Linzner, Nicola Cuti, John DiPrete, Robert Bloch, David Gerrold, L Sprague De Camp, Donald Sidney-Fryer, E Hoffman Price, William Conder, Robert Eber, Sutton Breiding, Mark Gelotte, A. B. Cox and lots more. If you enjoy fiction and verse in the S & S, weird or fantasy traditions, then try **THE DIVERSIFIER**, \$1.25 per copy of six issues for \$5.75 from PO Box 2078, Oroville, Ca 95965.

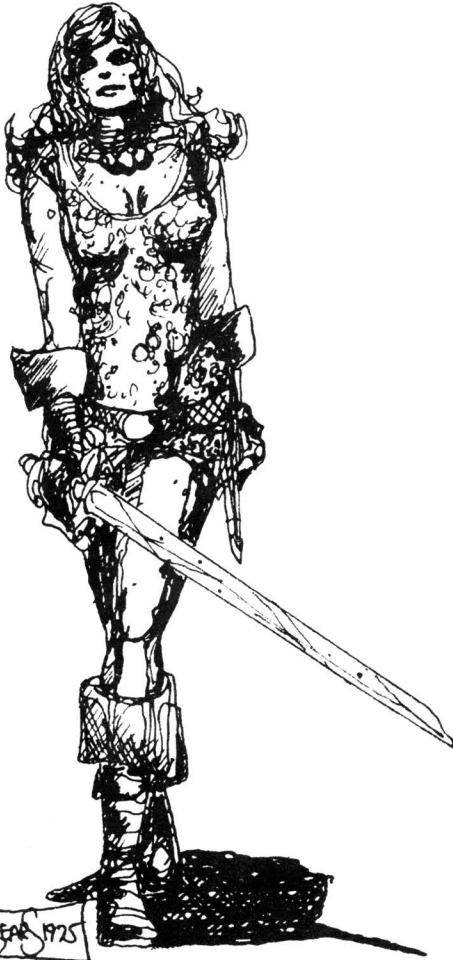
When W Paul Ganley found himself swamped with "good" material (fiction, verse) for **WEIRDBOOK** and realized he'd never be able to afford to get it all published via offset, he began a new mimeo publication called **WEIRDBOOKLET**. **EERIE COUNTRY** is the first in the **WEIRDBOOKLET SERIES**. 300 copies of this issue were printed and are available at \$2.50 from Box 35, Amberst Branch, Buffalo, NY 14226. The 82 page (plus covers) booklet includes work by a great many unknowns, plus familiar people like Brian Lumley, Joseph Payne Brennan, William Scott Home, and Darrell Schweitzer. There's a lot of good solid fiction and verse in this issue. Depending upon buyer reaction and sales, Paul will continue the series. I suggest you vote for its continuation by sending Paul \$2.50 today.

I've just received a copy of **TITAN**, a British mimeo-zine. It includes two fanzine review columns ("Zines Across the Water" and "Home Ground"), LOCs, a listing of new books (July 76 to December 76) and a lot of chatter on British fandom and cons. For the British fan, I'm sure it's a very informative zine. Americans would probably feel a little left out and lost. **TITAN** is available for 1/25p.

THE ROBERT E HOWARD UNITED PRESS ASSOCIATION (REHUPA) has a new Official Editor (OE). It is Brian Earl Brown, 55521 Elder Rd., Mishawaka, Ind. 46544. REHUPA is one of two apas (amateur press associations) dealing with the work of Robert E Howard. The second is THE HYPERBORIAN LEAGUE which also concerns itself with the life and works of Clark Ashton Smith. THL's OE is Don Herron, but since Don is in transit to a new home in California, Ben Indick (428 Sagamore Ave., Teaneck, NJ 07666) is acting as temporary OE. If interested in THL then contact Ben. Both apas require members to write and print a contribution which is then sent to the OE for collation with contributions from other members. The total package is stapled together and each member received a copy of the mailing. Members must pay yearly dues (\$2-\$3) and print enough copies for all members to receive one (both THL and REHUPA require 40 copies of each member's zine contribution.) Write Brian or Ben for more info.

SOUTH OF THE MOON is a zine which lists all apas currently operating. It indicates who the OE is, minimum activity (minac), deadlines, dues, etc. for all apas. A sample copy of SOTM cost 50c from Andrew Sigel, 424 Greenleaf St., Evanston, Ill. 60202.

SWASHBUCKLE No. 1 is out from Don Herrig, PO Box 411, Pottstown, Pa 19464. The zine is edited by Bruce D. Griffiths. **SWASHBUCKLE** is a comic strip zine devoted solely to the Heroic fantasy or S&S genre. The artwork and scripting ranges from average to excellent. I think this zine deserves support because of the potential it holds. If you enjoy S & S, pirate adventure, etc try it. Future issues promise work by Jihm Rohn and FC regular Jim Coplin. Single issue price is \$1.50.



Byron Roark (2951 S. 34th Street, Kansas City, Ks 66106), one half of the former team that produced **REH: LONESTAR FICTIONEER** is carrying on the tradition of **LSF** but in a new mag titled **PALANTIR**. There will no longer be a **LSF**, rather two mags will be published. Roark will do **PALANTIR** and Arnold Fenner (Box 186, Shawnee Mission, Ks 66201) will publish—edit **CHACAL**.

PALANTIR No. 1 is due out around the middle of February 1977 and will include "Hawks Over Egypt" by REH and illoed by Randy Spurgin, "To All Sophisticates" by REH; an article on the new Berkley Conan books by Karl Edward Wagner (editor of the new series); a five plate portfolio based on "The Scarlet Citadel" by Jeff Easley, an article on the new REH-oriented collaborations (illoed by Jim Pitts) by Dave McFerrari; and artwork by Steranko, the Severins, Hank Jankus and others. Single issue price will be \$3.50 for the 48 to 52 page mag.

Darrell Schweitzer is in the process of gathering material for a S & S humor anthology titled **BLUNDERING BARBARIAN TALES**. The anthology will be published by TK Graphics and pays a 50—50 pro rata split of royalties. Darrell is seeking manuscripts and would especially like to see a good solid Conan parody and a first rate parody of **THE WORM OUROBOROS**. Contact him at 113 Deepdale Rd, Strafford, Pa 19087.

NIGHTSHADE No. 3 is available from Ken Amos (7005 Bedford Lane, Louisville, Ky 40222) for \$1.50. It includes Karl Edward Wagner's updated bibliography and biography of Manly Wade Wellman. Also a short interview with Manly. **NIGHTSHADE** contains other material of interest to the fantasy fan.

I don't have price or content information, BUT I do know that Arnold Fenner (PO Box 186, Shawnee Mission, Ks 66201) has delivered **CHACAL** No. 2 to the printers. If it's half as good as No. 1, don't miss it. Fenner will also be bringing out a final issue of **REH: LONE STAR FICTIONEER**. Send him an SASE for more information.

I'm a newcomer to the work of Lord Dunsany but I'm learning to love (and almost understand) his delightful, insightful style of short fiction via **TALES OF THREE HEMISPHERES** published by George Scithers' Owlswick Press (Box 8243, Philadelphia, Pa 19101). The book of short stories and sketches (fictional not illustrative) was first published in 1919 sans illustrations. This is the first reprinting and the first illustrated edition with Tim Kirk doing the honors. Kirk's style seems so appropriate to the text. It's a delightful book. Scithers seems to put a lot of care and careful deliberation into his book-making. It's a finely wrought addition to any book shelf and all for only \$9. For Lovecraftians an added treat is a biographical sketch of Dunsany written by HPL and reprinted in **TALES** from a 1944 Arkham House volume.

Donald M. Grant (West Kingston, Rhode Island 02892) is one of the foremost publishers of quality fantasy hardcovers today. This issue includes an extensive interview with Grant plus reviews of several of his current in print books including **THE DEVIL IN IRON** \$15.00, **THE LAST CELT** \$20.00, **VIRGIL FINLAY: AN ASTROLOGICAL SKETCHBOOK** \$15.00 and **UPON THE WINDS OF YESTERDAY** (George Barr artbook) \$25.

Also available from Grant or his distributor (F & SF Book Co., PO Box 415, Staten Island, NY 10302) are: **OUT OF THE STORM** by William Hope Hodgson with Fabian DJ and interiors at \$10, **ROGUES IN THE HOUSE** by Robert E Howard and part of the Deluxe Conan matched set of books at \$15, **TO QUEBEC AND THE STARS** at \$15 and **BLACK VULMEAS VENGEANCE** at \$15.

TO QUEBEC is a 318 pp. hardcover book edited by L Sprague de Camp which includes a variety of non-fiction works by Howard Phillips Lovecraft. It's a treasure trove for Lovecraftians who wish to delve more into the thoughts and opinions of this master of horror literature. The works reprinted are from obscure fan presses, newspapers that HPL contributed articles to, and the like.

BLACK VULMEA'S VENGEANCE includes three pirate tales by Robert E. Howard. The three are: the title story, "Isle of Pirate's Doom" (reprinted from the George Hamilton OP booklet of the same title) and "Swords of the Red Brotherhood" (never before published). The title tale is reprinted from a 1938 issue of **GOLDEN FLEECE**.

"Swords" runs 25,000 words long according to **THE LAST CELT** and was edited by de Camp into a Conan tale titled "The Black Stranger" so it may seem familiar to some Conan-philes.

Stygian Isle Press (Box 147, Lamoni, Iowa 50140) has several items still in print though **FANTASY CROSSROADS** Nos. 1-9 are not among those items. **OMNIUMGATHUM** is still available at \$5 for the nearly 70 pages of fantasy verse and illustration. Well over 2200 lines of verse is included by such notables as REH, HPL, CAS, Peake, Bok, Hodgson, Whitehead, de Camp, Munn, Long, Moorcock, Lumley, Campbell, Norton, Zelazny, van Vogt, etc. The booklet includes (in addition to 45 authors and 125 poems) artwork by Fabian, Bok, Day, Caldwell, Easley, Riley, Vess, Mohr, Huber and Englum. This volume has been praised as "in the tradition of Derleth", "a volume that is so outstanding in content that even its certain high value as a collector's item ceases to seem important" (Frank Belknap Long) and lauded as "representative of the field of contemporary fantasy" (Donald Sidney-Fryer). Print run 1000, order today.

RUNES OF AHRH EIH ECHE is still available at \$2.95. It is the largest collection of letters (correspondence) by Robert E. Howard yet to be collected between two covers. The 1000 print run booklet is illustrated by Randall Spurgin with an REH oriented alphabet. Reading this booklet has been called "a moving experience". It certainly provides added insight into Howard the man.

The status of **ERASED FROM EXILE** is uncertain. Over 100 copies were returned to the printer with defects. The book is OP if those copies are not replaced. Send us an SASE for more information.

FANTASY CROSSWINDS Nos. 1 and 2 were published in January 1977. Nos. 3 and 4 were promised but are late, please have patience with us. Nos. 1 and 2 are now OP, print runs were 300 each. Print runs on the next two issues will be respectively 400 and 500 copies. You may still order Nos. 3 and 4 at \$1.50 each or \$3 for both.

Many new projects are in the works but we're keeping mum until they're in print. Stygian Isle Press will be finishing up the **ALMURIC PORTFOLIO** by Fabian, hopefully by late March 1977. The portfolio is sold out.

One final bit of news: I am now the US agent for the British Fantasy Society. See the blurb elsewhere in News Notes regarding **DARK HORIZONS** the BFS publication which members get along with their membership. Membership costs \$8 in US funds and may be remitted to Jonathan Bacon, Box 147, Lamoni, Iowa 50140. I strongly urge support of the BFS. In return you get an outstanding magazine of fiction, verse and news. I'm of course speaking of **DARK HORIZONS**. Send your money in today.



WARGAMING

I'm a real novice when it comes to wargaming, but I'm in the process of learning. As I try new games, I'll pass the results on to you.

To begin with, during the month of January 1977 I conducted (and am currently conducting) a non-course at Graceland titled Wargaming. The purpose was to find students who enjoyed complex games and work with them at learning several wargames.

We began with **DUNGEON** by David Meggary and published by TSR Games (PO Box 756, Lake Geneva, Wisc. 53147). It's a fairly simple game where in prizes are guarded by monsters which must be fought and defeated in order to win the prize. A player may enter as (in order of strength from most powerful to least) a wizard, a super-hero, a hero or an elf. The less powerful players require fewer prizes (gold pieces) to win than do the more powerful players. Each monster card indicates what each player must roll on two dice in order to defeat the monster and claim the prize. Wizards have spells to use, Elfs can get thru secret doors easier than other players, etc. The monsters and prizes get bigger at the lower levels of the Dungeon. Of course players have limits on how deep in the Dungeon they can go based upon how powerful they are. If a player fights a monster and loses he may be required to lose a turn, drop a prize or be killed and removed from the game based upon a "Combat Losing Table". As I said before, the game is very simple but that doesn't mean it's not enjoyable. The real fun begins in exercising options in the game. In fact we began using "Additional Rules for Advanced Play" before we finished our first game. Such things as ambushing, wandering monsters, re-entry, etc., made the game more lively. The rules say a 10 year old or older can play. I believe it. This is a good starting point for the wargamer headed for more complex action. **DUNGEON** is a boardgame for 1-12 players and sells for \$10.95.

Another company with more of a fanish flair is Flying Buffalo Inc. (PO Box 1467, Scottsdale, AZ 85252). We'll be discussing

their games in later installments, but if interested drop them an SASE for a listing of current games, etc.

I'd like to introduce you to a new friend: Charles Anshell (1226 North Rossell Ave., Oak Park, Ill 60302). Charles handles a great many items related to Wargaming. His first major catalog is in the works and can be had for \$2.50 (refundable off your first order of \$20 or more). The catalog will list over 100 manufacturers including games, accessories and miniatures from the areas of fantasy, S & S, SF and historical wargaming.

Hopefully my next installment will be longer and include material on **LANKHMAR**, **TUNNELS AND TROLLS** and **DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS**.

The Summer 1976 issue of **MACABRE** published by Michael Ambrose (9913 Minuteman St., El Paso, Texas 79924) is available for 60c. (no subs). This issue includes a review comparison by Mark S. Geston of the Willis Conover and Sprague de Camp biographies of Howard Phillips Lovecraft. Also Joel Harbin has contributed "Origin Point" (fiction) and Reginald Brane has contributed "A Fable". In the verse vein, the editor has included fragments from "The Old Path" by C. T. Thackeray. Incantations (editorial) and a review of Mark Geston's **LORDS OF THE STARSHIP** fill out the 14 page issue. Ambrose has indicated the next issue will be out in March, 1977.

WHISPERS No. 9 (December 1976) is now available from Stuart Schiff (Box 904, Chapel Hill NC 27514) for \$2 per copy. It features one of the eeriest Fabian covers I've yet seen coupled with a truly macabre back cover by Lee Brown Coye. **WHISPERS** continues to be the leading magazine in the area of weird or horror literature and this issue is no exception to the trend toward perfection. H Warner Munn has contributed a short piece titled "HPL: A Reminiscence", Dirk Mosig furthers the Lovecraftian studies with a piece on HPL and his fiction called "Myth-Maker". This issue contains an outstanding assortment of fiction by R. A. Lafferty, Lee Weinstein, Paul Bond, William Nolan, Dennis Etchison and David Compton. Mike Garcia has contributed a truly erotic visual portfolio based upon HPL's fiction. Lovecraft I'm sure has turned over in his victorian grave. **WHISPERS** is rounded out with news notes, editorial comments, verse by Gahan Wilson ("Bad Baby") and the usual fine selection of illustrators. Pick up a copy if you haven't already. You'll enjoy a great deal of reading pleasure from this magazine.

Stellar Z Productions (4608 St. Nazaire Road, Pensacola, Fla 32505) has just issued **FROM THE DEEP AND BEYOND** a 48 page booklet containing a series of three short stories by Gregory Nicholl. The three are "From the Deep", "The Hammerhead Horror" and "The Night The DOLPHIN Went Down". Nicoll admits a Lovecraftian influence and his fiction shows it. \$1.50 per copy plus 50c postage. Very interesting reading.

FANTASIED is an 8 page (8 1/2 x 11") offset newsletter style zine from Peter Gaffney (RD No. 1 Campville Rd., Endicott, NY 13760) It's more SF oriented but does include material in related fantasy areas, such as L. D. Fleckenstein's article "Science Fiction vs Fantasy". The rest of **FANTASIED** No. 4 includes comments on "Hard SF", definition of SF, book reviews, etc. No price listed, send an SASE for information.

THE GALAXY OF FANDOM No. 2 (Oct-Nov 1976) is geared towards fantasy and SF films. Articles cover Caroline Munro (who has appeared in the Dr. Phibes movies, **THE GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD**, **CAPTAIN KRONOS: VAMPIRE HUNTER**, **AT THE EARTH'S CORE** and other fantasy-horror

films), **Space 1999**, **LOGAN'S RUN** plus artwork by Frank Brunner, Alfredo Alcalá and some fanzine reviews. Available for 75c plus 25c postage from Christopher Simmons, 607 S. Pacific Coast Hiway, Redondo Beach, CA 90277.

Dark Eagle (see address in first paragraph of News Notes) has issued another finely reproduced Frank Brunner poster. **BELLADONNA** is a beautiful blond haired lass who I'd hate to tangle with (especially with that sword in her hand). This full color poster measures 17 x 22" and is printed on heavy textured cover stock. **BELLADONNA** has never before been published. There is a signed edition of 500 copies (numbered too) selling for \$5 plus 75c postage. The unsigned edition sells for \$3 plus 75c postage. All posters shipped in heavy tube mailers. **DARK EAGLE** also has an **ELRIC** poster available by Bob Gould and a **CONAN** poster by Barry Smith. Send 'em an SASE for price information.

I just received a copy of the HJMR Co. Newsletter (PO Box 308, North Miami, Fla 33161). It lists a great many SF and fantasy titles including copies of **AMAZING**, Arkham House books (OP), **SKULL-FACE** by Robert E. Howard (at \$50) and many more items. Send them a note and request the SF edition of their newsletter.

Lucile Coleman (PO Box 610813 North Miami, Fla 33161) just sent me her price list. It includes OP books and includes material from the fantasy genre and mainstream works. Send her 24c for her list.

OUTWORLDS No. 28-29 is available for \$2.50 from William Bowers (PO Box 2521, North Canton, Ohio 44720). **OUTWORLDS** is always a looked for zine and this issue is no exception. It starts out right with a Fabian cover and continues with Bowers' comments on being a BNF (Big Name Fan). Stuart Gilson contributes a fascinating portfolio (my favorite being "An Angel of Hell Peering. . ."). Further features include "The Fan-Writer Symposium", an interview with Robert Shea, some delightful artistic renditions—cartoons—potpourri by Derek Carter, "Opinionation" by andrew j offutt and lots more. Very fine issue. . . Buy!

T-K Graphics (PO Box 1951, Baltimore, Md 21203) has just issued **ESSAYS LOVECRAFTIAN** edited by Darrell Schweitzer and illustrated by Richard Huber. Huber's work first appeared in **FANTASY CROSSROADS** and I'm pleased to see him at home in another publisher's enterprises. He's a fine artist who deserves more than occasional exposure. It's hard to pinpoint "favorites" in his illustrations for the volume. I truly love his "Esoteric Order of Dagon" piece on page 57. . . I just wonder if that's supposed to be Scott Connors or Dirk Mosig (just kiddin' fellas). The illo on page 67 (opposite George Wetzel's "Genesis of the Cthulhu Mythos") is also superb. Of course no one buys for just the illustrations. Schweitzer has assembled a fantastic array of articles on Lovecraft and his Cthulhu Mythos. Pieces include HPL's letter on "Story-Writing", "A Literary Copernicus" by Fritz Leiber, Dirk Mosig's article: "The Four Faces of the Outsider" plus work by Bloch, Schweitzer, Marion Bradley, Richard Tierney, Robert Weinberg, Ben Indick, Bill Wallace and many more. Only \$3.95 for a real gem for Lovecraftians. . . novices and pros alike.

TWO-GUN RACONTEUR No. 3 is in print from Damon Sasser (PO Box 21278, Houston, Texas 77026). Only 500 copies at \$1.75 each have been printed. This issue includes artwork by Fabian, Ken Raney, Don Herron, David Parsons, Jamilkowski, Tom Foster, Arnie Fenner and a VERY nice portfolio by Gene Day based upon REH's "The Moon of Skulls". This issue also includes Howard fiction ("The Devil's Joker"), LOCs, "REH and the Ring" part one by Dennis McHaney, a comparison of the REH Conan vs the de Camp-Carter-Nyborg Conan in Don

Herron's article "Conan vs Conantics", and "The Rare Ones" and article by Charles Melvin on REH hardback books.

For Lovecraftian's, it might be noted that **THE YEAR'S BEST HORROR STORIES: SERIES 4** out from DAW Books (\$1.25) includes a six page article by E Hoffman Price titled "The Lovecraft Controversy-Why?". It compares the de Camp and Frank B Long biographies of HPL.

VOID is an Australian semi-prozine which features fiction in the fantasy, S & S, horror literature vein. The US agent for **VOID** is Darrell Schweitzer (113 Deepdale Rd., Strafford, Pa 19087). The magazine sells for \$1.45 per copy or three for \$4.00. Darrell has issues 2, 3 and 4 in limited stock so I'd order NOW, don't wait. Issue No. 4 has a story by Schweitzer which is a continuation of "The Veiled Pool of Mistorak" which Stygian Isle Press published in **FANTASY CROSSWINDS** No. 2. Quite frankly, you'll miss a lot if you miss the fiction in **VOID**. If only for the Schweitzer story (and the issue does have a lot more to recommend it) I suggest you send off your hard earned cash to the US agent.

I apologize for the lack of detail in this issue's News Notes. I try to make most of the blurbs into mini-reviews. As regular readers know, our last issue was out in August and a lot has happened since then, thus you get a double issue of **FC** and a double dose of News. The following items arrived too late to be covered but I'm squeezing them in anyway. Heaven knows when the next issue of **FC** will appear and I figure a short blurb now is better than a longer one in several months (though hopefully **FC** will get on to a quarterly or bi-monthly schedule again).

Readers who have been with **FC** since the early issues will remember the Vaughn Bode style cartoons of David Heath Jr. David published a zine title **NO SEX** but it disappeared about two years ago, with issue No. 3 showing up in my mail box just recently. This issue is larger than I remember the others (64 pages, 8½ x 11") and sells for a measly 70c (5 issues for \$3.50). It is predominantly comic strips by David and several cohorts. Frankly, the other work in **NO SEX** is very amateurish. Only David's work is worth the time to read and enjoy. He has a very unusual sense of humor in that he can find most anything to poke fun at. Heath is probably best characterized as a SF humorist though that may be over-all a little too restrictive in definition. Anyway, try **NO SEX**, the mag that is! (Write: C. Co. 1-68 Armor, APO NY 09034).

ART FANTASTIQUE No. 1 and No. 2 are questionable publications. Available for \$2.50 each from **TREK**, 2500 Pennington, Houston, Texas 77093. **AF** No. 1 contains artwork by Virgil Finlay and No. 2 includes work by Frazetta, Crandall and Wood. Neither publication has an introduction, explanation of the work or any kind of copyright notice. I wonder if this is a bootleg publication or if it contains material in the public domain. The Frazetta pieces have appeared in various portfolios that I've seen. Reproduction (especially on the Finlay work) is a poor to average. Some of the Finlay work seems to have been reproduced from the poor quality images of an old pulp magazine. Frankly, I'd save your money and suggest you buy something more worthwhile. I just wish I knew more about the copyright status of the work in the volumes. I can't believe a reliable publisher would leave off copyright information.

WHO WAS THAT MONOLITH I SAW YOU WITH by Michael Goodwin is published by Heritage, PO Box 721, Forest Park, Ga. 30050. It's a booklet of Star Trek cartoons. The artwork isn't all that great but it does include some clever pokes at the space adventure yarn format epitomized by Star Trek. Available for \$2.50 plus 50c for shipping from Heritage. Be sure to ask for their catalog. Heritage has some mighty nice items, like the Thomas Burnett Swann Jr. hardcover book **QUEENS WALK IN THE DUSK** which is illustrated by Jeff Jones. I've been trying to beg

a review copy of it but have not succeeded. It looks to be a real gem.

THE OLD DARK HOUSE is a horror film-zine published by George LaVoo (1719 Ninth St., Bay City, Mich 48706). Issue No. 1 sells for \$2.00. This issue includes information on **THE SENTINEL**, **BURNT OFFERINGS**, the films of Brian de Palma (**CARRIE**, **OBSESSION**, **SISTERS** and **PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE**) and reviews plus lots of pictures. George needs a lesson on cluttered lay-outs, but the zine does show promise and enthusiasm. Foreign buyers please add 50c to the \$2 purchase price.

THE PULPS by Tony Goodstone has just recently been issued by Chelsea House (70 West 40th Street, NY, NY 10018) as an oversized (7½ x 10½") paperback which retails for \$7.95. The book runs 240 pages with an additional 48 pages of full color illustrations and reproductions of rare pulp cover art. It includes over 50 complete stories, poems, and features from the pulps. Robert E Howard under the pseudonym of Sam Walsler penned "The Purple Heart of Erlik", a spicy adventure story of innocence (dear Arline) and a vengeance filled Chinese priest (nice stereotype). Also included in **THE PULPS** is another REH James Allison story (using the same character as appears in "Genseric's Fifth Born Son") titled "The Valley of the Worm". The book reprints work by HPL, CAS, Long, Finlay, Counselman, Weinbaum, Bradbury, Gallico, Burroughs, Max Brand and many others. This is one heck of an interesting volume.

Almost Omitted Addresses: **TITAN**, Geoff Rippington, 15 Queens Ave., Canterbury, Kent, England. **QUANTUM**, 1171 Neeb Road, Cincinnati, Ohio 45238.

BY THE WAY THE
MAN IN THE SUIT IS
F.C. REPORTER
SEAGULL BACON



EPISTLE EXPRESS

Loay
802 East Bridge
Blackwell, Okla. 74631

Concerning Scott Connors' query about my statement regarding the Lovecraft cult: I view Lovecraft fandom as being divided into two

very distinct groups, the Lovecraftians, the serious students of Lovecraft and his writing and wish him only the best (EOD fits into this group), and the Lovecraft Cult, the fanatics who have erected an altar to HPL as they envision him and seek to force this view of their idol upon anyone who will listen. This group is made up of people like Dirk Mosig and Scott Connors; well meaning people who have simply gone overboard on their admiration and desire to 'do something good for HPL', and are slowly turning most of fandom off (from) the remarkable gentleman called H. P. Lovecraft. And to say that the Cult does not worship HPL--let readers delve into such dagonzines as "Continuity" and "The Miskatonic" and decide for themselves--is as ludicrous as saying the Moon is made of Green Cheese. It is easy enough to try to undermine such criticism with levity or ridicule and abuse--the Cult has used such tactics on me before, as well as other critics--but it does not change the matter; most fans are discerning enough to penetrate to the heart of the matter and see the Cult for what it is. And that is what makes it so 'detestable': it isn't for the glory and fame of HPL that they are working so earnestly. . . it's for the glory of themselves. And the sooner the fans realize this, the sooner Lovecraft fandom will begin looking at HPL and his work in proper perspective again.

"The Half-Men of Chikanda" by Charles Saunders is, simply, one of the best stories I have read in a long, long time! I'm now an avid Imaro fan! Saunders' style is decidedly unHowardian. It is nice to see some originality re-entering the genre at last. His characterizations are skillfully and realistically handled. Charles Saunders, I believe, will go far in the fantasy genre.

"Review Rak" was enjoyable as always, particularly the reviews by McHaney, McFerran and Bacon. In all honesty, however, I think it only fair to point out a possible error of date in my review last issue of Cliff Eddy's **TERROR OUT OF TIME**. There are two dates for his death available--1967 on the jacket for **EXIT INTO ETERNITY** and 1971 in Muriel Eddy's introduction to **TERROR**; I used the latter because Mrs. Eddy of all people should know the date of her husband's death.

"Of Swords & Sorcery"--Paul Allen's very fine column--is an excellent contribution to the spirit of FC. I normally find myself in total agreement with his judgements. However, I think Lin Carter's criticism of Wagner's anachronisms in 'Kane' is wellfounded. The use of the term 'dollars' is unfortunate; it is enough to break the spell of fantasy that he, Wagner, has struggled to create for the reader. Ordinarily, it wouldn't be earth-shaking, if he was writing modern fantasy or science fiction, the term might be carried over to that period; but in fantasy's S&S subgenre it is critical to avoid all anachronisms. No doubt Wagner learned from his mistake. But Carter, certainly one of the finest fantasy writers and critics ever, was within his rights to bring it to people's attention. And it might be mentioned that Lin was easier on Wagner than he was on some other popular authors, like Dave Van Arnam or Mike Moorcock!

"White Slayer's of the Waste" by J. E. Coplin is highly enjoyable--second best tale in the ish in my opinion (Saunders' is the best)--and I hope he'll honor FC with another 'Hyborian Age' tale soon!

Linward C. Marley
213 Puritan Street
Fayetteville, N. C. 28306

I thought FC No. 9 was your best issue, and wrapped in another great Corben cover. I was very surprised to learn that many readers considered his beautiful cover on No. 8 to be pornographic. The reasons you give for the reaction are probably correct, but I

don't understand this reaction coming from FC's audience.

The letter column is always interesting. Please do not follow Gregory Nicoll's suggestion and print Blackwood's "The Wendigo". It would take up too much space and besides is readily available in **BEST GHOST STORIES OF ALGERNON BLACKWOOD**, published by Dover Publications and available from Dover, F & SF Book Co., T-K Graphics, and other dealers. By the way, Dover Publications has an excellent line of fantasy and supernatural books with which everyone should be familiar.

All the fiction this issue is good, with the ubiquitous Charles Saunders leading the pack. I assume he will eventually collect his Imaro stories into one volume. Eddy Bertin's "A Whisper of Leather Wings" was very good. Actually, I enjoy the fantasy-horror story more than the S&S tale.

I enjoyed all the art this issue, especially the Gene Day portfolio. I hope we never get to the point that artists will not undertake a project because other artists have produced "definitive" works on the same subject. Think of all we would miss.

Excellent News Notes. Interesting articles, especially Paul Allen's.

Darrell Schweitzer
Chateau d'Leng
Averoigne, France

My first reaction of FC No. 9 was that you must do something about the small and blurry print in parts of the magazine. It seems to me that

various offset presses have limits of smallness beyond which they cannot go without loss of clarity. The larger typeface is fine, but the smaller, used for the symposium and the news column is too small, especially on those pages which are underinked and grey rather than black. The result was very genuine eyestrain, watery eyes & a headache, something I am not normally susceptible to. I would suggest that you stick to the larger typeface even if it means a loss of wordage.

The cover: Certainly it's striking, but when one looks closely it seems the hirsute gentleman is about to lose his mammoth-hide jockstrap. Also he doesn't have hair on his body, but outright fur, quite unlike any European Caucasian I've seen. Perhaps he is an Ainu from northern Japan, who was blown far away while sailing. . . (The Ainu are the hairiest people of the world. They're an isolated pocket of Caucasians.)

"The Half Men of Chikanda" by Charles Saunders was certainly the most interesting piece of fiction in the issue, and perhaps the best written, but I was disappointed. Imaro can be summed up as a black Conan. Simple as that. The story could have happened in Conan's world, among white people of a different time and culture, with no changes at all. Saunders is doing a very good thing in bringing African lore into sword & sorcery fiction. (I would be very surprised if sub-Saharan Africa does not have a vast store of heroic legendry like most other places). But I wish he would get away from stock sword & sorcery elements. For his stories to be anything but barbarian epics of a different hue, he must 1) make characters and situations derive from African history, culture, and legendry so that they could not happen elsewhere and elsewhere, and 2) make his supernatural elements do the same, and be sufficiently intrinsic to the story that if they were withdrawn there would be no story. Anything short of that is costume fiction. So far he is only promising to bring fresh material into the field. He hasn't yet delivered.

By the way, I'd be curious to know how much of the background is history, and when the story is taking place. I would guess, from the presence of Chinese traders in eastern Africa, it must be during Ming times, circa 1360-1644. The Ming dynasty did send fleets that far, but short-sighted rulers eventually decided it wasn't worth the bother. If they hadn't things might have been much different in the following cen-

turies, and the Chinese would have perhaps discovered and barged in on the Europeans, not the other way around.

Eddy Bertin's story is fine, but also standard stuff. And again I'm wondering where the setting is taking place. The names seem to be English but the currency is francs.

Steve Riley
18 Norman Dr.
Framingham, Mass.

FANTASY CROSSROADS 9 -- arrived some time ago, so I'll just remark on a few things -- mostly my reaction to your editorial remarks. I think you

stated your beliefs excellently and really got to the heart of the matter in mentioning the sterility of classicized art versus the more realistic (and erotic) type of art that touches us deep within. I can't say for certain how the readership reacted, but I imagine a few souls came down on you for your stance, because, to use your own words in the editorial, "your stance was not the way they prefer life to be pictured." (I paraphrased it.) I think you handled the aspects of censorship in conjunction with being an editor and the ensuing responsibilities very well. In all sincerity, your editorial is one of the best I've seen on this subject. Objectively honest and to the point.

The above also leads into the cover illustration. I wonder how many of those who panned issue 8's cover thought that this one was much better, more in the vein of "true fantasy". Yet, I find this cover more startling than the last. There's no beauty or sensuality there. Instead, it's a gory, starkly realistic portrayal of a scene that's been played out too, too many times under different situations -- that of war and carnage. (I wonder how many too were disturbed even further when they noticed the cross. This, to me, makes it even more grimly real -- too close to the horrifying reality of what has gone on. In historical terms, I imagine the cover scene happened many, many times when the Visigoths and Huns swept out of northern Europe and overran Rome.) Yet for all the above, I feel Corben's painting is a real work of art. (Art doesn't have to make us secure -- see Goya's "The Disasters of War" for example.) Corben's painting really drives home for me the real horror of war and for that alone (not to mention the technical excellence of his style) imparts this work with genuine value.

((Editor's note: This letter refers back to the Steve Riley Portfolio in FC No. 7 and Gregory Nicoll's letter in FC No. 8)).

Some comments: I'm flattered by the overall favorable response to my Lovecraft portfolio. Note to Gregory Nicoll: regarding "Imprisoned with the Pharaohs", I read the passage the same way he did, but decided to illustrate what the narrator really saw, not what he thought he saw. It's very much like walking by a dark room and taking a quick glance inside. At first impression, you might think you see something out of the ordinary, but when you stop and take a look, you realize that the darkness, your movements (walking by the room), and your imagination all combined to make you think you saw something that really wasn't there. That's how I interpreted the story: the narrator thought the paw was a monster in itself, but when the entire sphinx emerged from the doorway, the narrator realized what he saw at first in the darkness and excitement was only the forepaw. I do thank Gregory for his kind remarks and for taking time to comment.

I know what Gregory Nicholl is saying in regard to Gene Day's work but I think he has his terminology wrong. I like Gene's work very much myself, but I would say it is neither realistic nor surrealist. Gene's work could only be described as being in the comic school of art -- terms like realism and surrealism aren't appropriate to describe his style -- although cinematographic is, due to Gene's use of lighting, angles, and composition.

"Realism" can be defined as: "the representation of nature or social life as it actually appears." Realistic artists are such

people as Gustave Courbet (the first realist painter), and the Ashcan school of American painting -- Maurice Prendergast, John Sloan, Edward Hopper, etc. It's not so much whether something drawn or painted looks like the real-life object (representational), but more the presentation of such, feeling of weight in the objects depicted and subject matter. Fantasy art can hardly be termed realistic no matter how well done it is. Even Andrew Wyeth is not a realistic painter in spite of his almost photographic qualities. Wyeth seems closer to surrealism than realism, due to the extreme calm and silence in his paintings -- they're almost eerie because of this.

"Surrealism" is: "a school of art and literature which expresses the subconscious mind in art form, excluding balance and conventional design." Artists such as Salvador Dali, Max Ernst and Man Ray fall into this category. Subject matter usually deals with the subconscious -- images of dreams, use of unconventional modes of expression that tie in with reality yet are not real, etc. Fantasy can play a big role here but not heroic fantasy or any branch of the genre we're interested in.

Art terminology is funny because it doesn't necessarily mean what it implies as in the use of the above terms. It's a genuine philosophy with its own system of usage and logic. I've had it pounded into my head for a few years so when I saw Gregory's letter, I felt I had to comment.

Fantasy art is pretty much that -- fantasy art -- mainly because most of it produced is illustrative (requiring an accompanying text to fully understand it even though the art may be appreciated on its own.) Some art terms can be applied, even the above in some cases, but in the case of Gene Day's work, I would say no. Wrong terminology.

Enough of that. The rest of the issue is really fine and I particularly enjoyed the art of Gene Day (of course), Clyde Caldwell (his logo is superb!), Steve Fabian and Ric Cruz -- his style is particularly distinctive, indeed the illustration on page 39 is one of the finest in the issue, methinks.

Gregory E. Nicoll
3535 Gleneagles Drive
Martinez, Georgia 30907
October 2, 1976

Congratulations on another fine issue of FANTASY CROSSROADS. Number nine provided me with plenty of good reading. I don't know how you managed to fit so much into one magazine, but I sure hope you keep doing it. Yog!

I wholeheartedly agree with Loay Hall as to the merits of Basil Copper's fiction, especially his short story "Amber Print". Copper is a master at creating atmosphere and anyone who (like myself) collects films can appreciate Copper's accomplishment. I recommended Cooper's collection FROM EVIL'S PILLOW to anyone who likes good horror stories in modern settings, and I think anyone who enjoyed Lovecraft's AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS would appreciate Cooper's inventive imitation of it, THE GREAT WHITE SPACE, which just came out in paperback.

Bertin's "A Whisper of Leathery Wings" was a very effective exercise in horror. I hope you can unearth more stories as good as that one; it was just what the doctor ordered as far as we who don't like heroic fantasy are concerned. As for Charles Saunders' stories, they wouldn't be half as tedious if he wasn't so hung up on drowning the readers in unpronounceable names. And it is pretentious enough to invent an entirely new language for use within a story, but when the author insists on using it to write his titles as well...!!! I can't help but feel that Saunders is laughing at us through those titles -- the one in number nine looks like 'NUTS TO YOU, YA CHICKEN' or something.

Speaking of Saunders, he wrote me a long letter attacking my statement of HPL's harmlessness as far as being a racist was concerned. His argument was that HPL perpetuated racist feelings in America by depicting Negroes as all sorts of grave-

robbers and wizards in stories such as "The Call of Cthulhu". (I can think of more offensive examples as far as that is concerned, particularly the description of Buck Robinson in "Herbert West-Reanimator"). I don't think this particular approach will hold up; Lovecraft had just as many degenerate Caucasians in his works -- The Whateleys, the Marshes, the Gilmans. . .hell, most of them bred with fish and assorted monsters from other dimensions. If that isn't degenerate (especially to an old gentleman like HPL) what, pray tell, is?

Charles R. Saunders
Creator of Imaro
Architect of Nyumbani
Afro-American Fantasist
Unemployed Psych. Teacher
Border-line Psychotic
(I practice what I teach)

I'm sure the Swahili-speaking peoples of Africa will be delighted to learn that their language is "pretentious" and "unpronounceable". To most fantasy writers, an invented language enhances the construction of the setting. As for Nicoll's interpretation of the title, in this case whatever is in the eye of the beholder is also in his mouth. . ."

Dennis ABeln
208 W. 4th
Salisbury, Mo. 65281

Regarding your suggestion of having awards in the Sword & Sorcery field, I find the idea interesting BUT there are so many awards in the literary, music, entertainment and what-have-you fields, and so much HYPE accompanying each one, that I am very skeptical--cynical at the mere mention of "Awards". The problem with them all is they're too often given NOT necessarily out of merit, but out of popularity, commerciality, and just plain stupidity. Besides, it seems a bit unfair for a group or organization to say that "Such & Such" was the best "So & So" of the year in this category and that. It's all so subjective, but then I guess everything is. Naturally, everyone has their favorite movie(s), record(s), book(s), but for someone or something to say that that was the "best of the year" is more than a little presumptuous and egotistical.

That is not to say I'm against the idea of S & S awards. I'm not. But it seems that awards, in the long run, no matter how well-intentioned they might be, cheapen the fields and genres they are given in.

I do think heroic fantasy should be given its due. And maybe some type of awards would be the answer. Just thought you'd like to know. Thanks, Jon.

10-6-76
Mark Mansell
15120 Ragus St.
La Puente, CA 91744

I have just received FC No. 9. I have to say that it is the most beautiful of any fantasy adventure magazine on the market. In my opinion, if you ever went pro with FC, you could easily out sell FANTASTIC and AMAZING.

The artwork was superb. The high spot was the front cover. Corben draws an excellent barbarian. This brings to mind a thought about how barbarians are pictured. It's a fact that barbarians aren't nice (for lack of a better word). They aren't people you'd care to have in your living room, face it, they are hard people for a hard life. They shouldn't be pictured as Redford or Reynolds with a loin cloth and sword. Gene Day's art was also great, though he didn't show Conan's face at any time.

The story's were fantastic. "The last laugh" was minor Howard, yet it seemed to be more of a first draft than a completed story. About Charles Saunders' Imaro, what can I say.

The man is great! His new viewpoint about barbarians and heroes will gain him a large following for his Imaro stories (he's already got me). All I can say is more, more!

It is a great idea not to be tied down by REH's style of fiction, but to cover larger areas. REH's stories will run out sooner or later, and those magazines that don't use anything but REH stuff will be out in the cold. FC will be one to survive I'm sure.

The round-table discussion wasn't bad, but your comments were of the most interest. Reading Scithers', I get the feeling you wrote him a long letter, and he sent back a one-line post card. The others ranged from mildly interesting to inane. I'm glad that yours were there to treat the subject seriously.

The column on "swords and sorcery" is a definite plus. On the strength of his comments, I tried BLOODSTONE by Karl Edward Wagner (whom I've just started corresponding with). It is superb S & S! So alive and perfect! Try to get a Kane story for a future issue of FC.

Keep up the News. FC is to S & S news what WHISPERS is to horror news.

In recent months, I've been drawn more and more to 'little magazines.' As I think of it, I realize its because they're so much more personal. Instead of aiming at a wide audience, they want a smaller, more enthusiastic, intimate audience. Its like having a lot of friends who share your interests.

P.S. Recently WHISPERS, WEIRD BOOK, FANTASY AND TERROR, and 3 others got together to do a special sampler of horror fanzines. I thought it was an excellent entertaining idea. (It was called TOADSTOOL WINE). Why don't you; AMRA; REH:LSF; REH; TGR; MIDNIGHT SUN, DARK FANTASY, HOWARD REVIEW, HOWARD READER, CHACAL and PHANTASY DIGEST get together and do a special sword and sorcery (REH oriented) sampler. Maybe Glenn Lord, and Hamilton and Warfield would also contribute a special HOWARD COLLECTOR and CROSS PLAINS for it. . .This would be fascinating in many respects. Sword & Sorcery buffs would eat it up. REH fans could be made happy by each magazine reprinting the Howard story or poem that had been most popular in their regular issues. It would provide great advertising for all your magazines. Each sampler (about 10 pages) would give a taste of your respective magazines. I think a TOADSTOOL WINE format would be the best and easiest way to put it out. For about \$5.00 (about 110-125 pages) it would be an incredible project and bargain. I wouldn't consider it except with you as coordinating editor since your FC is the best (you must know what you're doing.) I hope you think about it, anyway.

((Thanks for your comments on FC No. 9. The round robin was really compiled by Wayne Warfield. All editors--publishers were sent the same set of questions and they were asked to respond. As is obvious responses to the article were completed and presented to me for publication. No changes were made after I received it from Wayne Warfield.

Your idea of an anthology put together by all the REH--S & S mags is a good idea, but right now I'm so swamped it'd take a year to get into the planning stages. I'll see what response is to the idea, though. OK?

My planned bibliography is a long way off now. It's just an incredible task to even keep up with what's coming out each week. But if and when I publish it, it is my intention to publish a listing of everything REH ever wrote (verse, fiction, non-fiction) as well as anything written about him or his work. . .))

Robert Barger
P.O. Box 8
Evansville, Tennessee 37332

I received the latest FC today. I didn't like the Corben cover at all. Last issue's blue cover came off pretty good I thought, being a watery sort of thing, but this just doesn't come across to me. First off I guess the Corben illo itself is not as good, or not as

pleasing as the work he usually does. Secondly the red ink detracts quite a bit and overall I just find it sort of repulsive. I mean it hurts me to say this, on account of FC being one of my favorite zines, and Corben being an artist that I rate on a level with and maybe even a little above Frazetta, but I is just a' callin'em as I sees em. . . .

Also, the fiction I tried to read but I just don't enjoy the fiction you've been printing. With the exception of the REH stuff. Also Charles Saunders' story -- I haven't had time yet, but I do plan to read his story. Saunders is going to be a fine writer someday if he keeps working at it.

That's about all that I didn't like in this issue. What I did especially enjoy was Paul Allen's column, and the roundtable discussion between the REH fan-eds. This was I guess the highlight, and I'm disappointed that it had to be split in two parts. I'm looking forward to the rest of it. Letter page was good too.

I must say that your editorial about the Corben cover on issue No. 8 is something you should do more of. I mean, like Geis' SFR, I really enjoy it when an editor puts his—her personality into their magazine. You covered the issue pretty well. About the nekkid lady on the cover that is. But I personally wouldn't say that the thing was really erotic, sensuous is more the word.

I don't really agree with you as far as pornography goes. What you say is true, in many instances. But then again, Vaughn Bode's work can be viewed by many as "porno" and did appear in many of the "men's magazines" and so forth, and yet it doesn't take the "basest emotions of one of the most beautiful human experiences and drag it thru the mud". Well, very rarely anyway -- and when he did it was to usually to illustrate a point.

As to the establishing of awards in the S&S field. . . Look at all the awards around now for fantastic fiction. Hugo, Nebula, World Fantasy Award (Lovecraft?), Gandalf Award. There are too many already. This lifetime award stuff, like the Gandalf is a bunch of crap. Granting a lifetime contribution award each year for such a small field of fiction as fantasy in general is ridiculous. Eventually every fantasy author alive will have one of the things. But despite all this, I am for the establishing of a S&S award. There is a whole lot of trash floating around under the title of S&S and maybe it would serve some purpose to single out the best yearly contributors to the field and give them an award or something. The only thing near this now, really, is the Gandalf (which I repeat is a meaningless award, or eventually will be) and Carter's YEARS BEST FANTASY STORIES which is anything but that. Which is not to say Carter does not have some good stories in his collections in this series, but to be the "best of" there is an extraordinary amount of trash and "published here for the first time" stories. And in this year's book, there are two stories by Carter himself included! If establishing awards in S&S could do anything towards straightening out this awful mess, then I do definitely support it!

L. Sprague de Camp

On p. 5 of FC9, Mr. Connors speculates about my sympathy for HPL and REH. Since some have voiced strong opinions on my private feelings, without having asked me about my own views, I should like to say a word about these feelings.

When one has never known a man personally, one cannot have feelings about the man himself. All one can have are feelings towards the mental image or construct, which one has built up by hearing and reading about him. If one forms such an image and then meets the man, one may find that he does not fit the image. That is now impossible with HPL and REH.

I never knew them and only became seriously interested in them and their works after 1949. Since then, I have read most of what has been published by and about them, so I have a fair (though not perfect or infallible) idea of what sort of men they were. Assuming they were as I picture them, I have some sympathy for both. I have a bit more for HPL, because I see in

him some of the faults I possessed as a youth. I have striven to overcome or compensate for these faults, with what success is not for me to say.

On the other hand, I rather admire REH the more of the two, because he had qualities that in my own youth I should like to have had but lacked. At the same time, along with their notable virtues, I am aware of their grievous shortcomings. Some of these men's admirers resent my writing about their faults. Sorry about that, but I try to call my shots as I see them and am always willing to be corrected in errors.

Having written one story each involving HPL and REH, I have no plans for using them again in fiction. There are many other things to write about; so many, in fact, that I couldn't get around to all of them in a thousand years.

Frank Belknap Long

It was kind indeed of you to send me FANTASY CROSSROADS with its abundance of intellectually and aesthetically stimulating material and a transcript of an important paragraph in my recent letter to Sprague de Camp.

The reviews of "The Dreamer" have been so contradictory in general it has left me a little stunned -- I anticipated disagreement, for HPL was, and remains a highly controversial figure, but never to quite such an extent. It has been praised in the highest terms, and roundly denounced, one reviewer proclaiming that "it put me to sleep!" In HPL circles the reviews were 70 percent -- perhaps 75 percent -- extremely favorable, however, and what gratified me the most were the letters I've received from all but one of the "Circle" as it existed 40 years ago -- Galpin, Munn, Ed Price, Conover, etc. Ed wrote that he liked it better than all of my stories and poems etc. Only Shea was in agreement with about 30 percent of the younger group of fan reviewers. It received a nice review in the Los Angeles Herald Examiner, and in two other literary supplements. Since it was simply HPL as I remembered him, written two years before Sprague's book appeared. -- In Frierson's fanzine, dating back about 4 years now, I discussed, in an interview with Schiff, my memories of HPL, and "The Dreamer" do not depart, even slightly from the general trend of what I said at the time -- I can hardly be accused of joining a "coverup", as Connors has pointed out. I feel -- and will continue to feel -- that far too much emphasis has been placed on HPL's "racism". In his conversation with me and others there were long periods when he did not even mention his "Nordic superiority" myth views and they did not influence his general outlook anything like as much as commonly supposed, despite what he wrote in a few of the letters.

Thank you again for several hours of great reading pleasure.

I thought "A Whisper of Leathery Wings" a most impressive story -- somber and restrained in style, and with a "just right" approach to the horrific.

Brian Earl Brown
55521 Elder Rd.
Mishawaka, Ind. 46544

FC No. 9--Cover: maybe it's just me, but I find red the hardest color to look at. Tho I'm not half Harry Warner's age, I'm beginning to

voice his usual complaint against too greatly reduced type. The size you used to set Saunders' story is fine. The type used on your editorial takes a bit of straining. I think you're going to have to come to terms with the fact that you can't print as much as you'd like to in each issue of FC. There are physical limitations to everything. Alas!

I snigger at John Saxon's opinion that Howard's S&S was better than Leiber. Leiber could write rings around Howard. The man is gorgeous. Of course Howard would respond to this by chopping Leiber in half since Howard was a very direct and unsubtle writer. Of course there have been better writers of S&S and it's foolish to pretend that better S&S can't be written. But the better writers of S&S--Leiber, Moorcock and Wagner--have

little interest in doing the kinds of things Howard was doing so you can't simply compare story to story. You have to understand what each writer was up to.

I was more than a little amused by McHaney's vehement contention that BLOODSTAR was not a comic book. As someone who's read comic books for ten years I know one when I see it, even if it is published in hardcovers. Despite its \$15 price tag, it is not an advancement over the typical comic book-- except for length of its continuous narrative and the superior reproduction of the artwork. Corbin, while a great artist and possibly unrivaled with the use of the air-brush, is not unequaled in the comics field. John Buscema-- if he had taken the time and had the same enthusiasm as Corbin could have done as fine a book-- as could have Russell, Smith, Ploog, John Severin, Marie Severin, Neal Adams, Paul Gulacy and Wally Wood to name some just off the top. The writing is as bad as ever. A planet enters the solar system and the news media poo-poo's it for months? And scientists can't calculate where it is going to go? With the computer power we've got today they can approximate all the variables of that planet's course to within a few thousand miles. They damn well would know where it was going and damn well would know what would happen. The prolog reads like a resurrected piece of 30's sci-fi. It's not in the Howard original so it's Jakes and Corbin's fault for this piece of wretchedness. And the story is a mass of cliches. So's LOVE STORY and that never kept it from becoming a hit, either.

Graphic Novels (a term that sounds too like a euphemism for a porn novel) and all the other experiments in alternate comic book formats are not new things, only variations on old ideas. The writing is not superior to the comics field - there are individual examples of surpassing literacy and intelligence -- Chris Claremont and Don McGregor both come to mind. Lastly, it's ridiculous to think that the graphic novel will ever become popular-- it simply can't be cheap. We're talking about high-quality printing with expensive screening processes for the best reproduction of detail. We're talking about an artistic investment of time and energy far superior to the hacking of the comics field-- where the best talents usually drift out of the field in search of a better return for their effort -- such as commercial advertising. Sales will not be in the hundreds of thousands. Comic books are cheap because they are mass marketed. And newsprint is cheap. When you start talking about comics of a dollar or more, you're talking about a very limited market. A comic is not as deep as a novel. Even BLOODSTAR rates as no more than a novelet in length of fiction. Nor is it as vivid as a movie, or as cheap as television. It's a bastard medium and will never really become popular.

I liked Alan's column on S&S characters.

Wagner is getting so much attention today that I fear that he, like Delany, will fall into ways of self-indulgence and produce succeeding lesser works than he is capable of. Kane at over 6 foot and 300 pounds is not so impossible to one who is 6-2 and 240 pounds. Since Kane is said to fill doorframes (usually 6-6 is the door opening) he is probably a little over six foot to the tune of 6-6, for which a beefy man could easily weigh 300 pounds. This far better than the hero in MAHARS OF PELLUCIDAR who is said to be 6-6 and weight 180 pounds. He is also described as having a magnificent physique. Maybe for a basketball player.....

Li's Carter is so out of it when it comes to instructions on how to write good fiction, that Allen wastes his time to even refute him. Better are the comments of Le Guin in "From Poughkeepsie to Elfland." Her point is that the language of fantasies should have an aura of fantasy about them. If you can change a few names and produce a piece of mainstream fiction (as Le Guin does to a passage from a Katherine Kurtz novel to striking effect) it's not a good piece of fantasy writing. I think Wagner does meet this standard even when using somewhat modern forms of expressions. What his characters said and did were indubably fantasy. Jane Gaskell, as I recall not only used modern terms like noncom and snafu, but wrote a story

that could easily by 20th century contemporary. She fails.

The Roundtable Discussion, like all gossip was interesting, but not really illuminating. Well, it did illuminate the fact that most REH publishers are not really "fans". Fandom, science fiction fandom has a forty year old tradition and of the publishers, only Scithers shares this tradition with me.

"The Role of Fandom in Society" -- Fandom is an escapist fantasy world where real problems don't exist. It's only role in society is thereapeutic. (And I love it!)

A fanzine is a zine done by a fan for the love of it. CHACAL, PHANTASY DIGENT, FC are semi-pro zines, which is a fan of a different color. Fandom is also something of a voluntary masonic order, which is why money is such a bigaboo. How can you charge--demand money from a fellow mason?

REH: LSF--CHACAL is my idea of the best REH zine. FC is nicely fannish in tone. CROSS PLAINS never offered enough for its money until the last couple issues.

Continued from page 17

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

SASSER: I think E. Hoffman Price is long overdue for a big fan boom. Since he was a close friend of Howard's, many fans might turn to him after they have pursued Howardia to the limits.

SCITHERS: Your premise is wrong, of course. There is a possibility that interest in Howard will wane. This is not the same thing as a decline in "Howard fandom," primarily because of over-exploitation, but I cannot predict who might "succeed" him.

WARFIELD: I see no clear favorite right now. Authors who should have an active fandom include Mike Moorcock, Henry Kuttner, Karl Wagner and Thomas Burnett Swann. I, personally, would prefer more interest in the genre as a whole, than in single authors, however.

Question: How important do you think your contributions are to the genre? How important do you think you are to the genre?

BACON: I wouldn't be publishing if I didn't feel I could make a contribution to the genre. As to how important that contribution is... well others will need to decide. As an individual, I'm not important. The importance is relative to what FC aims at accomplishing and what it actually does accomplish. I'd hope that we would do the following: 1) provide a training ground for those interested in creative works in the fantasy genre and specifically the sub-genre labeled Heroic Fantasy; 2) introduce new writers and artists to the fandom audience; 3) assist in getting the Howard "canon" of fiction, verse and letters into print so that it may be studied, and enjoyed; 4) provide a forum for debate within our letters pages for fandom and pros; 5) encourage more fiction and verse from the professionals by commissioning works and or publishing "new" works in the several sub-genres under the general heading of Fantasy (i.e. S & S, horror lit., and possibly, SF).

FENNER: I don't feel that either REH: LSF or myself are terribly important to the genre. I do believe that some of our features (outside of the Howard fiction) and outlooks are a shot of penicillin to the field, mainly because of our honesty -- some might say our "nastiness". We're not trying to stomp on people's toes; just trying to give a different point of view. Still, I'm sure no one will mourn REH:LSF when it dies -- I daresay there'll be those who'll be happy to see us go. We've just tried to provide a form of entertainment.

HAMILTON: Based upon the letters I received from CP subscribers I would say that my contributions were of im-

portance and I assume I was of some importance, though the latter is immaterial.

McHANEY: Anyone who makes rare, desired material available to the public - even if that "public" is only a few thousand -- is doing something important. As far as my own importance goes, a fan editor is no more than what he does and gives his reader. I do consider myself a lot more competent in many areas, because my educational background was aimed at magazine journalism--I know what I'm doing. When I screw up, I'm the first person to realize it, and I don't need some jerk to remind me of it. Most fan editors who don't go on to some area related to the field are almost completely forgotten a year after they do whatever they are doing. Some are forgotten while they are still around. There are several I wish I could forget.

ROARK: Relatively unimportant, save for the fact of supplying the public with something they want. I feel our contribution has been upfront honesty, if not always good judgment. Frankly, I think I'm the Messiah of Fandom -- though a cult has not yet grown up around this belief. Plenty of guys have offered to crucify me in the past -- kinda makes one wonder, ya know? I stay out of dark alleys.

SASSER: According to the supporters of **REH: TWO GUN RACONTEUR**, I am contributing something. Though, as an individual, I'm just another Howard fan and am not that important, but **TGR** is.

SCITHERS: Impossible to answer without seeming either a wittold or a braggart.

WARFIELD: Again, this is impossible to judge unless one is suffering from ego inflation. I do not feel that any one publisher is, at the moment, all-important to fandom. Once, **THE HOWARD COLLECTOR** was the only **REH** zine, as was **CROSS PLAINS**. For many years, **AMRA** was also important. As for today, I believe anyone who cares enough to do a zine deserves our attention, but no one is indispensable!

Question: What rules govern the content of your magazine? What standards do you judge your work on?

BACON: I judge contributions on a two point criteria: a) is the work well written or eye pleasing and of interest to me, b) will readers react favorably and enjoy the work. **FC** is a product of Jonathan Bacon's creative energies (however minimal they may be). I publish it because I derive a certain amount of joy from doing so. Therefore, as ego-centric as it sounds, I publish those things which I enjoy.....in the hopes that others will agree. If I find no interest in a given subject, why the heck should I publish it?? Secondly, I try to respond to the likes and dislikes of my readers. Without them **FC** would cease to exist or dwindle in print run. That doesn't mean I go by a majority vote or that I respond to every request. Both are impossible to do. If the majority of readers wanted me to drop the artwork of Gene Day or Steve Fabian.....I'd refuse. They're my two favorite artistic contributors. On the other hand, I'm constantly bombarded by a) a group that wants **FC** to deal only with **REH** b) a group that wants **FC** to deal only with H. P. Lovecraft, c) a group that feels we should deal with all **S&S** authors currently alive, d) a group that feels we should deal only with **WEIRD TALES** authors, etc., etc., etc. You get the idea. It's impossible to do **EXACTLY** as your readers dictate.

FENNER: Naturally we're influenced by a number of amateur and pro magazines (both in and outside of the genre) and pattern some of our policies after them -- with our own twist, of course. But other than that no real rules or standards govern the magazine. Surely, there are some self-inflicted limits -- we avoid censorship, but simultaneously we attempt to keep a sense

of good taste throughout our contents. Unfortunately, our tastes don't always run in the same line as those of some of our readers. In the long run, practically anything goes; that is, as long as it's done well.

HAMILTON: Since I don't publish a zine anymore I don't feel the need to answer.

McHANEY: Before I started putting together **HOWARD REVIEW** No. 5 (in Jan. 1976) I never had any real rules for myself. I used what I liked. Besides, if I make my own rules, I can always change them or break them, and who'd know? No one is gonna write me, and say "Hey, so-and-so stinks. You broke the rules!" Silly question. As for standards, for the **REVIEW**, I've simply arrived at a goal locked deep in my brain which is higher than anything else I've seen, and everytime I fall short of that, it's the skids as far as I'm concerned. I've done plenty of jumping without reaching the top of the fence.

ROARK: Is it good? Is it of interest to our audience? Does it fit into the format of our publication? If so, anything is considered fair game. Our biggest problem is agreeing on something.....Arnie and I are like Fire & Water, so this usually proves difficult. Compromise has become a way of life. Some of the most asinine crap has caused a lot of yelling. When all else fails, Fenner cheats by using logic (shudder!) on me.

SASSER: My main rule is: is it interesting and--or informative. I'm aiming at newcomers to **REH**, but try to achieve a balance of topics and such so **TGR** will appeal to all Howard fans. As far as standards go, I ask myself would I buy it if someone else was putting it out and is it worth the money. I don't like to get ripped-off and don't want to do that to anyone else.

SCITHERS: Rules? No really -- it's a matter of what seems to fit.

WARFIELD: I try to balance what I believe readers will enjoy, and what seems to fit based on my own experiences. Correspondence plays a big part also.

Question: Do you think fans are being exploited? If so, are you getting your share of the dough?

BACON: Fans are being exploited **IF** they allow themselves to be. The rash of Howard books, booklets, fanzines, etc., exists because there is a demand for it. Fandom controls the marketplace by buying or not buying. Howardana is in the vogue now. If anyone who publishes his works and takes advantage of the boom is exploitive then we all are. There are some Howard completist and they probably are being exploited but they do that willingly. I know, I'm one of 'em. I'll buy or trade for anything with a relationship to **REH** and that includes (in my collection) posters, art portfolios, T-shirts, paper cups, fanzines, books, foreign anthologies (in languages I can't even speak!!!), and lots more. But I do it willingly. No one forces anyone to buy.

FENNER: It seems that fans have always been exploited, no matter where their interests may lie. High "special collector's" prices on a new publication have always burned my ass and I believe that it's high time to stand up as a group and tell some of the chief villains to shove it! But we probably won't -- just the way fans are, I guess. Some might classify us as exploiters -- I wouldn't agree, but I doubt if my feelings would be all that objective. But, no **REH:LSF** isn't making that much money; probably losing some if we itemized everything. Hear that Mr. Taxman? Seriously, I wish we were making enough of a profit to branch out or improve our distribution, but we're not.

HAMILTON: I don't think that fans are being exploited by the zines though I know of a certain Fred Cook who is selling pirated

copies of **ETCHINGS IN IVORY** and **THE HOWARD COLLECTOR** at ridiculous high prices.

McHANEY: Fans are definitely being exploited, but obviously, they either love it or are too stupid to realize it. I don't think you'll find any fanzine, though, that really makes a noticeable amount of money. The jerks that are doing it are the guys selling five or six lousy drawings for \$20 or \$25 by artists who used to be available for 25c for twenty pages. Those are the cretins that are going to kick the bottom out of the whole mess, and I hope it happens very soon. First, though, I think they'll kill off comics completely. 95 percent of the decent artists don't have to do comics any more because there are fools that are dumb enough to pay large sums of money to various crooks who hide their rip-offs behind a cover of "limited editions." They should limit the prices! My share of the dough? If the trends go on like they are now, I'll probably get into the limited edition art folio bit. I've worked a lot harder than any of the art folio crooks so why shouldn't I get a share? I'm not down on folios totally. I think de la Ree and a few others are putting out "bargains" compared to what you'd expect to pay now.

ROARK: Everyone is exploited in some way or another, but only if they condone it. Unless you let it happen, it can't. Without naming names, there are several people who I feel are ripping off fans; naturally, we've been accused of this heinous crime in the past. Anyone who does a fan publication will have this charge leveled against him one time or another. As a personal statement, I'm a virtual pauper -- all the revenue taken in for one issue is used to put out the next.

SASSER: REH fans, for the most part, are too smart to get burned more than once. An article in my second issue tells fans how to buy and collect Howard material without getting taken. My share of the dough goes into the next issue of TGR or related projects; not into funds for, say, trips to Bermuda and the like. I may sound stupid, but I really don't care much for money -- merely recognition for my work in Howard fandom.

SCITHERS: Fans are getting exploited. Second part of the question is rather vicious.

WARFIELD: Anytime you have a sellable product, you will have those who seek to exploit it. What profit I've ever made (which has been near zero) always went back into the next project.

RAMBLINGS——
Continued from page 1

There is more I could add, but I think this will give you an idea what it takes to get into these respective organizations. SFWA membership fees are \$12.00 per year, which gives you voting rights, subscription to their monthly newsletter, and they will act in your behalf on legal matters. In SFWA the writers vote for the awards themselves, and who knows more about sf than the writers. (This is evident to anyone who has read the annual anthologies of the Nebula Award Stories).

It is my idea that an organization of writers, artists and poets (in the semi-pro field) be formed using the same basis as the SFWA. There would be awards given, such as the NOVA (for lack of a better name) for different categories, voted upon by the general membership. Membership fees will be \$2.00 per year, with the money going to purchase membership cards, awards and to print up a monthly or bi-monthly newsletter.

Suggested requirement for membership: An artist, writer or poet must have sold or had published, something in one of the semi-pro magazines that meet the organization's requirements. Requirements: A semi-pro zine must pay some monetary payment to a contributor (not copies), for fiction, poetry and

art, and must publish at least three times in a given year from Jan 1st to Dec 31st.

The following categories are suggested for the awards:

- 1 - Best Novelette; 2 - Best short story; 3 - Best artist; 4 - Best Editor; 5 - Best semi-pro zine; 6 - Best poet.

Since the first writing of my proposal, it has been suggested by Chris Marler of **ASTRAL DIMENSIONS** that a separate award be given for **Horror** and **Fantasy**, such as the Gandalf award in the pro field.

Semi-pro zines, writers and poets **need not** be members of the organization to be nominated for an award, but you **must** be a member to vote.

You may be reading this in one of the semi-pro zines which have agreed to support the conception of my idea; so far I have three of them behind the idea and pushing it in their respective mags. I have contacted several of the zines qualified as semi-pros and hope to gain their support also. They are: **ART & STORY**, **WHISPERS**, **DEADSPAWN**, **MYRDDIN**, **MOONBROTH**, **FROM OUR WORLD**, **SPACE & TIME**, **DARK FANTASY**, **GALLILEO**, **PHANTASY DIGEST** and **FANTASY CROSSROADS**. The zines already supporting the idea are **THE DIVERSIFIER**, **BLACK LITE** and **ASTRAL DIMENSIONS**.

There may be others that I have neglected to mention or don't know qualify as semi-pros, if so they are welcome and will be considered also.

I truly believe this could be a very valuable and helpful organization for all involved; I hope all of you reading this will feel the same way.

DO NOT send any money at this time, as everything is still on the drawing board. Write me and let me hear any ideas you might have; any suggestions for improving the organization. Most of all tell me whether you'd be willing to support the idea. Once I'm sure enough people are interested, I'll start the membership drive and get things going.

Let's make **SPWAO (SEMI-PRO WRITERS AND ARTISTS ORGANIZATION)** a reality.

I do support Chet's proposal in a general way. I have some reservations about certain aspects of the proposal but I'm sure they'll be worked out satisfactorily. As an example, Unlike the SFWA (which requires publication by the writer within the last 3-5 years) Chet's proposal basically allows membership for life if the person is published once in a semi-prozine. On the other hand, the proposal is very tight by requiring semi-prozines to publish at least three times a year. Frankly, frequency of publication seems irrelevant to me. Or at least, three issues per year seems steep. FC has always put out four issues per year (except for 1974 when our first issue came out in November) and I know the kind of hard work it is to meet that type of frequency. Except in the area of best semi-prozine, the mags shouldn't be judged based upon ANYTHING, after all, the awards should be based upon the quality of the artwork, fiction or verse. . .not what format it is printed in. A gem of a story can shine even if published in a crud-zine.

Nevertheless, I support the formation of SPWAO and urge you to write Chet at: PO Box 2078, Oroville, CA 95965.

My support of Chet's series of awards does not in any way diminish my desire to see a fantasy award established via my suggestions last issue. The field will never grow and mature unless recognition (via awards, etc) is available for achievement in the genre. I still feel a need for awards to be established based upon a poll of all elements of the genre, i.e. editors, contributors and the readership. Arnold Fenner of **CHACAL** and I have been corresponding on the awards and have even established a basic format. The **BALROG AWARD** will be an annual award with several categories (still being defined). The one major difference is that voting will be open to everyone active in the fantasy genre. Award ballots will be run in cooperating magazines as well as in **THE BUYERS GUIDE**. Unlike most other awards currently established, no reader or

fan will be dis-enfranchised. In the near future, a joint publishing project will be announced to finance the BALROG AWARD. Fenner and Stygian Isle Press will jointly publish an item for collectors with all profits going to cover the expenses of establishing the BALROG. The final decision was for the award to cover all aspects of the fantasy genre. The BALROG will not be exclusively a Heroic Fantasy award, nor will it be strictly for recognition in high fantasy or horror—weird literature. All areas of the field will be eligible.

Your comments are again solicited on both the BALROG and Chet Clingan's proposed SPWAO.

On another matter: What follows is a guest editorial. John Rieber ran across an old issue of FANTASY CROSSROADS (No. 7 to be exact) and promptly sent off a letter of comment (LOC). Unfortunately, we've published two issues since then and the issue he discussed might be considered dated, but I prefer to think readers might be interested in yet another voice in the de Camp—Mosig debate issue. The following was written by John Rieber of 301 La Vista, McAllen, Texas 78501. Read on:

Lovecraft and Howard are storytellers, weavers of fantastic dreams. Neither intended to set himself up as a Dark Mohammed, a subject for literary cults' warfare; neither intended to provoke the Black Crusades.

Yet, since the publication of LOVECRAFT: A BIOGRAPHY, it's become more and more fashionable for fantasy readers to snarl at other fantasy readers across lettercols, book reviews, and reviews of book reviews. It's in vogue to boil personal preferences down to labels like "totally uninteresting" and slap them on story-cycles that have sold thousands of hardbound books, paperback books, and magazines as well as inspiring many a pastiche and fanzine.

Why?

The H. P. Lovecraft whose mind and perceptions are a source of awe to many a sworn enemy of Cimmerians wrote in a letter to Donald A. Wollheim

"This is really magnificent stuff—Howard has the most magnificent sense of the drama of "History" of anyone I know. He possesses a panoramic vision which takes in the evolution and interaction of races and nations over vast periods of time. . ."

The H. P. Lovecraft who wrote SUPERNATURAL HORROR IN LITERATURE praised Howard's skill in describing lingering atmospheres of "prehuman fear and necromancy which no other writer could duplicate," stating that Howard "was almost alone in his ability to create real emotions of fear and of dread suspense. . ."

And guess who eulogized "Brother Conan" in the selfsame letter?

Since south Texas suffers from a severe shortage of published REH letters, the obvious must serve: "The Black Stone", "The Fire of Asshurbanipal", "The Thing on the Roof", "The Children of Night" and "The Worms of the Earth", each arising from or containing an ebony seed planted by Lovecraft, but each shaped into a hauntingly twisty bonsai by Howard. From the collaboration on the history of Von Juntz's UNAUSPRECHLICHEN KULTEN to the Pictish curse, "Black gods of R'lyeh, even you would I invoke to the ruin and destruction of these butchers!" Lovecraft's shadow hand was there.

In spite of little things like these, the verbal slugfest goes on—not that either HPL or REH is in any position to care. Others are driven up proverbial walls, one way or another.

"Mr. Sprague de Camp's stories are quite a bit more entertaining than Lovecraft's." To some readers, certainly. But I doubt that such a generalization holds absolutely true, considering the notoriously divergent tastes of fantasy fans; it obviously does not seem to work in the case of Professor Mosig.

"He (Sprague) is a much better writer than Lovecraft was. Could Lovecraft have written THE BRONZE GOD OF RHODES

or THE TRITONIAN RING?" I have a hard time comparing Sprague with HPL, much less deciding that he's a "better writer"—unless one is speaking of financial success. de Camp's nonfiction, from his archaeological studies to his painstakingly-researched biographies, never fail to delight me; his fiction entertains while it bites. But his style and subject matter differ so radically from Lovecraft's that comparison is difficult. But why does one have to choose a "better writer" in the first place? Why not just let L. Sprague de Camp write as L. Sprague de Camp writes, and let Lovecraft be Lovecraft? The pertinent question seems to me to be not could HPL have written ANCIENT RUINS AND ARCHAEOLOGY or THE FALLIBLE FIEND, but would HPL have wanted to. Does de Camp want to write twenty pages of personal correspondence daily, THE COLOUR OUT OF SPACE, or TO QUEBEC AND THE STARS? As much as I enjoy de Camp's writing, bookstores would not be nearly such fascinating places if everyone wrote in his style. I'll allow subtlety to fend for itself and remark that the same line of analysis can be applied to Howard and Lovecraft as well; variety may not be the spice of life, but it is the lifeblood of fantasy.

"No! No! The whole thing is going to see print in yet another zine." By Crom, this sentence was beautiful to my eyes. Although Professor Mosig's conception of the role of the biographer agrees with mine—at least the viewpoint expressed in FC No. 7's lettercol does—I think that a toned-down book review followed up by a more detailed private correspondence with Sprague would have been much more effective insofar as he wished to encourage de Camp to revise his book. I doubt that Sprague hates HPL or wishes to assassinate his character; it wasn't necessary to hand down some kind of public conviction in order to force Sprague to consider reasonable revision.

Sprague should be commended for the calm open-mindedness that he maintained through the controversy. I only hope that his forthcoming TO QUEBEC AND THE STARS will be received as objectively.

John's letter is interesting not only for its obvious meaning but also because it brings to light the whole concept of (hopefully) friendly disagreement within fandom. I'm not a person who thrives on conflict, neither am I the sort who will go backwards for miles (figuratively) to avoid conflict. Conflict (I have learned over my 28 years of life) is a sign of possible growth. There was a time when I would keep my mouth shut rather than make a statement that would create conflict. More recently I've found that such a practice is more dangerous than facing the conflict head-on. Silence is construed to mean consent. I've heard too much bull-dung passed off as wisdom because no one dared be obnoxious enough to confront the jack-a-napes in our society.

That's why I disagree with certain parts of John's letter. It would ideally seem nice to have fandom avoid conflict and think as one mind. It's a nice peaceful vision. However, the mechanics of being human require that we constantly assess and test our beliefs. Argument and conflict are necessary facets of the genre if we're to be thinking humans. Therefore, I look to fandom for disagreement. I encourage debate until such time as it becomes personal affront instead of conflict of views. I commend both Dirk Mosig and L Sprague de Camp for their bravery. It is difficult to place one's views in print for the whole world to take pot shots at. "A toned-down book review" would have been an act of cowardice.

One must remember that fandom communicates thru its publications. There was no other means by which the mass of fandom would have become aware of both sides of the HPL issue without the Mosig review followed by the inevitable rebuttals. Again, debate and conflict are necessary facets of growth, and communication in fandom.

Lest we become complacent: here's another issue. In the recent issue of NIGHTSHADE (No. 3, see News Notes for or-

dering instructions) editor Ken Amos talks about the harm that the new rash of magazines can cause. He mentions such zines as **WHISPERS, FANTASY AND TERROR, MIDNIGHT SUN, MYRDDIN, WEIRD-BOOK and TOADSTOOL WINE**. To quote Ken: "These zines, when they become large in number, start to swallow up the first-class talent. Contributors naturally tend to submit work where they are paid in preference to giving away their work." **NIGHTSHADE** does not pay contributors other than giving them a copy of the magazine their work appears in plus the next subsequent issue. Many fanzines tend to thrive by only giving contributors copies. **FC** began that way. In fact we still do not compensate for non-fiction (i.e. articles, reviews, news info) except via a contributor's copy. We don't even give contributor's copies for **LOCs**. Letter writers get absolutely no compensation. We've begun (with **FC** No. 8) paying ½c per word for fiction and 10c per line for verse (with some exceptions) and that move was **NOT** forced upon us. We had dozens of accepted manuscripts by fictioneers and poets on hand for which the agreement was no compensation other than a contributor's copy. Of course, we are not holding those contributors to that out-dated agreement, they receive the same compensation now.

I realize that very few pro-writers will contribute material free (though de Camp received no compensation for his part in the extended debate). Despite that drawback, I feel there is an abundance of semi-pros and fans who only desire to see their work in print. The editor who cannot find first-class talent isn't looking hard enough. I'm rejecting work submitted to **FC** not because it isn't worthy of publication but because I don't want to bury it in my backlog. I brought out **FANTASY CROSSWINDS (FCW)** in order to get rid of a backlog. My backlog is even greater now than before I began **FCW**. In fact, I'm no longer accepting unsolicited manuscripts until after July 1, 1977. There is ample room in the genre for a multitude of quality fanzines and semi-prozines. No. one should be lacking for material. I just can't believe that ½c per word makes that much difference for most fan-contributors.

There's a new book out by Avon Books titled **THE FANTASTIC IMAGINATION**. It's edited by Robert Boyer and Kenneth Zahorski. The book is just barely in print and runs 304 pages. I have an uncorrected proof and the probable price listed is \$2.25. I don't know if that is the final price. The Boyer-Zahorski edited book is subtitled "An Anthology of High Fantasy". Obviously the book is edited with classroom use in mind. It includes a smattering of short fiction (including excerpts from novels and short stories) covering what the editors have termed **high fantasy**.

If I have a quarrel with the anthology at all, it is in the use of the term **high fantasy**. I recognize the need for categorization in literature. It's difficult to come to terms with literature or any area of studies without discussing similarities and dissimilarities of various works. We better understand when comparisons can be made and differences evaluated. Generalization and categorization are integral parts of life. Ignoring the abuses sometimes incumbent upon these functions, they are necessary to the living process. (i.e. without a **Sword and Sorcery** label how would the reader be able to specifically locate work in that genre to read and study). My argument is not with the process but with the term. The editors state that high fantasy consists of myth based tales and fairy tales. Respectively, examples are given as Alexander's **THE FOUNDLING AND OTHER TALES OF PRYDAIN** and **THE HOBBIT**.

If we have **high fantasy** then there must needs be **low** or at least **medium** fantasy. Boyer and Zahorski point out that it is sometimes easier to indicate what is **not** high fantasy. The ghost stories of Edgar Allen Poe are listed as not high fantasy. Are they then low fantasy? To my mind, a comprehensive study of all forms of fantasy needs to be done with terms established that do not themselves denigrate various forms of fantasy literature.

I'm sure in an academic setting it is easier to gain support for programs and courses of studies that deal with **high fantasy**.

After all, the title itself indicates that these stories are above the mass of looked down upon fantasy fiction. Let's arrive at some better labels.

By the way, I'm in no way trying to reflect negatively upon the character of editors Boyer or Zahorski. They've shown their skill and knowledge with a very enlightening collection of fiction. I applaud their efforts and recommend **THE FANTASTIC IMAGINATION** to you. I exist in an academic setting and know what fantasy fans must endure in the typically snobbish and elitist academic community. I just don't like giving the snobs fuel for their fire. All fiction should be judged upon its merits not upon its sub-genre or genre title.

The anthology includes work by Johann Ludwig Tieck "The Elves", George Mac Donald "The Light Princess", James Branch Cabell "The Music from Behind The Moon" and additional work by C. S. Lewis, Alexander, Buchan, Stockton and others.

LIGEIA MAE

By Steve Troyanovich

for Robert Bloch

what with all them commemorative e-vents and hell-raisin' celybration, i suppoze that they'll eventually forgive you, Ligeia Mae. after all it weren't really your fault. you didn't invent those damn Bicen toilet seats or them rent-a-July-the-Fourth hearse--and as for killin' him, hell! how was you suppozed to know ol' George's blood count was so low? now, i know what your'e gonna say. true, Jeff was a good ol' boy and he did warn you about that-- but hell, it were partly his own fault anyhow--what with those halfass inventions of his'n. why, Ligeia Mae, if it weren't for ol' TJ tell'in you that he'd fix your teeth for half price with his new machine between polytickin' i do believe that you'd be alright today. but like i was sayin', don't you worry about that--cause if you wanna re-tire we got us a passel of blood-suckers in Washin'ton that can take your place.

DARKSHIRE'S MONSTER

By Howard (Gene) Day

1

He had not always been alone; left to wander the expanses of the cool forest overlooking and surrounding the village of Darkshire. No, not always.

Yet the era of the Eaters was so deeply lost in the misty recesses of time that they existed now only as vague memories in the mind of He Who Ate. Often those ancient visions would curl their talons into the stuff of his dreams; and once there, The Eater would toss the night in agony at what had been forever lost. Only then, wracked by those intense nightmares, would the Eater cry, then and no other.

But now was not the night. It was the day, and the days filled the Eater's foggy mind with visions of only food, images to spark his ravenous, terrible hunger throughout every waking hour.

Great Darkshire was like some musty, deep ocean of greenery, splashed with the brilliant gold, purple and crimson that marked the presence of a host of glorious and often deadly floral and fauna.

This grand stage, with its towering oaks and elms and gerbans, was the Eater's domain. Here, it was that he reigned supreme. Here, it was that he ruled and ate. Yet he was not completely without the poacher, nor was he without enemies.

The hairless ones tormented him continuously, striving to implant their horrid sting sticks within the warm bulk of his flesh. And only by continual stealth had the Eater managed to stay alive to rule, within the massive expanse of the forest of Darkshire. Only stealth -- and the fact that the hairless ones feared him to the point of madness.

The very thought of this fear, and the fear of the beasts of the forest, exhilarated the Eater's appetite to a new high. It was the feeding of this fear, so heavy he could almost taste it, that enabled the Eater to carry on in the face of impending doom at the hands of his would-be usurpers.

Such was the Eater's state of mind when he first saw the female hairless-one.

She stood waist deep in the icy waters of the lakeside, bathing in the magical sun-glistening pool of lapping waves and waving fronds. Overhead the golden orb of Sol dried the tiny beads of blue that ran down her exposed upper body.

Even the Eater was stirred, as he watched her from his shadow-infested place of concealment some hundred yards away. Her full young breasts bobbed freely as she frolicked about among the lilies and horn-toads.

The Eater pushed these petty feelings aside. More important matters filled his thoughts, true emotions awakened to their fullest extent. "Here lies food," they told him. And he had not yet dined this day.

Like some large feline cat, the Eater slid from the stygian dark of Darkshire's foliage and edged forward, his great humped back hunched and aching. Breath slowly whistled from his twisted barrel chest, his breast rising ever so slightly as he moved.

Still the human female-one was unaware.

She sang.



2

Ailm Urbhur crashed through heavy, biting thorns until at last, cursing, he broke through into a clearing in the wood. He turned, wiping steamy sweat away from his sun bronzed brow, to observe the brothers CulHain breaking from the dense blanket of green Darkshire.

"Come on, you laggards," Ailm called to the pair, his voice taunt and as hot with anger as the sun, high above in the August air. "That thrice damned beast is still out there and we are no closer to killing the slimy monstrosity now, than we were some ten days back!"

"Canna be helped!" It was Klon speaking. He, like his brother, Klin, appeared to be physically opposite from the characteristics that marked the black maned, boisterous Ailm. They were both slight of build, blonde tossed and frail of colour and limb. But their appearance was deceiving, for they were both huntsmen and could fling a spear as deadly as could any man.

It was Klin's turn to speak. "Me brother's right, Ailm. We've followed you through this green inferno until our feet fairly rot with blisters. . . and still no sign of the creature."

Ailm grunted his displeasure and disgust at Klin's words, but nodded in defeat.

"Aye, ye are both right. And I hunger to return to the village and my new wife. The damn beast has lead us a merry chase for sure, for we are now not more than an hour's march from the village itself. What say you? Do we return and to the hells with whoever the thing's next victim be?"

The brothers CulHain grunted their grateful agreement.

Dampened by depression in spirit, the three moved forward from the clearing and into the swallowing green-black pit that was Darkshire.

3

The Eater stopped but once during his skulking of the smooth skinned female thing. A rodent, small and insignificant, chanced to flit across his stealthy path. The sight of food so close, drove the Eater into a frenzy. All caution tossed to the wind, he half-grunted -- half-roared as he quickly grasped the rodent within the hold of his hairy twisted hands, and from there popped the living beast into his gaping, slavering mouth.

It was during that moment of weakness and that uttering of his hunger, that the female became aware of his presence. Jerking her eyes upward in his direction, the female spotted his matty fur among the branches of the thicket. And she screamed the scream of nightmares as she recognized his ugly, misshapen form, recalled from horror tales told each night around the ring of the campfire.

Still screaming, she turned and crashed through the previously still surface of the sunwarmed lake of Darkshire.

But the Eater was already finished with his tiny, poor meal and his attention was once again resting upon the lithe, supple form of the fleeing hysterical female. Her smooth skin beckoned



and a new feeling came welling up within him, tearing his brain in two. And for the first time, his feelings of hunger were overridden.

Never before had the Eater known the dreams of the day, but even now visions of the nightmares he so often had, flooded his dim mind. Visions of what had been, with other females. Not smooth-skinned creatures like the one in the waters before him, but of others, similar more to himself, than to the hairless ones. They had existed in a time when his kind had been slightly altered from the way he appeared now.

And for the first time in many long and grueling centuries, the Eater did indeed thirst for more than food. He lusted.

He was nearly upon the screaming girl, for he had merely to reach out and pluck her from the waters. His hand a blur of movement, he felt his talons groping, ripping, seizing the soft, pink flesh of the hairless female. He screeched in a language he did not understand -- the voice of his past, and howling with glee threw himself upon the swooning human thing.

4

"A girl!" Ailm cried. "By the gods, I hear a girl's screams!" He broke from the party and began racing frantically in the direction of the cool, lake breezes. From ahead of him, buried somewhere within that mass of twisting roots and bent boughs the screams continued.

Klin and Klou were hastily gaining at his heels as the three raced at breakneck speeds through the damp, groping foilage and underbrush of Darkshire, tripping and stumbling their way towards the lakeshore.

Ahead the screams continued, reaching a new pitch of . . . revulsion? It was difficult to determine what could rip such cries of pitiful anguish from human lips.

The party broke from the living hothouse into a small clearing that lead to the cool, lapping surface of the blue lake of Darkshire Loch. And there lay the source of the screams which had just now become silent.

The Eater looked up slowly from where he stood over the cringing, unconscious female to where the intruders stood frozen in horror. Hairless males! And with sting-sticks! He must flee!

The scene brought a cry of anguish and torment from Ailm's sun-blistered lips.

"By the gods. . . NO! Tis my wife! MY WIFE!" Sickness flooded his muscular form. "He has slain her!"

"Better that he had, Ailm," whispered Klin CulHain. "The thing's not used her for food. . . but made her his mate!" The mere thought of that slaving, foul creature and what had transpired between it and his slender, frail wife was enough to break the mind of Ailm Urbhur. He stepped forward in what would have been a charge of revenge, but stopped dead, and screaming once in horrible torment, fell headlong to the earth in a convulsion of lunacy.



GENE
DAY

Knowing him beyond their help, the brothers CulHain ignored their slobbering companion and set forth to the slaying of the monstrosity.

The Eater knew he was to die. The deadly sting sticks would kill him for sure before he could flee to the concealment of the shadows of Darkshire. Doomed. Being in such a position, his mad, bizarre emotions left him with but one alternative.

With a roar so terrible, it froze the CulHain brothers in their footsteps, the Eater tore at the flesh of its chest, ripping it into gory raglike shreds. And tearing its still pumping heart from its own torso, managed to drive that gruesome organ down its gaping maw before it fell dead upon the waving grasses of the lakeside.

With him died the memories of a hundred centuries. Died the visions of lust and love and the hunger for food. With him died. . . the Eaters.

5 - Epilog

Some months later, it is said, the wife of Alim Urbhur did call upon the village mystic to give aid in the birth of her child. She was pregnant, the villagers said, but not from the loins of her own betrothed for he had died stricken with madness, after his trek into the woods in search of the Eater (from which he never actually returned). Beyond that, was the fact, that the pregnancy had lasted no more than four turns of the moon.

The village Mystic had shoved those facts aside when agreeing to aid her, coming to his own conclusions that she had no doubt been a lusty wench and had mated with some hamlet young lad before her wedding feast. And so he had went to aid her in the bearing of the child.

After that, it seems, the story is lost in haziness and half-guesses. None knew, or wished to know, the complete truth.

But it is said, that at birth, the Mystic had held the baby in his withered old arms and carried it into the torchlight. And on doing so, had screamed, tossing the child back upon the bed where its mother lay.

Once there, the child had opened its great yellow eyes and slowly looked about, and uttered its first and only word.

"Food?" It had sputtered and then had commenced to feast upon the flesh of his mother, the mystic and several observing rodents that had previously been hiding, frightened and rightly so, somewhere in the fool, dark corners of the chamber.



THE TEMPLE OF NEPHRENKA

By Philip J. Rahman & J.A. McKraken

(dedicated to Robert Bloch)

Lt. Degreve stood motionless, resting his hand on an ancient column while his eyes adjusted to the shadowy tunnel. Slowly, the cool basaltic walls seemed to catch the dim light of the lanterns that had been set up that morning and the murky passage materialized.

Degreve strode down the long colonnade with sharp, quick steps. Dr. Brumaire had sketches and measurements enough for one day, he thought. If they did not pack up now, they would have to end their ride back to the garrison in El Fayium by dark.

"Brumaire!"

The lieutenant's tone had not been loud, but the dusky grey stone caught his voice and sent it rebounding. Degreve scanned the black shadows of the myriad pillars that flanked either side of the ageless fane. Brumaire was nowhere to be seen. Degreve waited a moment for the familiar shuffle of the old doctor's feet to sound on the hard, stone floor from behind the massive idol that dominated the temple or out of one of the dark alcoves hidden amid the pillars.

Degreve snorted. The doddering old fool must be lost in his work again. The lieutenant stepped further into the ancient hall and glanced fleetingly on the stone titan that sat enthroned at the end of the colonnade. The unsteady light of the torches and lamps played over the falcon-headed god, casting liquid shadows that endowed the stiff features of the idol with a discomfiting illusion of life.

"Brumaire!" he called again more sharply.

The echoes fairly exploded, startling the young officer with the violence of their retort. The lieutenant swallowed a breath of air and waited for the verbal thunder to recede. As the last echoes died, a jarring clatter of heavy boots sounded behind him.

The lieutenant spun on his heels toward the entrance of the temple. Rushing into it came the lumbering figure of his private, Carnot, and their guide, a slight fellow called Farabi. Pvt. Carnot hastily saluted and after an awkward pause inquired after the shouting.

"That fool Brumaire is either asleep or deaf," said the lieutenant. "Find him and tell him we are leaving immediately." Carnot saluted hastily and shuffled off into the shadows.

The oppressive atmosphere of the temple had put an edge on Degreve's growing impatience and a scowl hardened his features. He turned at the sound of returning feet.

"He is not here, Lieutenant," reported the French private.

"Not here? Impossible!" Degreve waved Carnot away. "Search the temple again!"

"If I might speak, effendi," Farabi whispered. "I warned Dr. Brumaire of the evil reputation of this valley and the temple it conceals.

"The shrines of the ancient kings are abominations in the sight of Allah and are haunted by unclean spirits and evil djinn. To linger here is to put your body, mind and soul in terrible peril, for those wretched few the djinn do not put to death, the Black Messenger enters and makes his own."

Carnot's voice echoed from the back of the oblong temple, hushing the words of Farabi.

"Lieutenant," the private called, "I've found Brumaire's notebook!"

The massive infantryman looked like a small child beneath the huge granite statue of the falcon-headed god. Near the idol glowed a set of several lanterns that had been moved there to illuminate the hieroglyphic inscription on its base.

Degreve flipped through the doctor's notes and frowned. There was nothing in it but meaningless transcriptions, the last of them abandoned half finished. They searched about the base

of the stone god and then examined the walls for any concealed passageway the doctor might have accidentally discovered.

"There is a trick used by certain tomb robbers," offered Farabi reluctantly. "It is said that often a small draft may be detected from concealed tunnels if a torch is passed slowly across the wall where it is hidden."

"Well, do so," snapped Degreve, ordering Carnot to fetch three torches from their supplies. When the private returned, the lieutenant thrust one into the Arab's brown hand and took another for himself. The guide stepped toward the north wall where the streak had pointed while Pvt. Carnot inexpertly checked the east wall behind the statue.

Lt. Degreve passed his torch around the corners of the plinth and altar of the idol. The torch revealed nothing but dusty shards of shattered vessels, broken by past looters. Quietly, he cursed the missing scholar for his carelessness, himself for not posting Private Carnot to watch Brumaire, and General Bonaparte for ever encouraging civilians to join his Egyptian Expedition. Brumaire was a man not without influence; it would look very bad if he did not return with him.

"Effendi!" called the Egyptian excitedly. "Observe." Farabi passed the torch slowly across the roughly carved stones. There was a faint stir at one point, hardly noticeable. He passed the brand back and forth slowly as the slight flicker repeated itself again at the same point along the wall.

The deft hands of the Egyptian felt the stones for some kind of hidden catch. He pressed on a smaller block with a basrelief of an eye. A sly grin touched his lips; it gave way. The eye slid six inches into the block and then stopped. Farabi returned to the spot where the torch had not been disturbed and motioned the two soldiers to help him push.

A section of the wall swung freely on a pivot, releasing a stale, charnel draft from the black aperture revealed. The light of Farabi's torch disclosed a narrow doorway at the end of a short, roughly hewn corridor.

Lt. Degreve looked at Carnot and then back at Farabi in disbelief. He began to take an impetuous step over the threshold when Farabi's quick hand shot out and grabbed his arm.

"Have caution, effendi," he nervously warned the lieutenant. "If your doctor went down this passage, it could not have been of his own volition. The fellahin tell many terrible stories of men who have wandered near this place and not returned. This valley belongs to the arch-demon, Iblis, and to forgotten gods older than he."

Degreve grunted for silence. He had no more respect for the superstitions of the fellahin that he did for the ancient heathens that had created the temple. He ordered Carnot to fetch the rest of the torches and a length of rope in case the doctor had fallen into a pit.

When all was prepared, Degreve entered the dark corridor first followed by the reluctant Farabi, sandwiched between the lieutenant and Pvt. Carnot.

"Do not go before the light and take care where you place your feet," counselled Farabi. "The old race of Egypt built many hidden pits and cunning deathfalls into their sacred temples to discourage thieves and desecraters."

Carefully moving the torch about the mouth of the tunnel, the young officer took a tentative step. He listened, but heard only the soft rustle of his two companions as they cautiously followed.

The corridor was short; they reached the narrow doorway with a dozen halting steps. Thrusting a torch before them, they peered into the secret chamber. The smooth, gesso-coated walls blazed orange in the torchlight, although their true color was a deep saffron. Crowded upon them were strange glyphs and fierce portraits of polymorphic deities. Towering over all was a terrible, divine sentinel carved of black granite. The ibis-headed god stood squarely confronting the three men, his arm stiffly extended as if to command them to abandon their sacrilegious intrusion.

Farabi's lemuroid eyes swelled in superstitious wonder as he

prayed in Arabic that his young, foreign god, Allah, might shield him from the indignation of the Forgotten Ones.

Lt. Degreve shook off the awe that momentarily froze him and scanned the room for any sign of the missing scholar. It contained nothing but inscrutable frescos and the mute tutelary. Behind the twelve foot statue, buried in its quaking shadow, was an ornate bronze door, stained with verdigris. As the torches were moved closer, they found it hung ajar. Three feet into the adjacent chamber loomed a rugged wall that ran from either wall and flush with the ceiling. The stones were so poorly dressed and fitted as to suggest great haste in its erection.

Degreve was on the verge of conceding that Brumaire had been spirited off the earth by demons when he began to notice that the all-pervasive, mephitic stench seemed stronger in the blocked room.

"There, in the corner--a hole." Lt. Degreve moved his torch toward the roughly excavated opening in the southwest corner of the barricade.

"Brumaire must have gone through here," said Degreve, kneeling beside the opening.

"This is madness," said the Egyptian, his voice dry with fear. "Brumaire has been taken by ghouls. We must flee this place before the same fate befalls us."

Degreve scowled irritably; the boundaries of reality and myth, so basic and essential to a European were totally lost upon the Moslem.

"Do you think I might persuade my captain that your superstitions are an excuse for failure in Bonaparte's army?"

"Die if you wish, effendi, but let me go back. This place is accursed; it bares the brand of the demon Iblis--the Black Messenger of Karneter, the Stealer of Souls."

"Legends! Can you utter nothing but legends?" the Frenchman snapped.

Degreve angrily drew his cavalry saber and held the tip menacingly at the throat of the paled guide.

"You will not leave here until we do. Until then, you will follow."

Lt. Degreve crouched beside the tunnel and explored its opening with his torch. The jagged hole shrank to a diameter of less than three feet before it passed through the thick wall.

"Send Farabi in after me," he ordered. "Shoot him if he tries to desert."

Degreve stood up and tried to catch his breath in the dense, funereal atmosphere of the chamber. Already, the narrow tunnel that opened by his feet was orange with the light of Farabi's torch. Then, as the smooth gesso walls caught his light, he noticed a dark silhouette sprawled on the floor of the chamber, perhaps thirty feet away.

Ordering his men to hurry, Lt. Degreve rushed to the prostrate, gangly figure of Dr. Brumaire, who lay lifelessly beside his extinguished torch. The young officer rolled the scholar onto his back and listened for his heartbeat. Seizing the doctor by his shoulders, he shook him to consciousness.

An eye flickered and the grey-bearded antiquarian moaned softly. For a long moment the doctor stared into the tense face of Lt. Degreve without seeming to recognize him.

"Forgive me. . ." he muttered, "this air--I must have passed out." Brumaire awkwardly felt about his coat and found his pince-nez.

Surrounding them in lurid colors and a style alien to any of the hieroglyphs or paintings they had previously glimpsed were scores of shocking murals.

In a large panel that commanded attention was depicted a spindly pharaoh on a tall, ornate throne. To him came men dressed differently than the Egyptians, a pale-skinned embassy with long, black hair that trailed to the base of their spines and tendrils that hung down in front of their ears and over their chests. The leader of the embassy, a prince who wore a plumed headdress, presented to the king a strange, black jewel of many facets that rested in a yellow box of odd geometry.

"What manner of place is this?" muttered the lieutenant, drinking in the vivid portraits and nightmarish scenes.

"They form a historical narrative," offered the doctor. "One so startling I am forced to connect it with legends of the heretical pharaoh, Nephren Ka, whose terrible history is hinted of in the fragments of Manetho preserved by Africanus."

In a series of vignettes, slaves were seen erecting a new temple filled with crude, elongated idols of alien design. The images of the venerated gods of Egypt were smashed and cast from their pedestals and new, more terrifying gods elevated. In the new temple, the mad pharaoh was depicted brandishing a curved blade and putting slaves to death with the aid of scarletclad acolytes. Behind him towered a new figure, a dark man of cyclopean dimension, robed in blood red and of terrifying evil and unyielding visage.

"The pictures portray Nephren Ka's abandonment of the traditional gods of Egypt for the Dark One." See how the old priests are blasted by the Dark One or fallen upon by his legion of subordinate demons.

These hordes were the most terrible images depicted. They filled the latter panels, attacking people, stealing children and defiling the embalmed dead. Farabi recognized them as the most feared djinn of the desert, remembered even to his generation, and known to the Bedouin as **qutrubs**. In paintings that must have been even more abominable to the death-revering Egyptians, the scrawny, gibbous ghouls crawled about performing nauseating acts of defilement and desecration.

They were hook-beaked, black and shaggy with apish bodies and long talons. With these, they ripped apart the cotton wrappings of royal mummies, dismembered them, and feasted on the dry fragments. In one insane mural the Pharaoh was seen actually taking part in this necrophagia.

Tearing his eyes from the walls, Degreve turned once more to the bland, unmoved figure of Brumaire and demanded an explanation of how he had gotten to this hidden room of blasphemies.

The doctor paused to gather his thoughts. "The entrance was partly open. I noticed it while copying the inscription on the statue of Horus in the Hall of Pillars. I must have sprung some ancient trap--it closed behind me and I was forced to go forward until I found this room."

Degreve scowled in exasperation. He cursed his ill-fortune that he should be assigned to watch over such a senile fool, who knew no responsibilities save his pointless research.

"I should have listened to Farabi and left you here to die."

While the lieutenant took the doctor to task, Pvt. Carnot decided to explore the strange chamber. It was a long room with a downward sloping floor ornamented with macabre mosaics whose themes were as grim as those of the murals. Toward the far end of the room was a curious structure shaped like a squat, truncated cone some eight feet in diameter. Upon examination, he found it to be some kind of shaft or well. He bent over to peer into its foul-smelling depths as Lt. Degreve called him back. Reluctantly, he turned to rejoin the company.

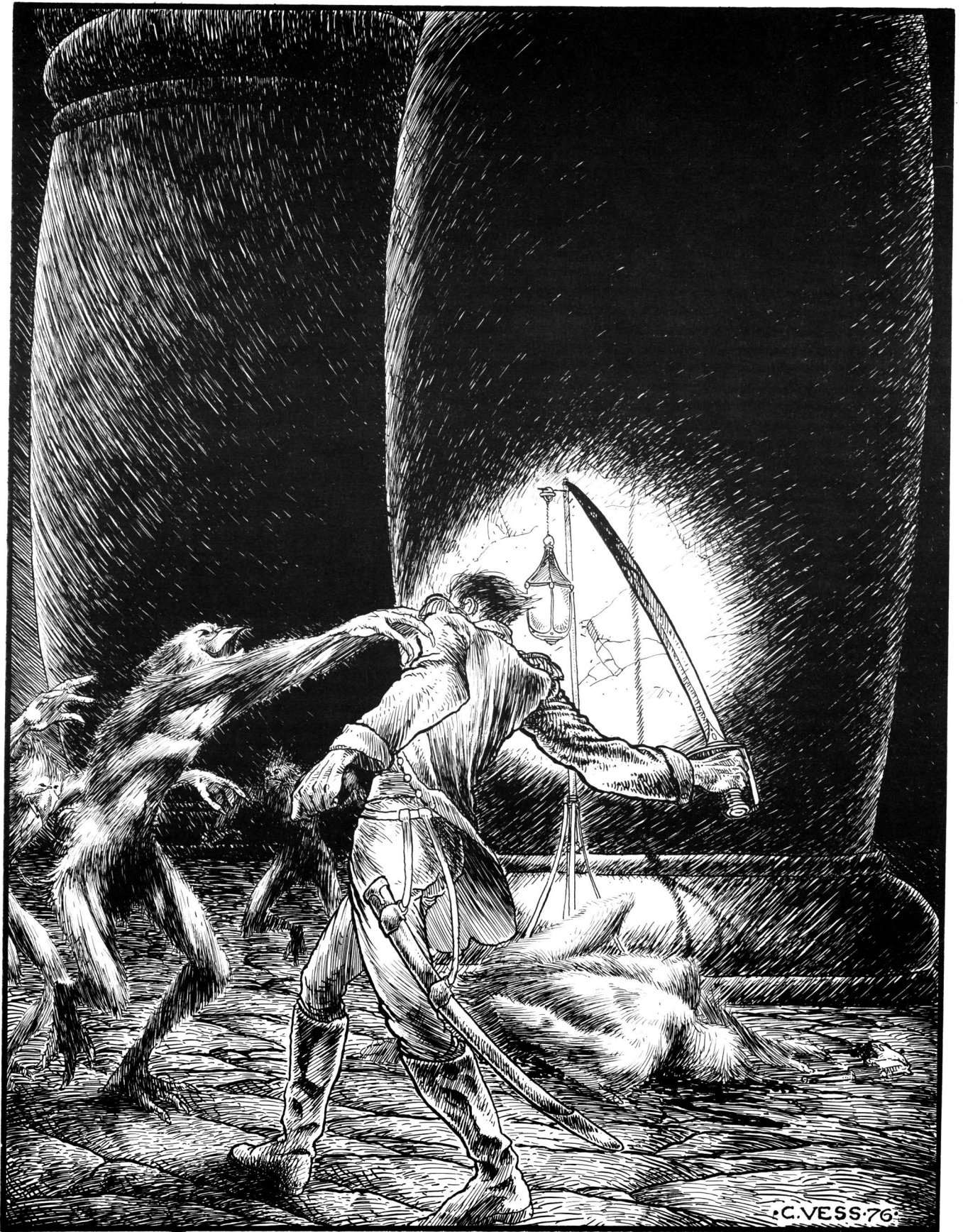
Farabi had already slipped through the tunnel, eager to escape the horrible murals. Brumaire, still protesting that he should have more time to study the paintings, followed.

Carnot hurried to the lieutenant, reporting his find and muttering something about a rustling noise he heard issuing deep below the shaft.

"Nothing more than rats. Now, follow me."

When Degreve reached the other side, he handed his torch to Brumaire and offered his hand to help the unwieldy Carnot through the narrow opening.

Suddenly a strange pallor swept across the face of the private and he twisted his features in a hoarse scream. Carnot's hand closed crushing upon Degreve's. Carnot cried and jabbered for help, but he lost his grip on the startled lieutenant and slid into the black hole.



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Degreve jerked back his torch from the doctor after cocking his pistol as the private's lunatic, guttural wails poured from the other side. As a shaggy hand reached through the tunnel, Degreve flung himself away from the opening, firing blindly. A shrill screech sounded that jarred the young officer out of his fear-inspired torpor. Seizing the old doctor by his wrist and screaming an inarticulate warning, he fled the walled-up room as unseen hands pulled the dead monstrosity back into the darkness.

With their hearts rising to their throats, the three men bolted through the saffron-colored room, through the narrow corridor and back into the Hall of Pillars. Degreve caught a breath of what he hoped would be clean air, but was almost strangled by the intensity of the stench.

A shrill hoot assailed his ears at the same instant that a fetid black shadow leaped at him. The lieutenant staggered back as crooked talons ripped through the blue fabric of his jacket and gouged deeply into the flesh beneath. His stumble threw him against Brumaire whose body steadied him long enough to allow him to bring his still smoldering pistol down crushingly into the hideous beaked face of the scrawny thing of bone and coarse fur.

While Lt. Degreve pulled himself loose, Farabi gasped and was knocked to the floor as another creature leaped at his throat. The frailer Egyptian was fallen upon by yet more of the hellish beings lunging from the shadows.

Degreve struck wildly with his saber, first at his own reeking attackers and then at the obscenities that crouched over the fallen guide. Slowly, sanity rallied inside his brain and he leaned against the column for support when he realized the fight was over.

Brumaire bent over the prostrate, bloody Farabi and slowly examined him. Degreve shut his eyes and turned from the sickening sight revealed in the dim light. The Egyptian lay twisted with his throat torn out; beside him lay one of the slain ghouls with his dagger buried deeply into its chest. About him sprawled two other slaughtered devils, more hideous in flesh than in a thousand tomb paintings. Shaggy, wattled and vulture

beaked--Farabi had called them **qutrubs**, eaters of the dead.

Brumaire softly touched one of the dead ghouls and sighed.

"My poor slave," he said gently.

"What's the matter with you?" The fouled, clawed lieutenant looked at the venerable Parisian scholar. "Have you been driven mad?"

But when the man calmly looked up at him, he saw not the face of Brumaire, but a cruel, swarthy visage bearing an ironic, uncompromising smile. Degreve shrunk back toward the mouth of the accursed fane.

The dark man rose to his full height and followed after the lieutenant. "A pity you could not read the warning above the image of Thoth," he said.

The young officer whirled and bolted into the night. What he had brought out of the secret fane was not Brumaire but an undying devil. His hopes of escape shattered when he saw the slaughtered horses. He hurriedly loaded his pistol as he fled over the sand.

At the top of a dune he turned toward the entrance of the temple and pulled back the hammer of his weapon. For an instant his finger froze in astonishment as the dark, pursuing shape began to swell in the fainter light and take on a nightmarishly inhuman silhouette, but then the lieutenant saw no more as the powder exploded in his face and a sheath of fire burst from within him and enveloped his screaming body in roaring flames.

The dark man lingered at the edge of the conflagration, his features lean and reddened in the light of the blaze. The charred body broke and crumbled upon the sand.

Slowly the tall figure turned from the pyre and strode toward the mouth of the tunnel where the hook-beaked ghouls awaited him. He regarded them quietly in the dying glow of the cremation as they gathered about him in the dark mass. Then, as the night breeze scattered the remaining ashes of the invader, he motioned them silently and they followed him back into the temple of Nephren Ka.

This is an unexpected news item that I frankly had not expected to ever announce. I've just been informed that due to dropping enrollment at Graceland College and a top heavy administration (i. e. too many administrators) that the administration is being re-organized and my responsibilities will be handled by other personnel.

Effective July 1, 1977; I no longer have a job. Therefore, for the foreseeable future **STYGIAN ISLE PRESS** is closing its doors. There will be no further issues until I find a new job and get situated in it. That may be months or years. I thank you all for your support in the past two years of publishing. You've all been very supportive. One final thing, **FANTASY CROSSWINDS** No. 3 will be ready about the same time as this issue. If I can't get **FCW** No. 4 printed within another month, I'll be refunding money for it. The **ALMURIC PORTFOLIO** by Fabian will definately see print before May 1977. Thanks again for your patience and support.

Editor

