



MAGIK TOMES



**The Best of Harry Harrison
by Harry Harrison**
Released by Timescape Books
Reviewed by C. J. Henderson

People who read science fiction break down into many categories. Two of the major divisions are those people who read science fiction magazines and those who do not. For those who do not, the only way they can ever catch up on all of the best short stories in the field is to wait for collections and anthologies to be printed.

For those people who do not read science fiction magazines, there is good news; Timescape Books has just released a gathering of Harry Harrison's best. Introduced by Barry Malzeberg, the volume contains over 300 pages of Harrison's finest work. The stories stretch over nearly twenty years of his career. There are fantasy stories, science fiction stories, and some which are hard to categorize. What they all are, however, is good.

The book opens with Harrison's classic, "The Streets of Ashekelon." This story, first written in the early '60s, was so radical for the times that it took several years to finally get it into print. The tale of the story's history, along with Harrison's personal comments on censorship, precede the story. Each of the shorts within the collection are preceded by, at least, a short paragraph (some, by several paragraphs) telling the reader something about the story, Harrison's feelings about it, or how it came to be written. In these passages, the author explains some of the private jokes within the stories, the ways some of them came into being, and other little bits of information which help give the book a warmer, more personal feeling.

As interesting and informative as these preludes are, however, it is the stories themselves which are of main interest. Harrison is a quiet writer; he is not given to large scenes of sweeping emotion. His stories grow in silence; the awful truth of what is about to happen creeps up darkly out of the corners of the paragraphs and slips before the reader, almost unnoticed.

This is not to imply that Harrison is another Harlan Ellison. Many of his stories are very funny, although there are not too many humorous ones in this collection. The second one in the book, "Captain Honario Harplayer, R. N.," is a good example of Harrison's tongue-in-cheek style of humor in full swing.

But, although his power to amuse is a fair one, his power to shock the sensibilities of the average person is a great one. Stories like "I Always Do What Teddy Says" or "A Criminal Act," show Harrison's very personal feelings toward violence and the senseless kind of social non-thinking which can bring violence about.

To review each story would take far too long. To give away any of the surprises would be unfair. The best I can do is to direct people to **The Best of Harry Harrison** and let them take it from there. I am fairly sure no one will be disappointed.



Horn Crown
by Andre Norton
Released by DAW Books
Reviewed by C. J. Henderson

One of the happiest moments of any fantasy reader's life is when they finish a great book and find out it is part of a series. Although the fantasy *genre* has suffered some terrible indignities, many of the series within its boundaries make fine reading, novel after novel.

One such series is Andre Norton's Witch World books. Although (as it is to be expected) some of them have been better than others, all of them have made for very good reading. Now, DAW books has released her newest one, **Horn Crown**, in which she finally goes back to the beginning of the series and sets the stage for all of the novels which have gone before.

In **Horn Crown**, we are taken all the way back to the beginning of the human "occupation" of the Witch World. It is set shortly after the time when the Elder People have deserted their home, and the Cosmic Gates have opened to allow the migration of the human households which would become the land's new masters. Though the land is abandoned, the new owners find signs of those who have left. Shrines of both darkness and light are found, some of them out in the open, some of them hidden. Evil black birds protect some areas; hideous magical traps protect others.

Due to a disturbance between the balance between dark and light, two people are drawn into a quest which will not only alter their lives but the entire face of the humanity which has escaped into the Witch World. The first, Elron the Clanless, finds himself

on the trail of his ex-lord's daughter. Blaming himself for her disappearance (the admitting of guilt being the thing which makes him clanless in the first place), he determines to trail and retrieve her for her father. He does not hope for a minute that this action will reinstate him with his clan; he is only a good warrior doing his duty.

On the other hand, Gatheia the Wise Woman also trails the missing girl. She, however, wants to find her for the more selfish reason of obtaining power for herself. It is her power by right, she feels, but, even if this is so, Gatheia does not understand the risk in trying to obtain it.

Elron and Gatheia cross paths and separate several times throughout the novel, facing terrible dangers both separately and together. Since the novel is written from Elron's point of view, we get only sketchy parts of Gatheia's adventures away from Elron, but it does not matter. Every scene we are given is a good one, and each leads us further into the mystery which both the hero and heroine are chasing.

Horn Crown is an excellently crafted book. Both of the book's major figures come across as real people. Their character traits, both good and bad, are so well-defined that, a third of the way through the book, the reader is able to tell what decisions they will make as easily as they can of friends they have known half a lifetime.

One of Norton's major achievements in this day of female author dominated fantasy novels is that, for once, the major male figure is not a completely unlikable, corrupt, or what-have-you personality. He is an average (actually, maybe, better-than-average) man doing what he feels to be right. Before he spends too much time in Gatheia's company, the readers find themselves hoping that he will get a chance to show her up. Norton has portrayed her Wise Woman as basically an arrogant snob, what one would, most likely, expect a young woman with power, on the trail of more power, to be like. She spends more time telling Elron how stupid and naive men are than she does working toward her goal.

What I am applauding here is not the fact that the major female character is haughty to the point of annoyance, but that Norton has realized that both

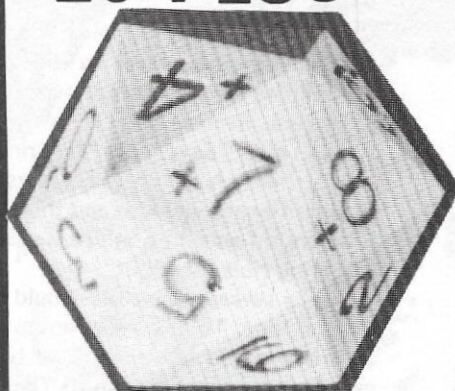
men and women can act stupid. For too much of what we have seen lately in the fantasy field has been a testament to the glory of womankind and a condemnation of the lowly male rather than a balanced gathering of both brought together to tell a story.

And **Horn Crown** certainly tells a good one. This latest Witch World book is one of the best in the series. Although violent action is limited, when it is center stage, it is riveting. Norton's characters speak naturally, conveying and hiding their feelings with a sense of realness which is overwhelmingly solid and enjoyable. The scenery of the novel is painted in light but detailed strokes. Every image is clearly set, but none of them is ponderous. No time is wasted anywhere throughout. From cover to cover, it is one of the tightest stories Norton has ever written.

Horn Crown is good reading. For anyone who has ever read a Witch World novel, this one is an absolute must. For anyone who has never read one, I couldn't recommend a better one to start with.



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