

Trade for 'The Spang Blah'? Got some when I hear from you.
 regards Philip

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( April 1978                                         Vol II No 2 )
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A bimonthly review of British paperback SF; published by Philip Stephensen-Payne.

Donated free to BSFA. Otherwise 10p a copy or selected trade.
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First my apologies for the quality of typing in this issue. For reasons too numerous to mention I was faced with typing it all up in a couple of evenings at a point when my typewriter had just died and I was feeling in great need of sleep. Thus it has been hammered out on an old machine at the office, which seems reluctant to type some keys (particularly a & ') and on which I couldn't find how to set the right margin. In addition, tiredness and hasty typing has led to many typos, while lack of time has restricted the use of corflu to a bare minimum. My apologies again - next issue should be better,

I have kept on the idea of an index of books reviewed and of cover artists, as both seemed to meet with general approval. There are still several of the latter I cannot identify and I would be grateful for all comments on identification. My thanks here to Tim Picbard for spotting the following from PP II.1: "PE" is probably Peter Elson; "Anywhen" - Chris Foss; "Hooded Swan" books - Angus McKie; "To Control the Stars" - Dean Ellis; "Wandering Worlds" - Tim White; "perry Rhodan 29" - Robert Lazell; "Cosmic Kaleidoscope" - probably Colin Hay.

I was sorry, but not very surprised, to see how poor the much-advertised "Visual Encyclopaedia" was (see p.10). It is a shame that publishers should spend so much time and effort on such poor efforts, when far more worthy volumes, like Don Tuck's 3-volume "Encyclopaedia of SF and Fantasy" are ignored. It only goes to show, I suppose, that its not what you sell that matters, it's the way you sell it.

Anyway, thanks as always to my fellow reviewers, Philippa Grove-Stephensen(Pa) and Robin Marcus(RM) and to my worthy printer Keith Freeman, all of whom have been faced with very tight deadlines this issue.

PRINCE OF ANNWYN by EVANGELINE WALTON:BALLANTINE/FUTURA:1974:179pp:80p:DJ
CHILDREN OF LLYR by EVANGELINE WALTON:BALLANTINE/FUTURA:1936:221pp:85p:DJ
SONG OF RHIANNON by EVANGELINE WALTON:BALLANTINE/FUTURA:1972:208pp:70p:DJ
ISLAND OF MIGHTY by EVANGELINE WALTON:BALLANTINE/FUTURA:1971:368pp:95p:P

The 'Four Branches of the Mabinogi' - mediaeval Welsh tales based on older legends - form the primary source material for Evangeline Walton's quartet, though much has been modified and added. The first three books trace the linked histories of Britain's High Kings and the Royal House of Dyved during a period of social upheaval as the idea of paternity is being recognised and male gods vie with the Mothers in the hearts of mankind. In book one Pwyll, Prince of Dyved, becomes embroiled in the affairs of other planes, the twilight world of Annwn and the Bright Realm. Magic and mystery abound in each (mostly of the strange visions and supernatural foes variety) yet Pwyll, at the cost of its enmity, gains from the Bright Realm his wife Rhiannon. The second book is more sombre, even harrowing. Within the wider themes of love and hate, peace and war, it relates the tragic consequences for the High King Bran and his family of the conflict between paternal and sister's-son inheritance. Miss Walton skilfully retains the starkness and gruesome sorcery of this tale. In "The Song of Rhiannon" we return to the homelier atmosphere of Dyved where Rhiannon, Manawyddan, last of Bran's brothers, and Pryderi their son struggle to withstand the revenge of the Bright Realm. Its low key provides welcome relief and brings the opening trilogy to a satisfying close. "The Island of the Mighty" stands apart in both tone and stature. Moral ambiguity lends it a depth the earlier books lack. Its main action concerns the strife between the prince-magician Gwydion and his sister Arianrhod over their son Lleu, whose birth first soured their love. The enmity grows as Lleu is named, armed, and finally, despite his mother's curse, found a kind of wife. That this last, Gwydion's greatest triumph, precipitates the book's climax and sad, sour ending clearly shows its ironic quality. The quartet, especially its final volume, is a considerable achievement. (RM)

CHILDREN OF DUNE by FRANK HERBERT: NEL: 1976: 380pp: £1-25: BP

The Muad'Dib is presumed dead, but he lives on in his twin children, for Leto and Ghanima possess all the racial memories of their family - a legacy of their mother's spice addiction. However they are too young to project the charisma of their father Paul, and several groups plot against them. Paul's sister Alia, possessed by Leto Harkonnen, is determined to control them for herself. Jessica, their grandmother, returns to Arrakis on behalf of the Bene Gesserit to try to breed their male Kwisatz Haderach from a union of the twins. The old Emperor's grandson, Farad'n moves to regain the throne, and even the Fremen have a faction wanting to return to the old, waterless ways. Through this web of intrigue drifts the Preacher, a mysterious blind man out of the desert who might almost be the Muad'Dib returned from the dead. Herbert handles the maturing of the children and the complex interrelationships of the characters with immense skill and assurance, and builds the story to a startling, but very satisfying climax, which leaves ample room for expansion in the fourth volume (already under way). This book must rank with "Dune" itself as one of the best he has ever written.

PERRY RHODAN 31:REALM OF THE TRI-PLANETS by K.H.SCHEER:ORBIT:1973?:128pp:65p

Rhodan, still in love, outwits the cleverest machine in the Galaxy to steal a superbattleship a mile long. Then, after a speech on how defenseless Terra is, he falls asleep.

DARKOVER LANDFALL by MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY: ARROW: 1972: 160pp: 80p: M

This is the first of the Darkover novels and tells of the crash which maroons a group of colonists on an unknown world under a red sun. Here the original ancestors of the later Darkovan cultures (still hundreds of years in the future) must learn to cope with the fierce climate of the planet and the startling effects of the "ghost wind". This book gives some hint of how the later Darkovan talents were to develop, and is likely to please and tantalise aficionados of the series. Like most of her recent books, it reflects Marion Zimmer Bradley's interest in people trying to adapt to new (and in this case, perilous) circumstances. This is not the best of the Darkover books, but, being the first, is a good place to start. If you like it, you'll probably like the rest. (Pa)

THE SPELL SWORD by MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY: ARROW: 1974: 158pp: 80p: M

"The Spell Sword", though chronologically the second of the Darkover series, is set two thousand years after "Darkover Landfall", when the Terran Empire and Darkover have again made contact, though they are still unaware of their kinship. Andrew Carr, a lonely, rootless spaceman sees in a fortune-teller's crystal ball the girl of his dreams and, on impulse, stays on Darkover to look for her. He soon finds that the girl, Callista, is in captivity and has lost telepathic contact with everyone else and can only reach him, a complete stranger. This is also the story of Damon Ridenow, who has come to doubt himself in everything since being denied the life of a working telepath. Eventually, in order to save Callista, Andrew, a sceptic about ESP, has to learn to use it, and Damon, a poor swordsman, has to ride out to fight. This is not only a story of loneliness and love, but also one of re-adjustment. The curious will be interested to know that MZB continues their story in "The Forbidden Tower". (Pa)

A SONG FOR LYA by GEORGE R R MARTIN: CORONET: 1971-74: 205pp: 85p

"A Song for Lya" won George Martin a Hugo in 1975, and would be worth the price of this collection on its own. It tells the story of Lyanna and her lover Robb in the old, old city of the Shkeen where they encounter the Greeshka and their religion of Union. Martin's poetic descriptions, immaculate plot and all-too-real characters make this one of the best stories of recent years. The book also contains his classic "With Morning Comes Mistfall", a haunting tale of science's triumph over superstition and mystery on a far-off, lonely world, as well as eight other of Martin's early, yet brilliant, stories.

LUD-IN-THE-MIST by HOPE MIRRLEES: BALLANTINE/FUTURA: 1926: 273pp: 90p: MH

When many years ago poetry, passion and all the romance of Faery were thrown out of the land of Dorimare along with its last Duke, a change came over the land, a certain fustiness. By the time the book opens the burghers of Lud, its capital, are indeed a stolid lot, yet it is the fate of one of them, Nathaniel Chanticleer, to discover more inside himself than he ever imagined. The extraordinary, ever fantastic, events that follow are a mixture of fairytale and farce with a dash of detective thriller and a strong undercurrent of unashamed sentiment. The faery element contains clear echoes of Dunsany, but the humour is all Hope Mirrlees' own, be it her gentle mockery of legal fictions, the malicious banter of Willy Wisp, or the cumulative comedy provided by the ever more bewildered citizenry of faery-afflicted Dorimare. For all its 'whimsy' "Lud" is a robust and inventive book. (RM)

BEST SCIENCE FICTION OF THE YEAR: 1 PART ONE ed TERRY CARR: PEACOCK: 1975
185pp: 70p: PG

It has always surprised me that no British paperback publishers have taken up any of the American "Best of the Year" collections. That the first such should be Terry Carr's, and should be published under the Peacock imprint is almost as startling. Terry Carr's approach has always been somewhat esoteric, and is certainly not aimed at adolescents, despite his special rambling introduction to this edition. The book actually contains six stories from his "Best SF of the Year 5" covering 1975 stories. There is Cordwainer Smith's "Down to a Sunless Sea", completed by his widow to far below his usual standard, John Varley's "Retrograde Summer", a very straightforward story set on Mercury, and Gene Wolfe's "The Hero as Werewolf", a depressing tale of man's descent to cannibalism in the perfect future. Somewhat better is Budrys' "The Silent Eyes of Time", a clearcut look at how to handle a troublesome scientist who invents time travel, and Gregory Benford's "Doing Lennon" on the man who wants to go into suspended animation and pretend on waking that he's really John Lennon. Finally there is Ellison's obscure "Croatoan" which won some support through its implied anti-abortion stance.

FANTASM AND MAGICS by JACK VANCE: MAYFLOWER: 1950-69: 192pp: 75p: PG

Jack Vance's main strength as a writer lies in his use of detail - it is the fine points which render his creations plausible and interesting. This collection of six pieces, all from the fifties, shows rather clearly that the very short story does not really allow him sufficient space for development. The shortest here "The Men Return" is frankly boring whilst the slightly longer "When the Five Moons Rise" and "Noise" show the author frustrated, yet on the verge of something good. "The New Prime" is more successful, but marred by a very dated 'trick' ending, and it is only in "Guyal of Sferre" and "The Miracle Workers" that the genuine Vancien note is struck. "Guyal" (originally the last section of "The Dying Earth"), basking uncomfortably in the pale decadent sun of a supreme cynicism wherein even magic is etiolated and the penalty of heroism is merely knowledge, epitomises the author's 'dark vein'. By contrast "The Miracle Workers" seems quite optimistic, only gently mocking humanity as it progresses round the circle. (RM)

DRAGONFLIGHT by ANNE McCAFFREY: CORGI: 1969: 254pp: 75p: BP

Another re-issue of a near-classic novel. The Hugo-winning novella which forms the first third of the book tells of how Lessa achieves a ten year old revenge for the slaughter of her family. In her moment of triumph she is discovered by the dragonriders who are looking for a spirited and telepathically talented girl to be Weyrwoman to the new golden queen dragon. The rest of the book describes how both sides get more than they bargained for and how Lessa and F'lar, rider of the bronze dragon Mnementh, struggle to bring the Weyr and the planet into a position where they can fight off an ancient and nearly-forgotten enemy. (Pa)

DRAGONSONG by ANNE McCAFFREY: CORGI: 1976: 176pp: 75p: DR

This story is set on Pern, but is a 'spin-off' rather than a continuation of the 'main' "dragonflight" series. It tells of Menolly - a girl with an irrepressible talent for music. But tradition rules that music-making is exclusively a male province and nowhere is more ruled by tradition than the sea-hold of Yanus, Menolly's father. This part of Menolly's story (continued in "Dragonsinger") is rather slight, and sometimes reads like a juvenile, but will entertain anyone who really enjoyed the earlier books. (Pa)

TRAVELLER IN BLACK by JOHN BRUNNER: MAGNUM: 1971: 181pp: 75p: BF

His domain lies wherever Chaos rules, and whenever a certain conjunction of four planets occurs he sets out on a journey of inspection. He is the traveller, a small man in black carrying a staff of "curdled light". Primarily he observes, checking the imprisoned elementals or watching the free ones and occasionally taking a hand in the long process by which Reason is established and part of his domain vanishes from Chaos into Time. At the beginning, Magic, which feeds on Chaos, is rampant and the traveller's own powers go unnoticed. But his power arises from his single nature, in a universe where everything has many natures. He uses it to grant requests - sometimes in a very liberal spirit - in order to expose the fraudulent, to remove the undesirable and to correct the stupid or thoughtless. Eventually when Magic seems about to loose Chaos on the world again, he uses his power to grant wishes to win the final battle. These four journeys were originally published separately, but they fit together very well. The whole is certainly a light fantastic, but as such is an elegant piece of whimsy. (Pa)

JOURNEY OF JOENES by ROBERT SHECKLEY: SPHERE: 1962: 191pp: 85p

One of Sheckley's best novels (previously published as "Journey Beyond Tomorrow") at last available again. It takes the form of a collection of writings gathered together somewhere in the 30th century, telling of the mythical journey of Joenes, an epic hero of the 21st century and his struggle against the 'Octagon' and the mysterious 'Guided Missiles'. The narrative is very episodic, but has some lovely humorous touches like the long discourse on the vital role played by deliberately misleading maps in the defense of the Octagon, while all the time taking a sardonic look at many standard American institutions. A delight of a book.

MILLENNIUM by BEN BOVA: ORBIT: 1976: 277pp: 90p

"Millenium", in good 'Analog' tradition, is hard SF at its best. The world trembles on the brink of a nuclear war, while the USA and USSR each desperately tries to put enough anti-missile satellites in orbit. Aghast at the possibilities, the American and Russian commanders of the Moon colony Selene decide to join forces and stop all this 'silly nonsense'. The plot, though ultimately both predictable and implausible, is gripping and makes it pleasant light reading.

SO BRIGHT THE VISION by CLIFFORD D SIMAK: MAGNUM: 1956-60: 159pp: 70p: CM

Four of Simak's lesser-known stories in a collection long unavailable. "The Golden Bugs" introduces some rather irritating crystalline aliens and the unusual, though drastic, method of dealing with them. "Leg. Forst." revolves around that unlikeliest of SF heroes, a stamp collector on the path to world domination. "So Bright the Vision" is about an author who decides that eventually he will live without his story-telling machine, and "write stories like the ancients wrote". Finally, in "Galactic Chest" the 'brownies' return to Earth, in the form of benevolent aliens setting the world to rights. An entertainingly optimistic collection.

THE PUPPIES OF TERRA by THOMAS M DISCH: PANTHER: 1966: 142pp: 75p

Much of mankind is reduced to the status of a pet dog; kept under control by the mind-leash. The narrative style seems to be modelled on the most nauseating parts of Samuel Richardson's coy moralising which hides any virtues the book might otherwise have possessed. (Pa)

THE CUSTODIANS by RICHARD COWPER: PAN: 1976: 144pp: 60p

Of the four stories in this volume, one of them "The Paradise Beach" is a slight detective tale, and another "The Hertford Manuscript" is a continuation of "The Time Machine", written very much after the style of Wells. The other two reflect Cowper's current concern with the spiritual future of man. In the title story he tells of a man who comes to a Pyrenean monastery in search of evidence about a man long dead and stays as custodian of a power which might alter the future of mankind. The last and strongest story "Piper at the Gates of Dawn" is a moving, and very evocative tale set at the end of the third millennium, a post-atomic era, when an old tale-teller and a young boy with a pipe wander through the north of England catching the ever-growing rumours of the flight of the White Bird which is to renew mankind. This story shows Cowper at his best. (Pa)

THE SHAPE OF SEX TO COME ed DOUGLAS HILL: PAN: 1965-78: 176pp: 60p

A slightly uneven book trying simultaneously to look at future sex behaviour, future attitudes to sex and the changing role of the sexes, with a couple of stories thrown in for little more reason than that they are SF about sex. There is Robert Silverberg's classic "In the Group" about a future where group marriage is the norm and individual pairings obscene. Disch provides a bizarre angle in "Planet of the Rapes" where every effort has been made to take the boredom out of sex. More seriously Hilary Bailey's "Sisters" takes a close look at two sisters, one personifying the 'Earth Mother' and the other the 'Liberated Woman'. The remaining five stories are generally entertaining, but the collection lacks any real sense of cohesion.

HROLF KRAKI'S SAGA by POUL ANDERSON: BALLANTINE/FUTURA: 1973: 261pp: 90p: DS

In an excellent foreword Poul Anderson explains his purpose and method in assembling this rationalised version of ancient Danish legend. The result is an absorbing tale, easy reading yet retaining the spare authenticity of saga. Perhaps the writing does overuse the modern vernacular in places, but this scarcely ever obscures the book's splendidly matter-of-fact barbarism. (RM)

THE LOST CONTINENT by C.J. CUTCLIFFE HYNE: BALLANTINE/FUTURA: 1899: 274pp: 90p: DE

Another story from "an ancient manuscript", it tells of Phorenice, whose charisma and genius have enabled her to rise from a lowly birth to seize the throne of Atlantis, but whose pride is destined to destroy an empire. The narrator is Deucalion, a brilliant general, inflicted with all the Spartan virtues, who tries to save his beloved Atlantis. The characters and the presentation are tedious on the whole. Only for Atlantis freaks. (Pa)

KEEP THE GIRAFFE BURNING by JOHN SLADEK: PANTHER: 1966-76: 205pp: 80p: PG

The best term for this collection must be 'experimental'. One of the stories ("The Design") is written to emulate the form of an engineering design for a bridge, another ("A Game of Jump") uses only a 307-word vocabulary (the 300 Key Words listed in "A Second Ladybird Key Words Picture Dictionary and Spelling Book..." and seven proper names) and a third, "The Master Plan", has nine different narratives proceeding at the same time, distinguished only by differing typefaces. There are a few more straightforward pieces - "Space Shoes of the Gods", a delightful satire on Von Daniken & crew, "The Face", a very odd story of a living face found growing in a park, and the bizarre "Elephant with Wooden Leg" about the time the cockroaches tried to conquer the world - but on the whole the collection remains clever, but boring.

THE BEST OF ROBERT BLOCH: BALLANTINE/FUTURA: 1943-74: 397pp: 90p: PA

In many ways Robert Bloch's Afterword sums up this book best. Asked to select what he thought were his best stories, he was then told that they had to be only science-fiction or fantasy, must be 'a variety of word-lengths, a variety of themes, a balance of old and new, an avoidance of material too frequently reprinted' and must include certain classics the reader would expect. With all those restrictions, the end-product fulfills nobody's definition of "The Best", and yet Bloch has managed to include a lot of quality. There is, of course, the famous "Hell-Bound Train", "Broomstick Ride" about a world ruled by witchcraft, "Enoch" about the strange voice in Seth's head that urged him to kill, the weirdly allegoric "The Learning Maze" and 18 other entertaining tales.

THE BEST OF LEIGH BRACKETT ed EDMOND HAMILTON: BALLANTINE/FUTURA: 1944-56: 423pp: 95p: BV

Leigh Brackett is best known for her planetary romances and the majority of the stories in this collection fall into that category. They are also the most enjoyable ones as her main strength lies in the haunting evocation of ancient cities and lost races. She can create an atmosphere of mystery and adventure - especially in the Venus stories where she conveys her own very vivid perception of the Sea of Morning Opals or the Mountains of White Cloud. For the casual reader 400 pages of poignant regret and naive plots is likely to be stifling, and should be 'dipped into' from time to time. However for the fan still hankering after the 'good old days' this book will be a fund of entertainment. (Pa)

THE BEST OF EDMOND HAMILTON ed LEIGH BRACKETT: BALLANTINE/FUTURA: 1926-68 381pp: 85p: HD

Fifteen of these stories were published in the 20 years from 1926-46, and are on the whole little more than typical of the average poor style of the period. The only real exception is "He That Hath Wings" (1938), a very touching story about a man born with wings who tries to adjust to living without them. The other, more recent, six stories are of a far higher calibre. Of these, the best is probably "What's It Like Out There", a very thoughtful look at a man returned from an expedition to Mars, who has to pretend how wonderful it all was, because that's all the people want to hear. As a whole, though, the collection is fairly boring, and the sickly and biased introduction by Leigh Brackett (Mrs. Edmond Hamilton) only makes it worse.

WEIRD TALES ed PETER HAINING: SPHERE: 1934-39: 238pp: 85p

MORE WEIRD TALES ed PETER HAINING: SPHERE: 1939-52: 256pp: 85p

A two-volume reprint of the outstanding 1976 Neville Spearman collection of stories from "Weird Tales". As always, Haining is a good editor, managing to select little-known stories, which are nevertheless very good. All the classic authors are here - Lovecraft ("Beyond the Wall of Sleep"), Clark Ashton Smith ("Garden of Adompha"), Howard ("Black Hound of Death"), Leiber ("The Phantom Slayer") and so on - as well as some samples of the best Weird Tales poetry and even a few letters. The one big drawback, though, is that Sphere have been unable to retain the facsimile printing that made the Spearman edition so outstanding, but despite that the books are a worthy testimonial to a great magazine.

DINOSAUR PLANET by ANNE McCAFFREY: ORBIT: 1978: 189pp: 75p: M

An exploration party lands on Ireta to check out its potential mineral wealth and discovers several very puzzling anomalies. Then they lose contact with the outside world and trouble develops within the crew. Unfortunately Anne McCaffrey takes a long time to establish the story and it needs patience to read 80 pages before anything very interesting occurs. Equally unfortunately the reader can have no assurance that the rest of the story will be worth the effort as this is only volume one of a projected trilogy, and ends, literally, on a cliff-hanger. On its own, "Dinosaur Planet" is very frustrating. (Pa)

WHERE LATE THE SWEET BIRDS SANG by KATE WILHELM: ARROW: 1976: 250pp: 90p

The world collapses in a rustle of exhausted resources. Seemingly the only survivors are the Sumner family and their research station built against just such an eventuality. Faced with widespread male sterility, they resort to cloning. However the clones soon turn on their creators, relegating them to the status of 'breeders' and regarding them as a lower form of life. Wilhelm's thesis, though, is that cloning, through the restriction of the gene pool, leads to mental stagnation and a devolution of intelligence. Thus the spurned human, Mark, can defeat them all. The story is enjoyable, though not outstanding, but the book is so riddled with evocations of the American Ideals of Individualism and, currently, anti-Technology that it was voted an undeserved Hugo last year.

THE SLAVES OF HEAVEN by EDMUND COOPER: CORONET: 1975: 191pp: 75p

After a global war, the surface population of Earth has regressed to primitivism, while a technological culture survives on the space-stations in orbit. To one of these, Heaven Seven, Berry, chief of the Londos clan, is brought. Soon he becomes embroiled in local power politics and decides to capture the space-station. If you can stand Cooper's rampant chauvinism and simplistic plotting it's quite fun.

KRONK by EDMUND COOPER: CORONET: 1970: 189pp: 75p: CF

Cooper's most entertaining book, reissued yet again. Alcoholic ravens, computerised religion and Yorkshire rabbits with a taste for kicking TV commentators to death, combine in this bizarre and satiric novel about a wild strain of VD with unusual side effects. A delight.

IN THE DAYS OF THE COMET by H.G.WELLS: FONTANA: 1906: 249pp: 80p: JT

Wells is remembered within the genre as one of the fathers of modern science fiction. It is often forgotten that his primary concern was to proselytise, often to the point of boredom. "In the Days of the Comet" lies at the drearier end of the spectrum. Mysterious gases from a comet suddenly remove all hate, jealousy, lies and so on from mankind, making the Earth all sweetness and light. The book's tedium is only exceeded by its implausibility.

THE DARK SIDE OF THE SUN by TERRY PRATCHETT: NEL: 1976: 158pp: 70p: TW

Dom Sabalos and his pet swamp ig ransack the galaxy for the vanished Joker master race - pursued by villains and Grandma. Also starring Isaac the robot and a cosy assortment of aliens. Lightweight, but fun. (RM)

RAVEN: SWORDSMISTRESS OF CHAOS by RICHARD KIRK: CORGI: 1978: 174pp: 70p

Yet another original heroic fantasy series that will probably prove as short-lived as the others. This time the protagonist is a beautiful young barbarian woman 'chosen' by some unnamed powers to further their cause, and aided by a taciturn wizard and the raven, half real half shadow. The book tries to combine the attraction of Howard's Agnes de la Fere with the fascinating 'theology' of Moorcock's "Law and Chaos" but, despite the added attraction of a map, hardly rises above the imitative.

THE EARLY WILLIAMSON: SPHERE: 1928-33: 268pp: 95p: PE

Asimov has been responsible for starting a number of trends in SF, but perhaps the most unfortunate has been the series of "The Early X" books. His own volume was enormous, comprehensive, and relatively interesting. Then came the "Early Del Rey" (reviewed in PP 1.2) which was fairly large, comprehensive, but relatively uninspired. Now we have "The Early Williamson" which is comparatively short, nothing like comprehensive (it contains only eleven short stories from the period - no novellas or novellettes) and of far poorer quality than either of the earlier two. Let us hope there are not many more volumes in this series.

SLAPSTICK by KURT VONNEGUT, Jr.: PANTHER: 1976: 186pp: 75p

For his central theme this time, Vonnegut has unearthed Plato's old notion (adequately refuted by Aristotle 2000 years ago) that all the problems of the world could be solved by creating large 'artificial' families (everyone with the same randomly-generated official Middle Name is related). On to this obsolete idea he has tacked a group of cardboard characters, an unimaginative scenario, and some flat prose broken into several short paragraphs, usually terminated by a banal "Hi Ho". The result is tedious.

SLAVE GIRL OF GOR by JOHN NORMAN: UNIVERSAL: 1977: 446pp: fl-25

Yet another Earth girl realises that her true destiny in life is to grovel in chains at the feet of a refugee from a Charles Atlas advertisement. Like other pornography, the lack of plot is irrelevant - if that's what turns you on, this'll turn you on.

LOGAN'S WORLD by WILLIAM F NOLAN: CORGI: 1978: 149pp: 70p

A motorcycle gang kidnaps Jessica, so Logan wipes them out, and then for good measure takes on a group attempting to revive the cities. The sequel has none of the qualities of the original, and is better ignored even by those who liked the film.

THE SATANISTS by ROBERT BLACK: FUTURA: 1976: 176pp: 75p

A novelisation of the film of the same name, this book is very much the run-of-the-mill Black Magic in Peaceful Village story - a cross between Dennis Wheatley and "Rosemary's Baby", but lacking the originality of either.

PLANETS FOR SALE by A.E. VAN VOGT & E. MAYNE HULL: PANTHER: 1943-47: 191pp:

A novelisation of five stories published in Astounding in the /75p: CF 1940s, by Edna Mayne Hull (Van Vogt's wife) though her name appears nowhere on the cover. They all concern the frontier territory of the Ridge Stars, a cluster far from Earth which is ruled by independent business 'operators', principally Artur Blord who provides the focus for the stories. They are standard products of the period, and cannot evoke more than the mildest enthusiasm.

SPACE COLONIES ed STEWART BRAND: PENGUIN: 1977: 162pp: £2-25: DD

An unusual and fascinating book, published jointly by Penguin and the Whole Earth Catalog, and compiled mainly from the US magazine "The CoEvolution Quarterly". The main purpose of the book is a discussion of the possibilities and problems of Gerard O'Neill's idea for orbiting space colonies. Unlike the other books on the subject, this one allows the reader to make up his own mind, presenting the arguments from both sides of the fence. Indeed, although the editor's initial reaction was in favour of the idea, the most convincing arguments in the book are presented in a six-page section in which T.A. Heppenheimer (who has written a book on the subject) presents the arguments and justifications, and is taken apart point by point and with meticulous detail by John Holt (which certainly changed my opinion). After a while the book leaves its original topic to cover discussion of Life on Mars, wristwatch radio transmitters and the whole philosophy of Space Travel. With its A4 format and small print (well broken by frequent illustrations) the book has as much material as a standard 600-page paperback and, despite the odd irrelevancy or idiocy maintains a very high level of information and informed discourse. I would recommend this very highly to anybody interested in the future of Space.

THE VISUAL ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION ed BRIAN ASH: PAN: 1978: 352pp: £5-50

It's big, glossy, and, initially, impressive. It's also a ^{/TW} gigantic rip-off. The book does not even attempt to act as an encyclopaedia but is rather based around a set of 19 topics (such as 'Warfare and Weaponry') within which there is a very brief introduction by a 'name' author (whose names are baaazoned everywhere as if they were real contributors) followed by several pages of chat by Ash, consisting mainly of title after title in endless lists. To this core is added six brief articles, by Edmund Cooper, George Turner, Damon Knight, De Camp & Ash (twice), which would have fitted better in a fanzine. There is a section on "Fandom and the Media", which is really too brief to be of any value, and a near useless (though eye-catching) "Program" supposedly listing major SF events from 1805-1977. The basic idea is not too bad, but unfortunately Ash, to use Jane Austen's words, is a "partial, prejudiced and ignorant historian". In addition the book has obviously been rushed into print - many of the illustrations are uncredited and the text is littered with errors and omissions (on the first page of information alone I discovered over 20). Sadly, the book does look impressive, and will probably make both Pan and Ash rich - and its readers ignorant.

STAR TREK INTERGALACTIC PUZZLES by JAMES RAZZI: BANTAM/CORGI: 1977: 128pp: £1-95

The book contains a very broad spectrum of puzzles - ranging from those requiring an intimate knowledge of the series (or the "Star Trek Concordance") to those needing only an application of logic, 'Vulcan' or otherwise. The tone of the book is frequently irritating, with comments like "if you've gotten this far, you're on a par with Mr Spock", and at least one of the 'logical' puzzles contains a contradiction the compiler has missed, but some of the puzzles are challenging and amusing and probably worth it for real addicts. (Pa)

STAR WARS BLUEPRINTS: BALLANTINE/FUTURA: 1978: £3-60

A collection of fifteen of the actual blueprints for some of the props in "Star Wars". Such a tiny selection from the thousands which must have been used can do little more than hint at the way some of the effects were done, and some of the comments such as "to be dressed with various greebllys" are totally incomprehensible, but even that much is of great interest to the real film buff.

EXPLORATIONS OF THE MARVELLOUS ed PETER NICHOLLS: FONTANA:1976:224pp:£1:KB

Here are the concrete results of the Science Fiction Foundation's one major contribution to the genre so far, the lecture series at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London in early 1975 on "Science Fiction and ...". The book contains transcripts of nine of the ten speeches given then (Alvin Toffler's could not be included for copyright reasons) plus an extra one from Philip K Dick, who was unable to attend through ill-health. Some of the pieces are outstanding. Ursula LeGuin takes a very close look at the possibility of characterisation in SF. Alan Garner presents a remarkable and deeply personal view of the forces that move, and threaten to destroy, the creative writer. Brunner provides a hilarious expose of some of the weirder offshoots of SF and the crasser idiocies within it. Dick provides a personal statement intended to supercede his famous "Android and the Human" speech, but unfortunately his new beliefs are far less approachable. Of similar quality are the pieces by Harrison (parallel worlds), Disch (bad SF) and Sheckley (the 'Search for the Marvellous'). Sadly less competent are the outsiders, Edward de Bono, John Taylor and Nicholls himself, each of whom seems primarily concerned with blowing his own trumpet, but these are too brief to mar an otherwise outstanding book.

STAR TREK FOTONOVEL 2: WHERE NO MAN HAS GONE BEFORE (by SAMUEL PEEPLES):

STAR TREK FOTONOVEL 3: THE TROUBLE WITH TRIBBLES (by DAVID GERROLD):

each BANTAM/CORGI: 1977: 160pp: 85p

The first fotonovel has apparently been selling well, so for many, 300 colour stills must be compensation enough for the cruelty done to plot, acting and dialogue. It is to be hoped that No. 2 will swiftly be buried in decent oblivion, like the pilot episode it recreates (no Sulu, no McCoy). However the tribbles will doubtless sell No. 3, even though the book doesn't purr. (Pa)

A HOUSE IN SPACE by HENRY COOPER Jr.: PANTHER: 1976: 156pp: 95p: MT

A book which succeeds despite itself. Henry Cooper's style is too journalistic for comfort at book-length, but his facts are accurate and the story of the Skylab missions is fascinating enough to overcome the barrier and make the book informative reading.

PERRY RHODAN 32: CHALLENGE OF THE UNKNOWN by CLARK DARLTON: ORBIT: 1973?

127pp: 70p: PJ

Hiding from the Arkonide Empire, Rhodan and buddies start wiping out the Mooffs, a race of telepathic jellyfish, just to pass the time. Well, it keeps them off the streets.

KEY TO ARTISTS

BF = Bob Fowke	DR = Dave Roe	MT = Mike Trim
BP = Bruce Pennington	DS = Darrell Sweet	P = Bob Pepper
BV = Boris Vallejo	HD = H.R. von Dongen	PA = Paul Alexander
CF = Chris Foss	JT = Justin Todd	PE = Peter Elson
CM = Chris Moore	KB = Keith Bowen	PG = Peter Goodfellow
DD = Don Davis	M = 'Melvyn'	PJ = Peter Jones
DE = Dean Ellis	MH = Michael Herring	MTW = Tim White
DJ = David Johnston		

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