

PPPP	AAA	PPPP	EEEEEE	RRRR	BBBB	AAA	CCCC	K	K
P P	A A	P P	E	R R	B B	A A	C	K	K
PPPP	AAAAA	PPPF	EEEE	RRRR	BBBB	AAAAA	C	KKK	
P	A A	P	E	R R	B B	A A	C	K	K
P	A A	P	EEEEEE	R R	BBBB	A A	CCCC	K	K

PPPP	AAA	RRRR	L	OOO	U	U	RRRR
P P	A A	R R	L	O O	U	U	R R
PPPP	AAAAA	RRRR	L	O O	U	U	RRRR
P	A A	R R	L	O O	U	U	R R
P	A A	R R	LLLLL	OOO	UUU		R R

August 1978

Vol II No 4

A bimonthly review of British paperback SF; published by Philip Stephensen-Payne.

Donated free to the BSFA. Otherwise 10p an issue or selected trade.
 Editorial Address: 'Lindon', 1, Lewell Avenue, Old Marston, OXFORD, OX3 0RL.

Through lack of time and space there's no editorial or Index of Books this time - apologies to anyone who misses them. I will pause only to thank my fellow reviewers, and to welcome the three of them here for the first time, Robin Marcus (RM), Philippa Grove-Stephensen(Pa), Mike Scott Rohan(MR), Deborah Hickenlooper(DH) and Rachel Vernon(RV), as well Keith Freeman forever duplicating.

- ** -

ORSINIAN TALES by URSULA LEGUIN: PANTHER: 1961-76: 175pp: 75p: PG

These eleven stories are not SF, but like LeGuin's other fiction they talk powerfully of the human spirit. Only in two of the stories do the characters overlap, but several are set in an unspecified east European country, which you may choose to think of as Orsinia. Its capital, Krasnoy, seems to embody the dullness, the oppressive forces of want and drabness against which the human spirit constantly has to struggle to achieve freedom, or beauty. In some of these stories small people win small victories - moments of joy or the consolations of companionship. "Conversations at Night", for example, tells of how Sanzo Chekey, poor and blind, finds love with Lisha, and how both acquire enough courage to take a long chance on happiness - knowing the gamble may fail. The failures too are recorded here, in "An Die Musik" a poor man with immense musical talent makes one effort to gain the recognition which will allow him to fulfill himself but, unable to compromise over his talent, he sinks into poverty which destroys him. "The Lady of Moge", on the other hand, is destroyed by safety and comfort, achieved at the cost of a forced compromise. LeGuin passes no judgements as she records the dark desperations which drive men to savagery ("The Barrow") or the moments of beauty which preserve the freedom of the spirit, even when not only body but mind must bow to captivity. These understated tales, with their carefully wrought detail and immense compassion, are a testament to LeGuin's imaginative power, craftsmanship and humanity. (Pa)

GATEWAY by FREDERIK POHL: BALLANTINE: 1977: 313pp: 75p: BV

Robinette Broadhead is a loser, and a coward. When he wins a lottery he decides to spend the money on a get-rich-quick scheme by shipping out to Gateway. For Gateway is a large asteroid full of alien spacecraft, and nobody knows how to navigate them. Volunteers choose a journey stick, man a ship, take the mystery trip out, observe what they can and then return to report - sometimes. In return Gateway pays them bonuses depending on the value of what was discovered and record the destination of each journey stick. Faced with the crews returning mad, dead or not at all, Broadhead discovers he cannot face the challenge and sits around waiting for the 'right' trip to come up. At the same time (to the reader) it is three years later and Broadhead is talking to a robot psychiatrist about the trip he finally took, and what happened. Pohl masterfully carries the two threads together to their different yet related climaxes. "Gateway" won him another, and well-deserved, Nebula this year, and proved he was still capable of much more than the banality of "Man Plus".

MISTRESS OF MISTRESSES by E.R. EDDISON: BALLANTINE: 1935: 401pp: £1-10: MT

The Mezentian Trilogy, of which this book was the first written, is a superbly extravagant heroic fantasy. It is also uncompromisingly philosophical, an offering to the Goddess all noble creatures serve, glorious Aphrodite who inspires all human beauty, be it of action or stasis. "Mistress of Mistresses" is set in the three adjacent realms of Mezria, Rerek and Fingiswold, uneasily united under the young and lovely Queen Antiope. Their governance is given over to an aristocracy greatly varied in temperament and sophistication; some, like the paragon Lessingham and Duke Barganax, brathing the highest aspirations of Renaissance Italy; others, particularly Horius Parry, the Queen's Vicar in Rerek, cast in the more wolfish mode of the Wars of the Roses. The crux of the plot lies in Lessingham's devotion to the rapacious Vicar (it takes three volumes properly to explain why), but more central is the gradual recognition of Lessingham and Barganax each in the other, and the more mysterious and complex identification of Antiope and Fiorinda, Barganax' adored mistress, with the Goddess Herself. The narrative is scarcely less involved, moving abruptly yet without jar from violent action to liesurely, jewelled description, Spinozan metaphysics or rapturous love scenes. The only constant is a sense of mirroring, of all the characters and events reflecting one another, potentially infinitely. In "Mistress of Mistresses" the Goddess has many magical servitors, but not the least is Eddison's majestically idiosyncratic prose, which refines his formidable material into an exquisite unity. (RM)

SUAINÉ AND THE CROW-GOD by STUART GORDON: NEL: 1975: 255pp: £1-35: IM

Despite the title this is a competent if characteristically idiosyncratic fahtasy. The plot tells of the 'supernatural' origins of Suaine's mother, who, we are told, has come through time to achieve the salvation of her people. Who they are (Atlanteans?), where their pride has bound them and how Suaine travels through the Moon and beyond, firstly on a mythic level and then seemingly through time to a realisation of who he is (a late 20th century figure) makes a complex and only just comprehensible story. Stuart Gordon's fine sense of atmosphere and background is in full play and his creations are largely compelling - but the reader may well end the book thoroughly bewildered. (Pa)

THE DROUGHT by J.G. BALLARD: PANTHER: 1965: 188pp: 80p: CF

A thin film of industrial pollution covers the sea, preventing evaporation. Gradually worldwide the rain stops and the land begins to dry up, turning into desert. Through this desiccated landscape wander the lost Doctor Ransom - who had found his soul in the river now vanished - the idiot Quilter, Jonas and his black suited fisherman, and other haunted & wraithlike figures. A compellingly bizarre book.

THE DEATH OF GRASS by JOHN CHRISTOPHER: SPHERE: 1956: 222pp: 85p

Christopher's most famous, and arguably best, science-fiction novel. A world-wide virus destroys all grasses, leading to mass starvation and death. The book follows a small group of survivors in England trying to find a permanent sanctuary. As always with Christopher the characters are vividly realised, the plot horrifyingly convincing, and the denouement bleakly satisfying. A shame he gave up the genre.

THE OMEN by DAVID SELTZER: FUTURA: 1976: 192pp: 75p

DAMIEN - OMEN II by JOSEPH HOWARD: FUTURA: 1978: 193pp: 75p

Slightly above average series about the birth of the AntiChrist in the 20th century, based on the films of the same name. The first sees the adoption, at birth, of the child by the American Ambassador in London and the consequent destruction of the family as they get in the way. In the next book the child, Damien, has moved to a rich uncle in the US and proceeds to destroy that family as well. Although over-gory, the books have a certain consistancy and rationale that make them just readable. There will probably be many sequels.

NOVELLA:3 by BEN BOVA: ORBIT: 1939-52: 159pp: 85p: CF

A third collection of three 'classic' novellas, again neglecting the unfamiliar for the common. The stories (Van Vogt's "Black Destroyer", William Tenn's "Firewater", Chandler's "Giant Killer") are each good, but are too readily available elsewhere to deserve reprinting here. Still, they'll probably sell the book.

BLACK HOLES ed JERRY POURNELLE: ORBIT: 1968-78: 334pp: 95p

An outstanding collection of stories and articles about black holes of one kind or another. Inevitably Larry Niven is represented, twice - with "The Hole Man" about murder and message transmission by black hole, and "The Borderland of Sol" where the hole becomes a method of piracy. There is the very moving "Kyrie" by Poul Anderson, illustrating poignantly the theory that an object falling into a black hole will seem, to an outside observer, to take forever to get there. (The same point is the centre of the less successful "Gloria" by Gail Kimberley). Pournelle himself, in "He Fell Into a Dark Hole" looks at the possible cause and uses of the bursts of energy emitted by black holes, while in "The Venging" by Greg Bear these bursts because the objects of devotion of an alien religion. Even Reginald Bretnor's Papa Schimmelhorn gets in on the act in "Papa Schimmelhorn's Yang", and Dian Girard heretically designs a new form of garbage disposal in "The Nothing Spot". As well as three other enjoyable stories and three poems, there are four articles (three by Pournelle and one by Robert Forward) lucidly explaining some of the background physics - as well as introducing the magician producing half the theories, Stephen Hawking, to whom the book is dedicated.

THE SHATTERED CHAIN by MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY: ARROW: 1976: 287pp: 95p: M

STAR OF DANGER by MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY: ARROW: 1965: 160pp: 95p: M

By tracing the fortune of a minor character who appears in both books, one can tell that "The Shattered Chain" is set a generation prior to "Star of Danger". However the main problem of the Darkover books is that Bradley did not originally conceive of a series, so that when (as in this case) two books were written years apart, the gains or losses of one generation seem to have had little effect on the next. Also the concerns of the earlier works are different from those of the more sophisticated books of recent years. "Star of Danger" is largely an adventure story of a young Terran and a Darkovan (Kennard Alton making his first appearance) - a friendship fated to have a vital effect on the history of Darkover. "The Shattered Chain" is a much more complex novel, centering on the 'Free Amazons' - an organisation of women dedicated to liberty and equality. It tells the stories of three women, one Terran and two contrasting Darkovans, which together explore the problems of a woman's position in a man's world. This is one of MZB's best books, with an interesting plot and well-portrayed background; and in Rohana Ardais she has created a woman to catch and hold the imagination. Unfortunately Arrow have chosen to issue these books with covers that are not only inaccurate, but even offensive to Darkover fans. (Pa)

DRUNKARD'S WALK by FREDERIK POHL: PANTHER: 1960: 133pp: 75p: RL

First published in 1960, and fairly good for the period. The characterisation is minimal, and the plot - Homo Superior planning to 'thin the herd' of Homo Sapiens, unmasked by an unworldly but astute mathematician - may have seemed new, once. The denouement, a sort of Drunkard's Chase, is potty enough to be enjoyable. Slight & dated, but good to read if you fancy some innocent fun. (DH)

THE STOCHASTIC MAN by ROBERT SILVERBERG: CORONET: 1975: 189pp: 80p

One of Silverberg's recent, disappointing novels. Lew Nichols makes a business of stochastic prediction - extrapolating trends mathematically to 'predict' the future - and is relatively content with his existence; until he meets Martin Carvajal. Carvajal seems able to 'see' the future directly, and is eager to teach Nichols to do the same. The book is very polished, as always with Silverberg these days, and has some very entertaining ideas. Overall, however, the story is rather listless and seems to wander aimlessly from episode to episode.

THE CABAL by SAUL DUNN: CORGI: 1978: 175pp: 75p: CA

Surprisingly enjoyable yarn about a criminal 'cabal' of five bizarre characters - Vandal, Pinball, Roatax, Faction and Weckold - who are the only people who can save Earth from invasion by the dreaded Calmaleso. The plot is ludicrous - as the five people outwit and conquer the invading fleet of one million spacecraft - but the characters themselves are marvellous, and some pieces of description (the first encounter with the Clock Man; the Bridges of Grief) are delightful.

THE SWORD OF SHANNARA by TERRY BROOKS: FUTURA: 1977: 726pp: £1-75: BH

In a post-atomic world of elves, dwarves and trolls, several thousand years in the future, Shea Ohmsford, half-elven, sets out reluctantly on a quest for the Sword of Shannara. Only he, as the last descendant of Jerle Shannara, can wield the sword which can break the power of the Warlock Lord, a renegade druid, and the forces of evil. With Shea goes a company of eight, including a dwarf, two elves, Shea's faithful foster brother, and Allanon, the powerful druid. All of which will sound familiar to readers of LOTR, but worse is to follow as episode after episode, and indeed the very structure of the book, has been plagiarised from Tolkien. This is especially unfortunate as Terry Brooks occasionally shows that he can invent original, and quite interesting, characters. At last, about halfway through the book the narrative becomes more original and picks up pace and excitement. When writing his own stories, Terry Brooks is well worth reading. (Pa)

STAR SONGS OF AN OLD PRIMATE by JAMES TIPTREE, JR.: BALLANTINE: 1969-76: 270pp: 75p: DS

There are times when it seems that Tiptree has fallen victim to her popularity, and strives too hard in an attempt to live up to her reputation. This is most evident in the longest story in this collection, "A Momentary Taste of Being", about a spacecraft searching out worlds for colonisation that finds something rather unexpected. The story is polished and peopled with Tiptree people and ideas, and would have made a marvellous 40-page novellette. However, Tiptree has spun it out to 100, and, sad to say, it becomes boring. Then there is "Houston, Houston, Do You Read", another polished tale but with an over-stated 'Women's Lib' theme that would be laughed at if the male/female roles were reversed, or if it were written by someone less famous than Tiptree. The collection is not all bad - "Your Haploid Heart" is a brilliant story about a very unusual method of reproduction; "The Psychologist Who Wouldn't Do Awful Things to Rats" a vivid Ellisonian view of vivisection; and "She Waits for All Men Born" a stark look at a new evolutionary step - but the overall reaction is one of disappointment.

THE GENESIS MACHINE by JAMES P HOGAN: BALLANTINE: 1978: 299pp: 80p

Brad Clifford, brilliant mathematician, has developed a new model for the creation of matter. Trying to pursue his research he runs into a wall of government resistance. Eventually Brad finds a loophole in the system and together with his friend and ally Aubrey Phillipsz - an equally brilliant applied physicist - sets out to make the machines which will test his theory. However, once the potential military use becomes obvious, officialdom again closes around them. The plot, though gripping, is not wholly convincing, and the characterisation is undistinguished - the splendid eccentricities of Aub Phillipsz partially compensate. The outstanding feature of the book is the scientific extrapolation which is masterly and pervasive; so pervasive that at times it seems to take over, but lovers of hard SF will find in Hogan a new leader of the field. (Pa)

FURY by HENRY KUTTNER: HAMLYN: 1947: 208pp: 80p

Mankind, having devastated the Earth in a nuclear holocaust, huddles in pressurised domes under the oceans of Venus. There they are ruled by the Immortals, a privileged minority of genetically mutated families. Into one such family is born Sam Harker. When his mother dies in childbirth his father takes revenge by 'mutilating' the child so that he looks like an ordinary mortal and then abandoning him. As Sam 'Reed' grows up his denied heritage subconsciously forces him to wage a single-handed war against the Immortals, even when he learns who he really is. A novel full of sound and fury, bleak but entertaining and still very healthy after 31 years.

THE LAST STARSHIP FROM EARTH by JOHN BOYD: PENGUIN: 1968: 182pp: 70p: PC

In a parallel world Haldane IV defies convention by falling in love with a student in a different course (he from Maths, she from Social Sciences). Although they try to keep the affair secret, they are betrayed to the State and exiled to the desolate planet of Hell. Parts of the book are inspired, but on the whole it seems very derivative and, at the end, implausible.

THE FURY by JOHN FARRIS: FUTURA: 1977: 341pp: 95p

The Tomorrow People strike again, with sex and violence added. In spite of all this its quite compulsive reading for those who like the genre. (RV)

THE BICENTENNIAL MAN by ISAAC ASIMOV: PANTHER: 1966+76: 254pp: 85p: CF

At times Asimov's fame and popularity have seemed to exceed his ability, allowing him to pass off substandard material while resting on the laurels of "Nightfall" and the 'Foundation' trilogy. Here at last is some fresh evidence of the ability that won him that reputation - in particular the title story, which is possibly the best he has ever written. Set in his familiar field of robotics it looks at the problem of an intelligent robot, Andrew Martin, who wants to be accepted as a man, and the sacrifices he must make to claim his humanity. The plot is not startlingly innovative but Asimov has, for once, created a really convincing character in Martin, and the reader rapidly becomes involved in his troubles. An earlier story dealing with a similar topic is "That Thou Art Mindful of Him", where a pair of robots try to settle the implied question of the title ("But What is Man?") with unsettling - though very logical - conclusions. Several of the other stories are also robotic in theme - "Feminine Intuition" which sees the return of Susan Calvin, in an advisory capacity; "The Tercentenary Incident" about a novel security measure to protect the President; "The Life and Times of Multivac" about a fight for freedom - whatever that means. The other six stories are somewhat slighter, but none are objectionable, and Asimov's interlaced chat is, as usual, entertaining. A very strong collection - one to rival even "Nightfall and other stories".

THE DAY OF THEIR RETURN by POUL ANDERSON: CORGI: 1975: 207pp: 85p: BP

Loosely a sequel to "The Rebel Worlds", but without Pbandry. Whilst rumours multiply that the Elder Race will return and redeem Aeneas, Ivar, heir to the leadership of that harsh and intriguing planet, but now a fugitive following an abortive strike against the Terran Empire, roves among its peoples. Meantime the humane, introspective Terran Commissioner Chunderban Desai seeks to find and reconcile him, while other off-worlders pursue their hidden purposes. An easy, entertaining book, competent rather than brilliant. (RM)

THE FENRIS DEVICE by BRIAN STABLEFORD: PAN: 1974: 156pp: 60p

SWAN SONG by BRIAN STABLEFORD: PAN: 1975: 158pp: 60p

The fifth and sixth 'Hooded Swan' adventures. In "The Fenris Device" dour, cynical Grainger is once again bullied into trying the near impossible by the man who owns his soul, and once again has to be helped out, in extremis, by the alien who shares his mind. In "Swan Song", having left Charlot and the 'Hooded Swan', he finds that the outside world is as unpleasant as Charlot's service and returns to the 'Hooded Swan' for a rescue mission which only he and that ship can perform - if anyone can. In Grainger Stableford has created a real individual, largely avoiding psychological cliches. Though none of the books in this series (of which these are the last) is much more than a competent adventure story, the ups and downs (through to the bitter-sweet ending) of Grainger's relationship to "the Wind" in particular and the rest of the world in general, give these books a touch of class. (Pa)

ANCIENT, MY ENEMY by GORDON R DICKSON: SPHERE: 1951-69: 253pp: 95p: CF

A book worth reading, if only for the title story - which is one of Dickson's best. Short but complex, it tells of the conflict on a backwoods planet between Kiev Archad and the native Hehog, who is convinced that it is his destiny to be killed by Kiev. The stark reality of the story and the bleak inevitability of the ending combine to make a powerful tale. None of the other eight stories reach the same standard - but some are certainly good - "The Bleak and Barren Land" about the conflict between technology and 'magic'; "In the Bone" on the effective ruthlessness of man as a species; "The Odd Ones" in which mankind is unknowingly judged by the delightful Lut and Snorap. Dickson is definitely an author who bears watching.

DAMNATION ALLEY by ROGER ZELAZNY: SPHERE: 1969: 157pp: 85p: S

Roger Zelazny's classic post-holocaust adventure reissued to tie in with the recent film. Hell Tanner, ex-Hell's Angel, has to cross a ravaged and radioactive America to take some vital serum to Boston. The story is light, fast-paced fun, though this edition is ruined by an appalling 'film' cover which bodes ill for the book's transference to the screen.

THE OPHIUCHI HOTLINE by JOHN VARLEY: ORBIT: 1977: 237pp: 85p

One of the first of the Quantum SF series - books 'selected by Isaac Asimov and Ben Bova' - "The Ophiuchi Hotline" is a very competent first novel. Six hundred years in the future mankind is perched precariously on the Moon and a few scattered colonies in the Solar System - the Earth having been devastated by the mysterious "Invaders" now settled on Jupiter. For the last four hundred years mankind has also been listening to information broadcast, apparently, from the Ophiuchi star system, gaining immense technological information from the small pieces they can decode. The novel deals with Lilo, a renegade geneticist employed by 'Boss' Tweed (sic) to help in a project to defeat the Invaders, and her subsequent rebellion. As with many first novels, the book suffers from over-complexity (in addition to the above, there is a lot on cloning) and inexperience, but apart for that it is really very good.

IN THE OCEAN OF NIGHT by GREGORY BENFORD: ORBIT: 1972-77: 333pp: 95p: PJ

Nigel Walmsley, the first man to explore an alien spacecraft, becomes convinced that the salvation of an over-crowded and sadly polluted world lies in the knowledge to be gained from such contact. Twice he risks the safety of the globe - or so his superiors think - to find that knowledge, but gains only frustration. Then the remains of a third craft are found on the Moon and Nigel finds an answer, but not the one he expected. The book well conveys the frustration and disappointment as twenty years go by and nothing is achieved, but there is much more as other plot strands - the involvement of the New Sons of God for instance - add initially to the interest, but later to the frustration of the reader trying to work out what it all adds up to. The book is clever and convincing, but at some crucial points is also incomprehensible. (Pa)

TRAVELLING TOWARDS EPSILON ed MAXIM JAKUBOWSKI: NEL: 1956-75: 288pp: £1-15: JP

An uneven collection of modern French SF. Prize of the book must be Jacques Sternberg's brief "How's Business?" about a planet where soap-making is carried to perfection - as an art rather than a business. There is also Gefard Klein's moving "Jonah" concerning the only man who can tame the Leviathans of Outer Space. "Delta" by Christine Renard & Claude Cheinisse imagines vividly a society where three sexes are necessary for a marriage. "Thomas" by Dominique Douay looks curiously at the man destined to rule the world. On the whole the other ten stories are much poorer, but the book is of mild interest to those interested in foreign SF.

SCIENCE FICTION ed JAMES GIBSON: JOHN MURRAY: 1896-1957: 120pp: 60p: GW

Other than labelling this book as part of "The Short Story Series", there is no publisher's blurb, introduction, story notes or anything to indicate the rationale behind the selection of these eleven stories. Each of them is good, though not outstanding, and the choice is very eccentric - ranging from George Griffith's "The Raid of Le Vengeur" to Philip Dick's "Impostor", with two stories by John Christopher, yet none, for example, by John Wyndham. With some notes, explanation, or bibliography it might have been entertaining - without them its eminently ignorable.

SHOCK 2 by RICHARD MATHESON: SPHERE: 1952-62: 157pp: 85p

A collection of 13 well-crafted stories, some touching, some humorous, and a few decidedly blood-chilling. The worst of the horror comes from Matheson's perception of what men can inflict on each other in their ignorance and cruelty. Many of these stories will be familiar to anthology readers, for example the funny "A Flourish of Strumpets" and the rather horrid "Graveyard Shift". The collection highlights Matheson's ability to tell a neatly pointed tale, though none of these stories are as masterly as "Hell House". (Pa)

THX 1138 by Ben Bova: PANTHER: 1971: 157pp: 75p

Novelisation of the screenplay of George Lucas' first (SF) film about a bleak future where everybody is controlled by drugs and monitored by the police. It made a mildly entertaining film, but a relatively boring book.

FAR OUT by DAMON KNIGHT: MAGNUM: 1949-60: 223pp: 90p: CM

Another 13 of Knight's short stories. For the 50s they are all quite competent, but none are outstanding and they seem very dated today, even the classics like "Babel II" and "Idiot Stick".

WIND FROM THE ABYSS by JANET E MORRIS: BANTAM: 1978: 339pp: 85p

At the end of the second Silistra novel Estri, the sexy but far from stupid daughter of a World-Shaper, is captured by a hitherto unknown relative Khys, Dharen of Silistra, absolute ruler of the planet. He declares all her prior adventures merely the result of his 'hesting' or manipulation of future probabilities, and strips her of power and memory. Khys dominates book three, "Wind from the Abyss", though all the earlier protagonists are caught up in the author's highly competent plot intricacies. Despite a long very boring opening section the book does eventually gather momentum - abduction, intrigue and outright conflict climaxing in a rather good family quarrel on the planet Estri herself had once called into existence and its violent repercussions for Silistra. The reflective but illuminating closing chapters neatly round off the trilogy while leaving room for further developments. (RM)

ECOTOPIA by ERNEST CALLENBACH: PLUTO PRESS: 1975: 167pp: £1-20: BS

In 1980 the West Coast states of the USA declared Independence and for 20 years have remained in near-total isolation from the rest of the continent. "Ecotopia", the new state, is dedicated to a 'stable-state' ecology and economy and has also developed a radical social system - in fact a complete Alternate Society. Now, on the brink of the 21st century, Will Weston, the USA's top journalist, is going to Ecotopia to tell the still 'consumer' society of America what this largely unknown country is really like. The book is half his private diary on that trip, and half the reports he sends back. Predictably the book is a conservationist's dream, but although the numerous arguments that Callenbach uses are well-put, they do not create a living atmosphere. This does not matter so much in the 'journalist' pieces - they are convincing as newspaper articles - but the 'diary' sections give an appallingly naive account of a dreadfully predictable story. (Pa)

THE CONDITION OF MUZAK by MICHAEL MOORCOCK: FONTANA: 1977: 272pp: 95p: BS

For this fourth and 'last' of the Jerry Cornelius quartet, Moorcock won the 1977 Guardian Fiction Prize which, though a little surprising, is not undeserved. It is the most polished, and most approachable, of the Cornelius books providing some explanation for the series in general. Moorcock suggests, through two characters' conversation, that Cornelius represents a radically different look at the technological twentieth century - he is a character uniquely at one with the technology and industrialisation, rather than marvelling at mechanistic wonders or pining for ecological primitivism. The book still will not appeal to many, but it is probably the easiest, and most rewarding, introduction to Cornelius.

FLUKE by JAMES HERBERT: NEL: 1977: 191pp: 80p: BM

A delightful novel, showing that Herbert has more in him than the standard 'nasty'. From the day he was born, Fluke realised there was more to him than just being a dog - he had vague memories of a 'before', when he was something else. Gradually as he grows older his memory strengthens and he remembers part of his previous life as a man and sets out to find his ex-family. Herbert blends a careful mixture of humour - as Fluke learns to become a dog - and seriousness - as he strives to retain his humanity - and portrays the world of dogs with imaginative flair.

STAR TREK 12 by JAMES BLISH & J.A. LAWRENCE: CORGI: 1977: 177pp: 90p

When James Blish died he left Star Trek 12 uncompleted; since then Judith Lawrence has finished the remaining two stories. The adaptations are as competent as ever, and it is impossible to tell where the authorship changes. On the other hand the episodes in this volume were not the most enthralling ones and they remain rather dull. However there are a useful pair of appendices, listing the episodes alphabetically, and the contents of each of the books. (Pa)

THE BLOODSTAR CONSPIRACY by STEPHEN GOLDIN (& E.E. SMITH): PANTHER: 1978: 158pp: 65p: CF

Yvette D'Alembert finally marries Pias Baval and they go to his home for a honeymoon. The reception is not all they might wish so, booted off the planet, they single-handedly take over a pirate ship that happens to be passing. Meanwhile Yvette's brother Jules is yet again outwitting the 'cosmos-spanning conspiracy' organised by Lady A. The predictability of the series is becoming tedious.

NEBULA AWARD STORIES 11 ed URSULA K LEGUIN: CORGI: 1974/5: 253pp: 95p

A good year for award winners. The novella award went to Roger Zelazny for "Home is the Hangman", a moving story of the robot returned from space to claim his heritage from his designer. The novellette category was won by the late Tom Reamy for "San Diego Lightfoot Sue", a touching tale of two lovers and the desperate attempt to cross the 30 years of age that separate them. Best short story was Fritz Leiber's amusing "Catch That Zeppelin", another parallel world tale. Also in the collection are Joe Haldeman's imaginative "End Game" (the conclusion of "The Forever War"), P.J. Plauger's "Child of all Ages" about an unusual immortal, and Harlan Ellison's bizarre "Shatterday" where a man suddenly encounters himself. The only disappointing items are Craig Strete's "Time Deer" and the essays by Peter Nichols and Vonda McIntyre.

MIDWORLD by ALAN DEAN FOSTER: ORBIT: 1975: 213pp: 85p: PJ

In the middle of a tropical forest $\frac{1}{2}$ mile tall, mankind has carved itself a precarious niche. The descendants of a crashed colony ship, regressed almost to savagery, live in harmony with the creatures and plants around them. The equilibrium is shattered one day by the arrival from the sky of a gleaming metal sphere with a couple of people in it. Born, the dreamer of the tribe, agrees to guide the pair through the thick forest to their 'Station', but even he is unprepared for the alien ways and beliefs of the strangers, who ultimately become his enemy. The story is somewhat naive, but the ecology is fascinating, and some of the questions raised relevant.

WHEN THE WORLD SHOOK by H.RIDER HAGGARD: BALLANTINE: 1918: 338pp: 65p: MH

Out-of-copyright fantasy writers with enormous outputs make good publishing business, and Haggard is among the best. His plots and characters do repeat themselves, self-sacrificing young women popping up with sado-masochistic regularity, but his imagination is genuinely powerful. Here his gallant explorers turn up a couple of survivors of a great global civilisation, its demi-god ruler and his (eventually self-sacrificing) daughter. There is some good old World War I Hun-bashing, but if this and similar symptoms of the time don't worry you, you'll have a 'thundering good read'. (MR)

THE PEOPLE OF THE MIST by H.RIDER HAGGARD: BALLANTINE: 1894: 365pp: 70p: DS

The characters are all from the stock Rider Haggard mould - the proud and very beautiful woman; the noble and handsome man; the faithful but stupid black servant. The situations - misfortune leading a man with a Quest to Africa; the rescue from evil slavers; the hunt after fabulous jewels belonging to a lost race - are equally unsurprising. So, like most formula novels, this book will satisfy those after "another Rider Haggard" and disappoint those after something original or different. (Pa)

THE WORLD'S DESIRE by H.RIDER HAGGARD & ANDREW LANG: BALLANTINE: 1890: 238pp: 60p: MH

Not quite the usual Haggard, largely due to the co-authorship of Andrew Lang, the famous authority on myth and fairy-tale (and who is acknowledged in only $\frac{1}{4}$ inch letters on the cover). Unfortunately it's also less readable, being entirely in a pseudo-biblical archaic style which is as musty as a boarding-house aspidistra. It mixes the Odysseus legend, much kicked about, with that of the Egyptian Helen, built up into a kind of eternal female, the "World's Desire". Despite occasional bursts of turgid poetry and tedious philosophising, it has moments of genuine power. (MR)

DEUS IRAE by PHILIP K DICK & ROGER ZELAZNY: SPHERE: 1976: 220pp: 95p

Tibor McMasters, limbless artist, journeys in search of Carl Lufteufel, the man who started World War III. For the Servants of Wrath, a burgeoning post-cataclysm sect of the gloomiest variety, require a portrait of their god. The leftover machines and assorted mutants he meets are appropriately macabre, the humour suitably dark - but only in the denouement of its rambling plot does the book rise above the self-indulgent. (RM)

WARLORDS OF ATLANTIS by PAUL VICTOR: FUTURA: 1978: 158pp: 75p

Reading as though it were written by the special effects department, this book-of-the-film lacks a convincing plot, internal consistency and any sort of characterisation. Unfortunately as the girl was left behind in the asteroid-under-the-sea we stand in grave danger of a sequel. (Pa)

THE HISTORY OF THE SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE: PART TWO: 1936-1945 ed MICHAEL ASHLEY:
NEL: 1936-45: 298pp: £1-50

The second volume of Mike Ashley's sterling history. As before the book begins with a long (75 page) introduction on the history of SF mags in the given ten years, fascinating as ever, and concludes with ten very useful bibliographies of ten representative authors during the period. Sandwiched between the two are ten stories, one from each featured author. Unfortunately, in striving to avoid the familiar, Mike Ashley has dug out relatively poor samples, even for the period. An invaluable book for the serious collector, but of little interest to the casual reader.

FUTURE PERFECT ed H. BRUCE FRANKLIN: OUP: 1966: 404pp: £2-95: DL

An attempt to look at American nineteenth century SF and to make a few points about major authors of the period via their excursions into the genre. A couple of the stories are worth reading. Edgar Allan Poe's "Mellonta Tauta" takes a delightfully sarcastic look at contemporary philosophy from the hindsight of the 29th century. Melville's "The Bell Tower" is a fascinatingly stark parable of man's striving against Fate. The rest however are relatively uninspired and Mr Franklin's dry, and often inchoate, introductions only make the book more tedious, even to the student.

RAVEN 2: A TIME OF GHOSTS by RICHARD KIRK: CORGI: 1978: 203pp: 80p: CA

More unexceptional sword and sorcery. This time Raven has to release her friend Gondar Lifebane from suspicion of kidnapping, save the Altanate from invasion and do battle again with weaponmaster Donwayne and the evil sorcerer Belthis. There are a few flashes of imagination, but generally the book remains dull.

THE GREEN MAN by KINGSLEY AMIS: PANTHER: 1969: 175pp: 95p

Maurice Allingham knows that his coaching inn, "The Green Man", has not been haunted for years, though the ghost of the sinister Dr Underwood used to walk there, so when he starts seeing ghosts he tries to investigate. Unfortunately Maurice is a known alcoholic, so his 'apparitions' are dismissed as delirium tremens by everyone else. Maurice's investigations and their bizarre results are told with Amis' ironic appreciation of the escatological. It seems likely that the intellectual force behind the book would yield more dividends after a second reading, if only one could face Maurice Allingham again. (Pa)

CAPRICORN ONE by BERNARD L. ROSS & PETER HYAMS: FUTURA: 1978: 219pp: 80p

A wish-fulfillment plot at once megalomaniac and banal: the US Space Program is rotten to the core and only the courage and cleverness of a young newsman (in the face of the Mafia, the FBI, NASA and the Networks) can lay bare its slimy heart. This implausible lark is graced with much easy cynicism, cheap moralising, an indulgent ethnic charity that makes the teeth hurt and extremely clumsy writing. The most appropriate response to "Capricorn One" is to drop it in the bath. (DH)

STAR TREK FOTONOVEL 4: A TASTE OF ARMAGEDDON: BANTAM: 1978: 160pp: 85p

These best-selling Fotonovels have been hailed as "superb mementoes" of the episodes. Unfortunately the choice of colour stills, the presentation of the dialogue and especially the interpolated comments tend also to emphasise the worst aspects of the series. (Pa)

PERRY RHODAN 34: SOS: SPACESHIP TITAN by KURT BRAND: ORBIT: 1973: 123pp: 70p: AM

PERRY RHODAN 35: BEWARE THE MICROBOTS by KURT MAHR: ORBIT: 1973: 123pp: 70p: AM

Having been almost defeated by a horde of deadly teddy-bears in PR34, Rhodan looks for a foe nearer his size and in PR35 picks on a group of two-inch long robot insects - and almost loses. The first book, for some weird reason, also contains two trivial short stories & part 3 of a serial- all nothing to do with Rhodan.

THE OIL HEIST by W.A. HARBINSON: CORGI: 1978: 188pp: 85p

Four years in the future a group of terrorists capture one of the North Sea oil rigs and threaten to explode a nuclear device (which will destroy the rig and much of the oil field) if their demands are not met. Almost singlehandedly, Ricketts, an English 'toolpusher', defies and then defeats them. The plot is corny but fast-moving, and occasionally thought-provoking.

FUTURE FACTS by STEPHEN ROSEN: CORGI: 1976: 535pp: £1-95

An amazing compendium of things recently discovered or developed that might become part of everyday life in 10-100 years time. Mr Rosen has collated information on over 200 items ranging from self-lighting cigarettes to thermonuclear fusion, each piece containing a short description of the subject, (usually) an associated illustration, and a brief comment from the author on the social implications/impact. The style is immensely readable and informative, and the book has an excellent index, making this a welcome addition to any reference shelf.

A FIELD GUIDE TO THE LITTLE PEOPLE by NANCY ARROWSMITH & GEORGE MOORSE: PAN: 1977: 297pp: 95p

The authors have gathered together a fair amount of folk material on some 80 supernatural beings from across Europe, producing entires that make fascinating reading with their description of the natural 'habitat' and physical appearance of many assorted varieties of elves, often with illustrative tales. Their division into 'light elves', 'dark elves' and 'dusky elves' seemd to be rather arbitrary, and the illustrations are decidedly uninspired. For those wanting information on the range of European elves this book will be useful, though not as comprehensive or well written as Katherine Briggs survey of Britain in "A Dictionary of Fairies". (Pa)

PLEASE EXPLAIN by ISAAC ASIMOV: CORONET: 1973: 191pp: 85p

For a number of years Asimov ran a column in Science Digest, answering briefly any general scientific questions put to him. In this book he has collected 100 of the more interesting, forming a compilation both fascinating and informative.

SGI-FI NOW by ALAN FRANK: OCTOPUS: 1978: 80pp: £1-95

Theoretically a survey of science fiction films in the last 10 years ("2001" to "Star Wars") this book is as uninspiring as its appalling title implies. Alan Frank is no expert in the field and, judging by the brief, often inaccurate, summaries given to them, appears not even to have seen some of the more important films (e.g. "Solaris", "Man Who Fell to Earth"). Of those covered more fully, his evaluation is intensely and uncritically personal, overderiding ambitious films he disliked ("Zardoz will remain rubbish - on a monumental scale") while raving for columns over trivia like "It's Alive" or "Horror Express".. The glossy pictures aren't worth it.

TEACUP FORTUNE-TELLING by JO SHERIDAN: MAYFLOWER: 1978: 109pp: 65p

Most of this book is taken up with a dictionary of the symbols used in reading tea leaves and their interpretations, which appears comprehensive. Also included is a chapter on how to give a reading from the tea-leaves, with some encouraging examples. The only thing lacking is instructions on how to tell which patterns the leaves have drawn - telling a rabbit from a hare could be important as they have very different meanings. (Pa)

MAN AND THE STARS by DUNCAN LUNAN: CORGI: 1974: 400pp: £1-25

For the most part a portentous but rather lightweight book about travelling to OUT THERE (part one) and contact with THEM (part two); what originality it had has faded since its first appearance in 1974. Mr Lunan has done an admirable job of collating his many sources, but the science ranges from the superficial to the suspect. The last 100 pages venture into Daniken territory, perpetuating some of von D8s classic howlers, and attempting to use modern pyramidology in the interpretation of some radio signal echoes recorded haphazardly in 1928/9 to reveal the presence of a probe from Epsilon Bootes. I don't believe a word of it -- no probe could be that damn silly. (MR)

KEY TO ARTISTS

AM = Angus McKie	CM = Chris Moore	M = 'Melvyn'
BH = The Brothers Hildebrandt	DL = David Laufer	MH= Michael Herring
BM = Bob Martin	DS = Darrell Sweet	MT = Murray Tinkelman
BP = Bruce Pennington	GW = Guy Wyndham-Jones	PC = Peter Cross
BS = Bill Sanderson	IM = Ian Miller	PG = Peter Goodfellow
CA = Chris Achilleos	JP = Joe Petagno	PJ = Peter Jones
CF = Chris Foss		S = Seito

BOOKS NOT RECEIVED FOR REVIEW

MIRKHEIM by POUL ANDERSON: SPHERE

A TORRENT OF FACES by JAMES BLISH & NORMAN KNIGHT: ARROW

MISSION TO UNIVERSE by GORDON DICKSON: SPHERE

GUNPOWDER GOD by H. BEAM PIPER: SPHERE

PERRY RHODAN 36: MAN AND MONSTER by K.H. SCHEER: ORBIT