

THE TERMINAL MAN by Michael Crichton (Knopf 1972, 241pp., \$6.95) is the bread & butter novel of the year with 75,000 hardbound copies already in print. The book is fast paced adventure, has a menace, romance, medical background, and is competently written. It couldn't miss. Critically it didn't do so well. Crichton brings up the moral problems involved in computer control of people, but sidesteps any real discussion of them. It's worth reading, but not seven dollars worth.

Don Wollheim is one of the most astute editors in the SF field and has pointed out many times in the past that the mass audience for SF is mainly a teen-age audience who prefer action adventure with a hero you can identify with. It's no surprise that he would start off his own publishing venture with a book by the best known and biggest selling teen-age adventure author writing today, Andre Norton. Miss Norton is a good and prolific writer of SF and fantasy adventure. We have five of her books on hand for review. SPELL OF THE WITCH WORLD (DAW 1972, UQ 1001, 150pp., 95¢) is not actually a novel, but a couple of shorter works utilizing part of the witch world background. It's not as satisfying as a novel, but like nearly all Andre Norton books is very readable. THE CRYSTAL GRYPHON (Atheneum 1972, 234pp., \$5.50) also uses the witchworld background, and is a much more satisfying novel complete with hints of past civilizations, magic, fighting, and all the other elements for a good adventure novel. Both hero and heroine are interesting and easy to identify with (the story is told in alternating chapters from each point of view). Jack Gaughan has a fine jacket and the book is very handsomely made. It's well worth investing in the hardbound edition. BREED TO COME (Viking 1972, 285pp., \$4.95) is another new Norton novel. It's about a race of mutated cats trying to pick up the pieces of civilization after humans have apparently wiped themselves out. It's readable, but poorer than most Norton science fiction. Wait for the paperback or, if you're not particularly a Norton fan, skip it entirely. DRAGON MAGIC (Crowell 1972, 213pp., \$4.50) is actually a children's book. It's a retelling of various dragon legends with a Nesbitt type framework added on. The illustrations by Robin



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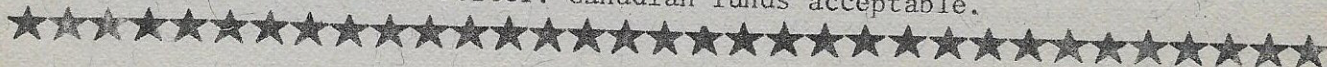
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Jacques are excellent and make the book worthwhile if you're a children's fantasy enthusiast. EXILES OF THE STARS (Ace 1972, 22365, 249pp., 95¢) is a reprint of a 1971 Viking hardcover and is a typically well-written SF novel in her Free Traders series. In fact, the book is a direct sequel to one of Norton's best novels, MOON OF THREE RINGS. If you're familiar with the earlier novel, don't miss this one. If not, get them both.

Ursula K. LeGuin has been writing a series of juvenile fantasies which have gotten a lot of critical acclaim. A WIZARD OF EARTHSEA (1968) has already become a recognized classic in the fantasy field. Its sequel, THE TOMBS OF ATUAN (Atheneum 1971, 161pp., \$5.50) was a Newbery runner-up (the most prestigious award in the childrens book field), and now the third volume, THE FARTHEST SHORE (Atheneum 1972, 223pp., \$6.25) is available. It's the final book in the series and carries the adventures of Ged to a logical and satisfactory conclusion. I didn't enjoy it as much as the earlier books, even though it adds the depth to the series that the earlier books lacked. I suspect it will seem much better when I reread the whole series in a few years. As usual, Atheneum has produced a beautiful book to add to your permanent library. By the way, if you only read THE TOMBS OF ATUAN in its short magazine version, pick up the complete hardcover edition. It's a much better story.

For one of the sleepers of the year, I'd like to nominate CHANGE SONG by Lee Hoffman (Doubleday 1972, 203pp., \$4.95). It's one of those well-written books which can either be fantasy or SF, depending on how you write your definitions. I put it down as a fantasy in the witch world genre, but much better written. The atmosphere is fascinating and the story is exciting and well told. Don't miss this one.

Roger Zelazny has been exploring the straight fantasy field the last couple of years. JACK OF SHADOWS (Signet Q5140, 142pp., 95¢) was published by Walker in 1971 and, if I remember correctly, was serialized in F&SF. It copped a Hugo nomination last year. It's very much in the Cabell/Jack Vance tradition for the first half and falls down somewhat after that when Zelazny tries to turn it into a quasi-SF novel. The Signet edition has a fine uncredited cover by, I think, Bob Pepper. NINE PRINCES IN AMBER (Avon 1972, V2444, 175pp., 75¢) was originally published by Doubleday in 1970 and went immediately out of print, so most of you will be encountering it for the first time. It's not a novel, but the first third or fourth of one. It introduces the real world of Amber and all the shadow worlds that imitate it. Aside from Zelazny's jarring tendency to use slang in the wrong places, the writing is smooth and the story exciting. Unfortunately, it doesn't go anyplace and I found it very unsatisfactory. The second volume, THE GUNS OF AVALON (Doubleday 1972, 180pp., \$5.95) is even more unsatisfactory. All of the story involved takes place in the last five pages. The rest is just stage setting. It took me about an hour to read, and at the end, I was ready to start the story. The problem is that the series is not a trilogy, but a novel in three or more parts. This may be the only way Zelazny can afford to write a long fantasy novel, but it sure plays hell with the readers. I'm anxiously awaiting the next part.

I seem to have ended up reviewing mostly fantasy this column, so I might as well go all the way and look at some of the Ballantine Adult Fantasy books. Let me warn you that I'm not much of a fantasy fan, although I can enjoy well written fantasy adventure. Lovecraft bores me to tears and Clark Ashton Smith's wordy prose makes me throw up my hands in disgust. I tried to read his XICCARPH (Ballantine 1972, 02501, 241pp., \$1.25) but gave up pretty early. Many years ago, when I had more patience, I actually got all the way through THE NIGHT LAND by William Hope Hodgson. Ballantine has reprinted it in two volumes (02669, 02670, 244pp., 243pp., \$1.25 each) and I wonder why. The stilted prose stopped me dead this time around. (*Charlie Brown*)

WE CAN BUILD YOU by Philip K. Dick (DAW Books UQ1014, 206pp., 95¢) Serialized as "A. Lincoln, Simulacrum" a couple of years ago, Dick's latest novel seems a more "worked over" book than we have seen from him in the last few years. It is very good, with moments of brilliance, but some of the cranky crazy phildickian mix is lacking. It's a very moody book, almost a desperate book. The atmosphere is dark, very dark, and the problem the hero has to conquer is his inner self, a demon over which he has no control and of which he lacks knowledge. This is probably Dick's most ironic novel and an engrossing

reading experience. But I am not thoroughly satisfied. Read everything he writes, though, because some of my best friends don't agree with my taste in Dick. I know he's important enough a writer of SF not to miss any of his books. (*David G. Hartwell*)

OLE DOC METHUSELAH by L. Ron Hubbard (DAW Books UQ1020, 1972, 190pp., 95¢) Here are seven stories of the Universal Medical Society originally published in Astounding in the 1940's. From a collector's and completist viewpoint this is a marvelous book, but from a literary standpoint the stories are dated and creak a bit at the joints. I remembered the stories fondly but had not reread them until now. I'm a bit sorry, for here, as in many other cases, the memory was superior to the reality. I also had not realized just how much the original Cartier illustrations had shaped the mood of the stories for me. Plots are almost identical and this shows much more in a collection than in the original magazine appearances. Unless you have a great longing and nostalgia, I'd recommend that you skip this one. (*Tony Lewis*)

WHEN HARLIE WAS ONE by David Gerrold (Ballantine 1972, 02885, 279pp., \$1.25; also SFBC) David Gerrold is improving fast. Last month a mediocre novel (THE SPACE SKIMMER) and a worse collection, now a decent novel with spots of real success. The "HARLIE" stories are light, brisk, full of ideas and fairly well integrated into one book. The romance sub-plot is a bit like a mix of Robert Heinlein and Harlan Ellison (if you can believe that) and though the love theme is well-handled in regard to plotting, some of the writing (esp. the great consummation scene of David and Annie) is foggy Romantic. Ah well, a great improvement for Gerrold. Wait until next month for his next book and see what happens. (*David G. Hartwell*)

THE IRON DREAM by Norman Spinrad (Avon N448, 1972, 255pp., 95¢) This novel has two title pages. The first says THE IRON DREAM by Norman Spinrad. The second says LORD OF THE SWASTIKA by Adolph Hitler. What Spinrad has done is to write an SF novel in the style of Hitler, assuming that in an alternate universe Hitler had emigrated to the U.S. after Germany and Austria were ruined in World War I, used his artistic talents to become an illustrator of pulp magazines and especially the SF magazines when they came along, and finally became a writer of pulp fiction himself, sublimating his dreams of a master race in a stream of SF and sword & sorcery novels in which virile blond heroes blast and slash their way through hordes of sub-human monsters to purify and save humanity. LORD OF THE SWASTIKA is supposed to be his Hugo-winning novel of 1954, published just after his death. Spinrad has taken care to write in the style that Hitler would have been expected to write in. That is to say, he's written a dreadfully turgid and ineptly plotted novel, which he then proceeds to dissect in an eleven page "scholarly afterword," holding up each flaw to critical scorn. The concept is fascinating, and, considering how much work Spinrad has put into this and how well he succeeds at what he attempts, it's a pity that a novel deliberately written badly for a special effect is still a bad novel. It would be easy to say that LORD OF THE SWASTIKA will never win a Hugo in this time stream (though Spinrad presents a surprising if not quite convincing reason for its winning one in that other 1954 despite all its glaring flaws), except that there's already precedent for a Hugo being awarded on the basis of a stunningly unique plot concept rather than literary merit, and THE IRON DREAM certainly fits that description! (*Fred Patten*)

ORBIT 10 edited by Damon Knight (Putnam 1972, 254pp., \$5.95) This latest ORBIT is better than its predecessors but still not worth its price. Gene Wolfe has an excellent novella, "The Fifth Head of Cerberus," which evokes a haunting mood and manages to sustain it for seventy pages; and Gardner Dozois' "A Kingdom by the Sea" is able to turn a standard ESP situation into a genuinely unsettling story with an explosive climax; but most of the other stories are fair to poor, like one might find in a less than average issue of F&SF. Wilhelm and Lafferty are chasing their usual subjects again, which are getting to be rather tiring. (*Greg Feeley*)