

Cover art uncredited

yond the standard space opera climax.

Like most people, Arch Comyn has heard wild rumors about the fate of the first attempt to make "the big jump" through hyperspace to another star. Unlike most, Arch had a best friend among the crew of that first try and has determined to discover his friend's fate. This necessitates infiltrating the Mars compound of the Cochranes, the family/corporation that has financed the expedition. He does this just well enough to find the captain of the ship, who dies screaming in Arch's arms. Arch is beaten senseless by the Cochranes and sent back to earth, where he finds himself being followed by two separate shadows.

He then must infiltrate the Cochranes' lunar stronghold (not to mention one of the lovely Cochrane women), to find out which *they* hired, and to try to learn who hired the other.

From there, Arch naturally finds himself on the hastily-commissioned second ship, sent in search of the landing site and crew members of the first ship.

This takes us through the first two-thirds of the book. From this point on, I must walk a tightrope between telling you too much and not telling you enough. Before he died, the captain had told Arch something about the "Transuranae," and Cochrane scientists confirm that the captain's body had been found to contain elements higher in the periodic table than uranium, elements not found naturally in our solar system. By the time Arch reaches the planet of Barnard's Star, we are prepared to meet any manner of monster. What we find instead are beautiful humanoid, yet bird-like, beings living in a veritable Eden. But these are not the Transuranae.

What follows is a sweep to a climax

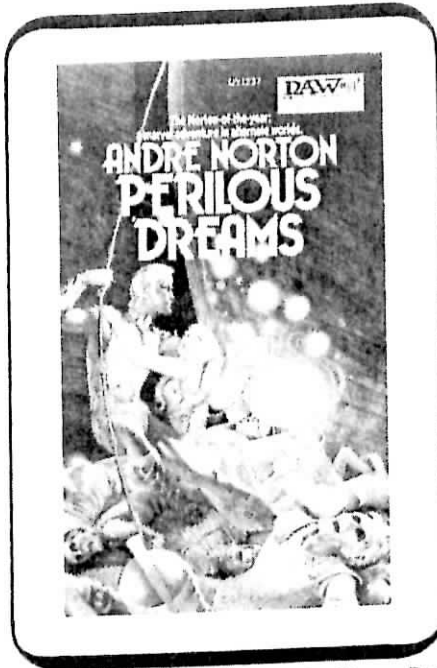
that is gripping and religio-mystic at the same time. What especially intrigued me was the way in which Ms. Brackett (who is well-known for her abilities as a rough and tumble writer) was able to give her prose a subtle, but definite, Biblical ring during key parts of the story:

And the face that looked into his through the leaded glass was the face of Paul Rogers as Comyn had known it all his life, and yet it was not. Paul Rogers was gone from it and someone else was there in his stead, someone beyond his understanding. And Comyn took his hands away and was afraid. (p. 128)

Despite the definite religious overtones of the last third of the book, there is nothing heavyhanded about it, nothing that should discourage anyone of any (or no) belief from reading it. Ms. Brackett is far too fine a storyteller to preach rather than entertain. The religious overlay does not follow any specific pattern, despite the fact that there are characters named Peter, Paul, and Simon; I checked with a priest. But it does evoke some of the mystery and strangeness, and pain of loss we are bound to find in space.

Recommended to all libraries and readers, and especially to those who enjoy their action with a little something extra.

—Allan Rotstein



Cover art by George Barr

**PERILOUS DREAMS** by Andre Norton.  
Front. by George Barr.  
New York: DAW, 1976, \$1.25, 199 pp.  
SBN: 451-UY1237

(Prefatory Warning: I am a confirmed Norton devotee. I admit this though it is not considered cool in some circles I frequent. Nuts to 'em!)

*Perilous Dreams* is actually three separate, uh, things. The first part is a lengthy

piece—novella? novelette?—which is *really* two connected shorter pieces. There are also two shorter pieces which share the same basic background world and problems with the others, but have different characters. If I sound confused, I am. There is no indication of the fact that these stories are unrelated, except for background, on the cover. In fact, it is called a novel twice on the cover. I'm not too sure what it is, but a novel it isn't.

In the city of Ty-Kry there is a guild of Dreamers who can create dreams and take other people with them into these dreams so that the experiences seem real. In all these stories the complications arise when the dreams become a little too real. When an author has to steal from herself, things have gone sadly awry.

I have a highly developed *sensawonder* and powers of suspension of disbelief you would not believe, so I did manage to glean some faint glimmer of enjoyment from *Perilous Dreams*. And, no, not from the obligatory sex scene. I can enjoy just about anything which gives me a new world to explore, and this odd little piece gives us not only the world of the Dreamers, but the ones they invent. Unfortunately, they are not drawn completely enough for full enjoyment. I think Norton would have done better to write one short novel or long novelette rather than this confusing *melange*.

Surprisingly, all the pieces except "Get Out of My Dream" had well-drawn characters. The first two interconnected pieces, "Toys of Tamisen" and "Ship of Mist," have a strong female lead, Tamisen or Tam-sin (well, she has a different name in the differing worlds she dreams up). She is a point ten Dreamer, one of the best, but her social status is as a slave to Lord Starrex of Ty-Kry. When he commands a diverting dream for himself and a guest, Lord Kas, she projects them into an alternate world.

This was no dreaming such as Tamisen had ever known before, and panic gripped so harshly in her throat and chest that she might have screamed, save that she had no voice left. She fell down and down from a point above, to strike among bushes which took some of her weight, but with an impact which left her bruised and half senseless. She lay unmoving, gasping, her eyes closed, fearing to open them to see that she was indeed caught in a wild nightmare and not properly dreaming.

[...]

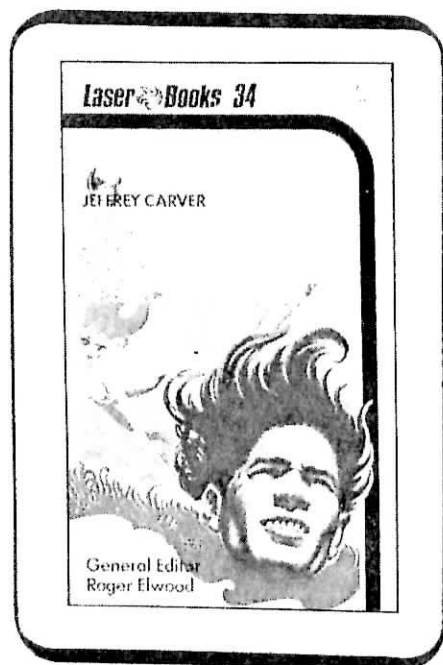
She thought of the idea she had built upon to astound Starrex; her wits quickened. Had the fact that she had worked with a new theory, trying to bring a twist to dreaming which might pierce the indifference of a bored man, precipitated *this*? (p. 13-14)

Tamisen and Starrex are equals here in-

stead of master and slave. Tamisen erases the ancient evils from Ty-Kry and helps defeat Kas' treachery, winning Starrex's respect and love. "Get Out of My Dream" also has a man and woman sent into their past to destroy an old menace on their planet, but here the woman is just dragged around breathless after the man. The last one, "Nightmare," has strong male and female characters with an interesting relationship. They're galactic police agents who infiltrate Ty-Kry to find out why some dreams are deadly to particularly rich or important clients. Burr takes the lead in the action, but Uabach/Ludia won't take a secondary role and it's she who gets them out again.

These small strengths, however, don't overcome the samenesses enough to make the book worthwhile. I suppose if you are really desperate for something to read and there is a copy laying around, you might try it, but I certainly would not buy it.

—Mary Kay Jackson



Cover art by Kelly Freas

**SEAS OF ERNATHE** by Jeffrey Carver  
Don Mills, Ontario: Laser. 1976, 95c,  
190 pp.  
ISBN: 0-373-72034-3

Jeffrey Carver's first novel is not especially convincing, but it creates a pensive atmosphere that lifts it above the usual run of Laser's titles.

Ernathe is a sea world that had been settled by humans centuries earlier. There is a native race, the Nale'nid, but the humans had carefully avoided them since they seemed to prefer to remain aloof. Now for no discernable reason the Nale'nid are coming into human areas and seriously disrupting everything. Their senseless vandalism endangers the existence of the

colony, and the humans are unable or unwilling to restrain them. As the novel opens a starship landing upon Ernathe is fired upon—it was a Nale'nid, wandering unnoticed about a military encampment, playing a prank.

The protagonist is Seth Perland, a pilot on this starship. The story is, of course, his quest to learn what's happening on Ernathe. Why have the Nale'nid become destructive; why are the humans helpless to stop them; how can peaceful relations be reestablished? His quest is facilitated when he is kidnapped by a beautiful, telepathic Nale'nid girl, Lo'ela, who takes him on an extensive tour of the Nale'nid civilization. Seth gains insight into the Nale'nid psychology, returns to the human settlements just in time to forestall a war against the sea-people (which the humans could not have won), and persuades both races to enter into a beneficial partnership.

The plot is pretty simplistic. Carver's strength is in depicting an alien civilization and psychology. These are vague and undefined, as if distorted by Ernathe's waters; they are alien and not entirely understandable by human minds. Carver gets slightly carried away by this concept, and Seth accepts it all too easily. He doesn't seem to really try to comprehend the whys and wherefores of what he sees. But Carver does create a world of eerie beauty, of strange social mores and a philosophical

moodiness.

They made no attempt to greet Seth and Lo'ela, but as the two seated themselves on empty nearby cushions, Lo'ela spoke several words in her own tongue. No one spoke in return; nevertheless, she seemed satisfied. Seth, watching, felt distinctly uncomfortable, and he wondered what had just passed among the sea-people. Lo'ela addressed him: *This will be difficult for me. Please be attentive and don't wander from me if I falter.* She was clearly rather nervous, and Seth wondered how much of that was a reflection of his own high strung feelings. He spoke no answer, but tried to settle his thoughts and relax the tenseness in his body—and to open himself for whatever was to follow. (p. 93)

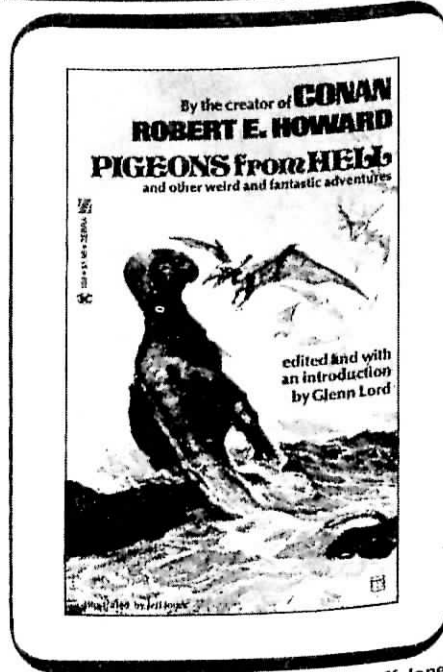
The reader who, like Seth, will simply try to relax and accept what is shown will find the experience worth sitting through. *Seas of Ernathe* is not a great book but it's one you can read without feeling you've wasted 95c and a couple of hours. There is an introduction by Terry Carr who speaks enthusiastically about Jeffrey Carver's fledgling talent and how much we can expect from him in the future. Yes, *Seas of Ernathe* does make me feel that his fourth or fifth novel may be really worth waiting for.

—Frederick Patten

**PIGEONS FROM HELL** by Robert E. Howard. [Edited and with an introduction by Glenn Lord]  
New York: Zebra. 1976, \$1.95, 315 pp.  
ISBN: 0-89083-189-0

This collection of fourteen stories contains some of the best of Robert E. Howard's non-series tales of fantastic and supernatural adventure. It is in effect a reprint of the 1963 Arkham House collection, *The Dark Man and Others*, although Zebra has eliminated the title story of that volume and added a short introduction (and an editorial credit) by Glenn Lord. The time-period of Howard's writing is from 1925 to 1936 although the tales are not in any chronological order.

Zebra Books have made themselves the *de facto* publishers of all of Howard's non-series stories. This has proven a magnificent blessing for all who love good fantasy literature, for surely Robert E. Howard stands as the giant of the modern occult-supernatural adventure story. There is no peer to his vivid scenes of fierce battle between heroes of titanic strength and strange, monstrous creations of the netherworld. His mastery of imagery in connoting exotic worlds while keeping an illusion of realism makes him the touchstone of all modern epic fantasy. This more than compensates for Howard's tendency to repeat the same basic plot pattern again and again.



Cover art by Jeff Jones

Glenn Lord, the executor of Howard's literary estate, has chosen a wide variety of macabre tales to illustrate Howard's prose talents. There are superb tales from modern horror in the South of the 1930s to Westerns set in Texas (whose details of cowboy life Howard knew so well from his own life) to medieval epics. And many,