

quiet but rewarding lives. Abruptly, however, their world is upset by the entrance of Elliot Hoover, a puzzling man who claims that Ivy is the reincarnation of his own daughter, Audrey Rose, who died a decade earlier.

The Templetons' reaction is pretty much what one would expect; they believe Hoover to be mentally unbalanced, possibly dangerously so, and take steps to keep him from any contact with their daughter. His insistence inspires stronger steps, including legal actions and the threat of physical force. Ivy begins to suffer from strange compulsive dreams, dreams from which she cannot be awakened, dreams which seem to be re-enactments of the death of Audrey Rose. As a result of one of these seizures, Hoover spirits Ivy to his own apartment, and finds himself facing a charge of kidnapping.

The second half of the novel consists of Hoover's trial and the methods employed by his crafty but self-serving lawyer, as Hoover's case threatens to develop into a legal ruling on the validity of the belief in reincarnation. The trial is climaxed when an attempt is made by means of regressive hypnosis to reach memories of an earlier existence, an experiment which results in Ivy's death, the destruction of the Templeton's marriage, and the freeing of Audrey Rose's tortured soul once more.

It all sounds very familiar, sort of *The Exorcist* with reincarnation. De Felitta strikes out then on originality of subject matter or plotting. It scores only slightly better with his treatment. The prose is no more than satisfactory. The characterizations are a degree above stereotyping, but are not deeply drawn enough for the reader to empathize very thoroughly with the major characters, except perhaps Ivy herself. Motivations are told rather than

shown through the actions of the characters. The omniscient author, for example, tells us that Brice Mack is ambitious.

Even the basic mechanics of the novel are somewhat suspect. De Felitta demonstrates a fairly good lay grasp of courtroom procedure, but the hypnotism scene doesn't ring true at all. I am willing to accept that under extreme circumstances, a court would allow a dangerous psychological experiment to be performed on a ten year-old girl if it was requested by the defense, but not in the case here, where it is requested by the prosecution. I am willing to accept that a character such as Elliott Hoover would be naive enough not to realize the impropriety of making a substantial gift to a defense witness, but I am not willing to accept that as crafty a lawyer as Brice Mack is portrayed would overlook such an elementary precaution as avoiding any semblance of suborning a witness.

Lastly, the suspense is not built at all. There are several dream sequences, each of which is written to be progressively more frightening. The manipulation of the hidden soul of Audrey Rose is hinted at, but never developed into a positive menace. Worse, the rationale behind the dead girl's actions is never sufficiently explained, and the dichotomy between her own personality and that of Ivy Templeton (remember, they're supposed to be the same person in different incarnations) is never reconciled. De Felitta has thrown in some Buddhist philosophy, a little bit of Scientology, and Hoover's journal of discovery through India as sideshows, but they remain merely that, sideshows, distractions and filler.

Audrey Rose then is a competent bit of mediocrity, which will undoubtedly have a brief moment of popularity, a short-lived paperback edition, and possibly—considering the success of *The Exorcist* and *The Other*—a film version. Save your \$8.95 and watch it on TV, if you have nothing better to do.

—Don D'Ammassa

KNAVE OF DREAMS by Andre Norton
New York: Viking, 1975, \$7.95, 252 pp.
ISBN: 0-670-41467-0 LC: 75-14444

Knave of Dreams is good average Norton. That is to say, it is an absorbing story with likeable characters in an interesting, well-visualized world. No map is provided, but the descriptions are so clear that a reader could almost chart it anyway.

And as such, of course, it is pleasant reading. Ramsay Kimble, a half-Iroquois American, finds himself in an alternate world in which science went much further and faster than it did in our world,



KNAVE OF DREAMS

Andre Norton



Cover design by Kathy Westray

and led to a devastating war. The society in which he finds himself is at a feudal stage, trying to rebuild a stable culture. Meanwhile it has investigated psychic powers, which form the basis of its religion, with much better results than our world has had. This ingenious set-up allows Norton a plausible background for precisely the kind of mixed warfare which used to give space opera a bad name because it was normally so wildly implausible: swords, magic, and ray-guns all as weapons of approximately equal importance, allowing the hero a well-rounded display of his brawn, sensitivity, and intellect.

The book has the faults as well as the virtues standard in average-level Norton. The characters are likeable, but they are stereotypes, not given any depth: the attractive young man and woman of courage and integrity who gradually fall in love, an imperious *grande dame* devoted to her country, an evil usurper, a fribble of a secondary usurper (sort of; technically, Berthal is probably the rightful heir), etc.

The most interesting character is Osythes, a Shaman of great power and integrity who is, for lack of any better alternatives, a prime mover in what he believes to be an evil act. He helps kill a puppet prince, Kaskar, without leaving evidence of murder, by killing Ramsay Kimble, Kaskar's double in our world. (This gimmick to get the plot going was perhaps badly chosen. A little direct poison, killing the unfortunate Kaskar and leaving Kimble alone, would have been more sensible. And although the book explains why Kimble shows up in Kaskar's body after their deaths instead of dying

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Cover photograph by Cosimo Scianna

as the doubles did in test-runs, the explanation seems a bit lame.) The religion Osythes serves is a prophetic one, with a Tarot-like deck of fortune-telling cards in four suits, Hopes, Fates, Fears, and Dreams—Kimble, it turns out, is the Knave of Dreams, a figure something like the joker or a Tarot Fool.

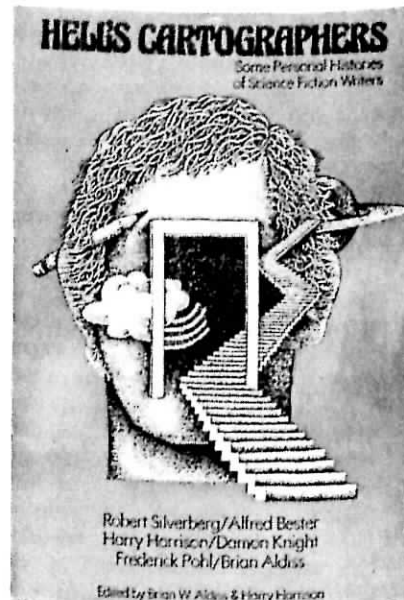
But Osythes never sounds quite like the Shaman of a mystery cult. He sounds like a statistician: e.g., "Ochall is not of the Enlightened Ones. However, that does not mean that he may not have learned some trick of mind control that he has used to override the inner man in our poor Prince" or "A foreseeing... can only indicate probable events, which may be changed by the choices of those concerned." The descriptions of the Enlightened Ones imply that their prophecies are indeed statistical, not Delphic, but Osythes believes in his gods and believes in the divinity of his probabilities as well as, say, the divinity of the fortunes found in the cards. It is out of key to have him sounding so much like a scientist of our

world.

Indeed, there is generally a slight carelessness in the choice of words, even at the level of simple grammatical meaning. E.g., in the first few pages: "that death is a deed of worthy cause" (for "that death is a worthy cause" or "that death is a deed worth causing"—it's not clear which); "That she comes unwillingly and under threat, we are all aware of" (the "of" is redundant); "she struck out at Melkolf" as an equivalent to "she said." (But while I am nit-picking, I must mention my pleasure at finding someone who is still aware of the meaning of "enough," as in "[they] were far enough into the glow of light for their features to be clearly visible," someone who does not phrase it "far enough... that their features were clearly visible" as if "enough" meant the same as "so.")

Knave of Dreams is an appealing book for a single reading, although the hasty writing gets in the way of enjoying a re-reading.

—Ruth Berman

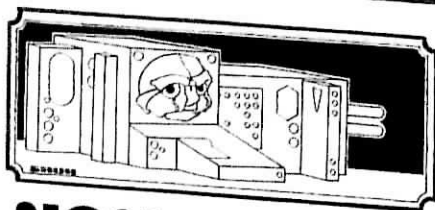


Cover art by Randall Richmond

fog snapping at our ass all the way..."). Sheer delight!

Robert Silverberg, without doubt one of the leading examples of a writer whose exceptional and valuable growth as a creative artist can be accurately traced, admits that his best and hardest-won achievements have been so disregarded by publishers and readers (his best books went out of print quickly) that he now feels "sad, bitter, and confused." (This pronouncement was published in a postscript to this essay in the winter 1976 issue of *Algol*, postdating the original publication of this book in England in 1975.) In "Sounding Brass; Tinkling Cymbal," Silverberg says he is determined to write no more sf, and reading his story of incredible financial success—marred only by "the failure of my big [non-fiction] books to have much commercial success"—leads the reader to understand how deep frustration and disappointment can have what Silverberg mildly calls "a depressing effect," crushing the energy and determination of a fine writer. I wish I could agree with Silverberg that his most ambitious works are worth the pain he suffered, but critically I am often at odds with his opinions. While I find *Thorns*, *The Masks of Time*, *The World Inside*, *Nightwings*, and the story "Sundance" among sf's most important works of the last decade, I also feel *Downward to the Earth*, *A Time of Changes*, *The Book of Skulls*, *Son of Man*, and *Dying Inside* to be failures on various levels, books that too often mistake cold, sometimes wrong-headed validation for dramatic exploration of the human psyche. But Silverberg's self-analysis is a telling indictment, a story of the struggle the artist must endure to continue to create what he feels to be worthy literature. Silverberg, by the way, is the youngest of the writers in this book, which makes his pain even more wretched.

May 1976, DELAP'S F&SF REVIEW



NON-FICTION

HELL'S CARTOGRAPHERS: SOME PERSONAL HISTORIES OF SCIENCE FICTION WRITERS edited by Brian W. Aldiss and Harry Harrison
New York: Harper & Row, 1976, \$7.95, 246 pp. Illustrated with photos.
ISBN: 0-06-010052-4 LC: 75-25074

Brian Aldiss' introduction is a short but headily condensed package of information about the whys and wherefores of this book, eminently quotable but best summed up in all its particulars with the following paragraph:

The overall interest in this volume resides, I think, in the fact that vital parameters of our six lives lie between the Bomb and the Apollo. These two events mark out our sceptical approach to life from both those writers of a generation before us and those of a later generation. We have all been keeping the reading public reading for two or more decades; this is how and why we did it. (p. 5)

Six essays are included, from a spectrum of writers who are unquestionably strong-voiced, highly individual authors. As might be expected, each one tackles his 'personal history' in a manner unlike his fellows, which gives the reader a wel-

comely broadbased and literate perspective. The book is more disturbing (sometimes even alarming) than I expected, and I am grateful for the opportunity to hear these men speak candidly of their lives and careers. And yet... and yet, somehow, I am not completely satisfied, and I'm not sure I can explain precisely why this is so.

In looking at the essays individually, Alfred Bester's "My Affair with Science Fiction" (previously published in Mr. Harrison's 1975 anthology *Nova 4*) is by far the most entertaining. If Bester were not the author of two of the most discussed novels in modern sf (*The Demolished Man* and *The Stars My Destination*), I still think this autobiographical sketch would fascinate any reader, for Bester is a fascinating man as well as a terrific writer. Here he provides much information about his career in sf—influential work, but relatively limited considering the length of time he's been around—as well as other fields such as radio and television, comics, and magazine editing. While Bester does not spend a lot of time explaining his assessment of sf as a genre or his own relationship to it (he is still astounded by the lasting popularity of his novels), his work is truly autobiographical in that it encompasses his variety of interests and personal pleasures. But there are some glittery nuggets of sf-nal information that will have fans goggling: his one absurd meeting with John W. Campbell (sacrilege!), his "private opinion that a majority of the science fiction crowd, despite their brilliance, were missing their marbles" (ungratefulness!), and so on. And as in his fiction, the writing is energetic and irreverent: "...we packed and drove to the car ferry at Dover, with the