

inction rather less academically and a good deal more bluntly—of which more next month. He sees Verne as a small-minded French bourgeois "nationalist" fascinated with gimmicks and gadgets, well satisfied with his Nineteenth Century society, and more or less willing to project it into the indefinitely far future, but with no real interest in society, or sociological development. He considers Analog the last stand of the Verne genre and John Campbell its prophet. Wells, on the other hand, began with future projection and social satire in his first and best books—although he contributed more basic themes and gimmicks to science fiction than Verne—who criticized him for it. The English *New Worlds* and *New Wave* are thus Wells's logical heirs.

If I understand Philmus, he might—if he concerned himself with them—depart from Wollheim's point of view in this last respect. He sees SF writers before Wells as sharing classical education's concern with philosophical concepts, so that they consciously involved these concepts in their fiction and used it to develop them. In this interpretation, SF writers from Wells down to our own time have been more concerned with extrapolating the reality seen by science . . . but the new writers may have come full-circle and returned to the academic approach. The technically oriented mid-generation, who lacked the academic and philosophical background that Philmus and

the Roses exemplify, either explored it privately—Blish, Knight—or rather clumsily "rediscovered" themes that the classicists had sucked dry in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries.

Of the "insiders," whom I'll discuss next month, Wollheim is wide-ranging and sometimes critical; as the editor of Ace Books' thoroughly eclectic SF paperbacks, he is completely out of sympathy with Analog's approach. Blish, as "Atheling," will undoubtedly be much more critical but probably less intuitional; he knows what he likes, but he also knows why.

DREAD COMPANION

By Andre Norton • Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, New York • 1970 • 234 pp. • \$4.95

All, or nearly all, of Andre Norton's books about the far future are based on the same major premise. As mankind spreads out from Earth among the stars, generating new subspecies under the strange conditions of strange worlds, developing new centers for exploration, new institutions, new customs, the explorers and pioneers come upon the traces of Forerunners whose civilizations have been born, flourished and vanished thousands and millions of years before. These lost beings have had strange shapes, though most of them were close to human form, or could take it. Above all, they have had personal powers and scientific knowledge that men have not yet de-

veloped. Some of these relics of the Forerunners can be boons; many of them are dangerous to ignorant fumbler, to whom they seem like magic. In some human beings, too, a trace of the old races is sometimes reborn—perhaps though something like our cruder molecular biology.

In this confrontation with the Forerunners, Andre Norton has also used the suggestion that some of the sprites and monsters of Earthly folklore are memories of these other races. Her heroine, Kilda c'Rhyn, sees the chance to get off her own cramped world by taking a job as nurse/companion to a pair of peculiar children, on a colonial world. But the girl, Bartare, acts strangely and seems to listen to unheard voices, and presently they all go through a conventional enough science-fictional "gate" into another continuum where some of the Forerunners live and gather strength for a return to our universe. They find a spaceman who has been wandering there for centuries, and who helps Kilda find a way out for herself and the reluctant children.

Miss Norton never answers all the questions she raises, never resolves all the mysteries she unveils. This seems to drive teacher and librarians up the wall, but I trust that youngsters appreciate the opportunity to use their own imaginations, so that a book is different for everyone who reads it. I know I am still haunted by the dryad-like folk of her "Janus" books, another unfinished story to

which I hope she will return.

Let's put it another way. She shows us a universe where there are many quarks, and where some people, in some places, glimpse a whole new science of their nature and control. It can be a terrifying universe, and a hostile one, but it is always fascinating.

THE HOUSE IN NOVEMBER

By Keith Laumer • G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York • 1970 • 192 pp. • \$4.95

A condensation of this book was serialized in *If* at the end of 1969 as "The Seeds of Gonyl." It is run-of-the-mill Laumer, without even the hilarious tongue-in-cheek corn of his Retief yarns. Frankly, it belongs back in the days of *Planet Stories*, except that the initial puzzle is better constructed and the hellbent save-the-world stampede holds off till near the end.

Jeff Mallory "wakes up" one November morning, in his hometown in the middle of Nebraska, to find three months lost and the world totally changed. Beatrice has become almost a ghost town, his wife and children and neighbors zombies at the command of other humanoid monsters from a gigantic tower rising above the prairies. He escapes, and finds the outside world almost as empty and almost as strange. An army of Americans and Russians is preparing to wipe out the stronghold of the Red Chinese which they are sure have invaded America and oc-