

PPPP	AAA	PPPP	EEEEEE	RRRR	BBBB	AAA	CCC	K	K
P P	A A	P P	E	R R	B B	A A	C C	K	K
PPPP	AAAAA	FFFF	EEEE	RRRR	BBBB	AAAAA	C	KKK	
P	A A	P	E	R R	B B	A A	C C	K	K
PP	AA AA	PP	EEEEEE	R R	BBBB	AA AA	CCC	K	K

PPPP	AAA	RRRR	LL	OOO	UU UU	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
IP	AA AA	R R	LLLLL	OOO	UUU	R R

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Back to normal this issue, with editorial and index restored, the latter missed more than the former I suspect. A regrettable number of typographical errors again this issue, I'm afraid -- I seem always to have been on the point of falling asleep as I typed. Hopefully the result is still sufficiently legible.

A few more artists identified on II.4 -- thanks as always to Tim Pickard for his assistance-- "Black Holes" ed Pournelle -- Anthony Roberts; "The Stochastic Man" by Silverberg -- Jim Burns?; "The Fenris Device" and "SwanSong" by Stableford and "Nebula Award Stories 11" -- Angus Mc Kie; "The Ophiuchi Hotline" by Varley -- Chris Foss; "Star Trek 12" ed Blish -- S. Fantoni (alias Eddie Jones). Orbit have adopted a policy of naming artists in their Newsletters (I don't know why they won't credit them on covers, but it's better than nothing) -- leaving Pan, Corgi and Sphere as the major offenders remaining. Anyone with time for a letter might care to write to the Press Officers there to try to persuade them. While you're at it, how about trying to persuade them that the bleary messes Joe Petagno produces do justice to no book and can only hurt sales -- he's ruined another good book this issue ("Odd John") -- are Art Directors devoid of taste?

I must also express my disgust at the publication of "The Black Moon" by Saul Dunn & Corgi -- a blatant attempt to sell a crummy early novel on the strength of a totally unconnected series. Does the Trades Description Act cover such misdirection?

Anyway, time left just to thank my fellow reviewers -- Robin Marcus (RM), Philippa Grove-Stephenson (Pa), Mike Scott Rohan (MR) and Deborah Hickenlooper (DH); Thanks also to Keith Freeman for the duplicating, and to Greg Hills for suggested 'improvements' in the masthead (see above) -- I don't know yet if I like them.

#### KEY TO ARTISTS

BF = Bob Fowke	FB = Frank Bellamy	FB = Paul Bowden
BE = Bob Haberfield	GD = Gino D'Achille	FC = Peter Cross
BP = Bob Parkin	GW = Gilbert Williams	PE = Peter Elson
BT = Bill Taylor	HD = H.R. Van Dongen	PG = Peter Gudynas
BV = Bob Venosa	JB = Jim Burns	PGf = Peter Goodfellow
CA = Chris Achilleos	JBt = John Butler	IJ = Peter Jones
CAM = Candy Amsden	JF = Joe Petagno	RM = Rodney Matthews
CF = Chris Foss	KF = Frank Kelly Froas	RMc = Ralph McQuarrie
CH = Colin Hay	M = 'Melvyn'	S = Satty
CM = Cliff McReynolds	MF = Michael Freeman	TR = Tony Roberts

LORD FOUL'S BANE by STEPHEN DONALDSON: FONTANA: 1977: 446pp: £1-25: PGf

THE ILLEARTH WAR by STEPHEN DONALDSON: FONTANA: 1977: 479pp: £1-25: PGf

THE POWER THAT PRESERVES by STEPHEN DONALDSON: FONTANA: 1977: 447pp: £1-25: PGf

Thomas Covenant, a young highly successful author, was shattered to find he had leprosy. After six months in a leprosarium, he returns to his home town, only to find himself an outcast. After a strange, cryptic encounter with an old beggar, he finds himself in another world, in the presence of an evil power calling himself Lord Foul the Despiser, who gives Covenant a message to "the Lords". Covenant 'wakes' to find himself in 'the Land', a world he neither knows nor understands, reluctantly carrying not only the message but also, in the form of his white-gold wedding ring a powerful "wild magic" which neither he, nor anyone else, knows how to use. Eventually Covenant reaches the Lords only to find himself caught up in the consequences of his message - the quest for the Staff of Law, which forms the second half of the first book, at the end of which he is returned to his own world. Twice more he is summoned to the Land by those who hope to use his wild magic to win their war against Lord Foul, and Covenant, treated as a Lord himself because of his ring, reluctantly allows himself to become involved in the struggle.

This mammoth trilogy has several features common to this type of fantasy - powerful Lords, a beautiful land, a strong city under siege, a war against a master evil, a quest etc. etc. Sometimes Donaldson's imagination lets him down and the result is a stock image or situation, and occasionally it runs away with him and the result is far-fetched (the Sprites) or twee (the initial impression of the Giants), but for the most part he conveys a clear and thoroughly integrated view of his fantasy world. His story is also, generally speaking, well told, though some incidents seem inserted without adequate preparation, and his grasp of the tale is large enough in scope to match the high and dangerous matters in which he deals. Most especially he is not afraid of the shattering effects that such events have on the innocent: there is much that is bleak and terrible, especially in the last volume, which rings very true - a war that is destroying the foundations of a world would, one feels, have consequences this grim.

But, in the end, these books stand or fall on the character of Thomas Covenant - their greatest strength and their greatest weakness. For most of these 1400 pages Covenant tries to stay uninvolved - even with the consequences of his own action or inaction. For him this world with its burgeoning health and cure for leprosy is a dangerous self-delusion, a fantasy world dreamed up by himself in an attempt to escape his illness, his powerlessness and his ostracism. So he calls himself "The Unbeliever" - having also lost his faith both in humanity and in himself. Covenant's fight with himself over the reality of the Land, over the harm which his attitude does and over the devotion which he most unwillingly receives forms a major strand of the book. Donaldson's inexperience at presenting character make all this seem at first like self-pity, pettishness or even downright stupidity; and one's lack of awareness of Covenant's problems can at first seriously disrupt one's reactions to the first book. Later comprehension grows, and with it compassion for this near tragic figure. He does stand at the centre of these books, and the flaws in him and his presentation may reasonably repel some readers, but for most the pace of the story and the power of Donaldson's vision will propel them through "The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant, the Unbeliever". (Pa)

THE PLAGUE DOGS by RICHARD ADAMS: PENGUIN: 1977: 460pp: 95p: JEt

After two brilliant novels, Mr Adams seems to have decided he doesn't have to woo his public any more, and has produced a fatally flawed book. "The Plague Dogs" has three basic faults. Firstly, Adams preaches - about animal experiments - to a degree obstructive to the book. Secondly, he exhibits a tendency to ramble, spending pages eulogising the Lake District for instance - a procedure with much historical precedent, but irritating for all that. Most destructive, however, is his excessive use of local dialect for the main characters. Few books could survive the effort of translating sentences like "Just tappy lappy doon th' bankside an' grab it b' th' chollers cot c' th' hirscl" every paragraph or so, and on top of the other problems it makes the whole book a tedious drudge. Parts of the book are good, and the interior illustrations by A. Wainwright were an inspiration - but it's not really worth reading.

LAST AND FIRST MEN by OLAF STAPLEDON: MAGNUM: 1930: 314pp: £1-25: PGf

LAST MEN IN LONDON by OLAF STAPLEDON: MAGNUM: 1932: 269pp: £1-25: PGf

ODD JOHN by OLAF STAPLEDON: MEL: 1935: 190pp: 95p: JF

In his lifetime, Olaf Stapledon published only five major novels, and yet with those few he left a lasting mark on the field of science fiction. To find three of them reprinted in the same month is a treat. "Last and First Men" takes a cosmic view of the evolution of man from the present (1930) to the year 2,000,000,000 when the last vestiges of man wait on the icy wastes of Neptune for the death of the Sun. After some inaccurate prophecies of the near future, Stapledon traces the development of our current civilisation to its inevitable downfall several thousand years in the future, the rise of the civilisation of the Second Men, the invasion of the Martians, the rise and fall of the Third Men, and so on through Man's transformation and migration to Venus and, ultimately, to Neptune where the narrator, a member of the Eighteenth Human Species, sits recording Mankind's history. In "Last Men in London" Stapledon narrows his vision and, using the same Neptunian narrator, investigates the Earth of the early twentieth century, particularly the follies of the First World War, tracing mainly the adventures of his hero Paul, but expanding at times to a more general view of mankind. Finally, in "Odd John", Stapledon restricts his scope even further to examine one character, John Wainwright, Homo Superior, and his struggle to come to terms with twentieth century humanity. It is a far lighter book than the other two, and is alone in having a plot, but is also concerned with examining the shortcomings of mankind. Stapledon's thesis throughout is that Mankind, though capable of individual grandeur (Paul, as influenced by his Neptunian 'parasite') and of eventual racial harmony (the Eighteenth Men), is too blinded by rages and petty jealousies to survive in his current form. Ever the philosopher, Stapledon presents a refreshingly sane view (especially in "Last Men in London") of how life should and can be run. Remarkable for their insight, imagination and innovation, this trio of books deserves close attention, despite their often turgid style - and let us hope it is not long before "The Star Maker" and "Sirius" are again in print.

THE THREE DAMOISELS by VERA CHAPMAN: MAGNUM: 1976: 352pp: £1-25: PGf

Here are three Arthurian fantasies in one volume. The first is a retelling of "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight", the other two are based on Malory, telling the story of Lynet and the end of the Arthurian age. Vera Chapman invents a number of characters not to be found in Malory, notably Ursulet, Arthur's daughter and heroine of the third story. These stories are a little too slight, and the connection between the first and the others is a little forced, but on the whole they are honest and straightforward renderings, true to the spirit of the originals. They are also well thought out, if not sparkingly original. (Pa)

MEDUSA'S CHILDREN by BOB SHAW: PAN: 1977: 157pp: 70p: CH?

An impressively unusual novel. In a strange underwater world where there appears to be no gravity and little air, lives the Clan, a race of aquatic humanoids. Below them, at the centre of the world, lives their mysterious deity, Ka, to whom all things return. When their universe is disrupted by a powerful new current, a group swims down to investigate the cause, only to encounter Ka and be sent on a mission far stranger than they could imagine. Bob Shaw is consistently entertaining and sparkingly innovative, and this is one of his best novels so far.

DOORWAYS IN THE SAND by ROGER ZELAZNY: STAR: 1976: 185pp: 75p: BH

Fred Cassidy is the beneficiary of an unusual will - he receives a large personal income while a student, which will terminate upon his graduation. He is content to stay an eternal student, shifting subject often enough to save himself from being automatically graduated, but when he starts hearing voices in his head, life gets more complicated. Somehow several aliens, squads of galactic police and a curious device which inverts various objects, including Fred, get involved in this bizarre tale. Not Zelazny's best - but distinctly amusing.

BEASTS by JOHN CROWLEY: CRBIT: 1976: 184pp: 80p: RM

John Crowley's second novel, "Beasts", confirms his place at the top of the list of new SF authors. Set in a future and fragmented America, the book looks at the similarities and differences of men and beasts, and their relationships. In the wake of twentieth century genetic manipulation, crossbreeds of man and beast exist, the most common being the leos, proud, reclusive and hated by ordinary men. One of them, Painter, decides to exert his independence, refusing to be hemmed into Government reservations, and leads his tribe over the hill. With him goes Caddie, the human girl indentured to him as servant, and, later, they are joined by ex-ethologist Loren Casaubon and his charge, Sten Gregorius, heir to one of the largest fortunes in America, not to mention Hawk and the crazy lost dog, Sweeps. Weaving a complex path around them all is Reynard, half-man and half-fox, saviour, villain and genius. Crowley manages to balance theme and action with great skill to a startling yet satisfying conclusion.

LOW-FLYING AIRCRAFT by J.G. BALLARD: PANTHER: 191pp: 1976: 75p: CF

Ballard's first collection in six years, this book forms an interesting blend of his varied themes and styles. The longest story in the collection, "The Ultimate City", almost a short novel in itself, combines his early post-cataclysm scenery with the civilised violence that has typified his more recent novels in a bizarre epic of a shattered and deserted Desert City. "My Dream of Flying to Wake Island" and "The Beach Murders" recapture the idiosyncrasy of his surrealist "Atrocity Exhibition" days. Surprisingly, humour also makes a notable entrance - in "The Life and Death of God" where the clergy debate the existence of God, or "The Greatest Television Show on Earth" when God decides to do his own censoring on the network's historic dramas. An interesting collection, with enough variety to suit most tastes.

THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE by COLIN WILSON: 1969: 268pp: 95p:

In an interesting preface the author emphasises the central role of ideas in his vision of writing. It is therefore unsurprising that in this meaty novel Colin Wilson tends to bludgeon the reader with a welter of facts and speculations. These centre around the untapped potential of the human brain, whence springs a lengthy plot which finally transposes ingeniously into an exposition of the Necronomicon theme. The author's convincing journalistic style is ideal for bringing ideas to life so that the book, despite its excessive didacticism, is a surprisingly gripping and rewarding read - but devotees of Shakespeare beware! (RM)

CINNABAR by EDWARD BRYANT: FONTANA: 1976: 176pp: 75p: PGf

The introduction alone is full of warning signals: the author is a 'Clarion' writer, friend of Ellison, lover of Ballard's work. The book gets better as it goes on; I think as the author became more genuinely interested in his characters and their doings, he became ~~xxx~~ less self-conscious. When it ~~xx~~ can get out of its own Pseudo Corner, by Delany out of Ballard with touches of other pretensions, it is interesting. It can even at times be entertaining. (DH)

KILLER NICE by KIT REED: CORGI: 1976: 190pp: 95p: PJ

Kit Reed has a unique vision of the world. She sees things as no other author does and her stories always carry a distinctive flavour of the unusual. In this book are collected fifteen of her better pieces from the last few years. "The Vine" tells of the strange Baskin family, whose only role in life seems to be tending the mysterious 'vine' that fills their greenhouse. "The Thing at Wedgerley" is a light-hearted look at a novel way to lay a ghost, while "The Wandering Gentile" portrays a new companion for the Wandering Jew. Unfortunately, with so many of her stories in one place the individual impact becomes greatly diminished by the end - they should be read one at a time over a long period.

EARTHWIND by ROBERT HOLDSTOCK: PAN: 1977: 245pp: 80p

On the planet Aeran, mankind has regressed to savagery. For some unknown reason the original human settlers have reverted to a Stone Age culture, relying on their oracle, the mysterious and pervasive Earthwind. To the world comes Elspeth Mueller, in search of the carven symbols the natives draw that bear a curious resemblance to those found in ancient sites in Ireland. To Aeran also comes Karl Gorstein, with starship and crew, to implant the natives with 'monitors' to keep them subservient to the rulers of the Galaxy. The book watches the conflict between Karl and Elspeth - and between civilised mankind and his oracle (the I Ching) and stone-age man and the Earthwind - as they struggle against each other and against their fading memories. Though not up to the high standards set by his earlier "Eye Among the Blind", this book is another good example of Holdstock's growing talent.

ANDROMEDA 3 ed PETER WESTON: ORBIT: 1978: 240pp: 90p: GD

An uneven collection, at its best reaching the standards of the first volume in the series. Chris Priest provides an outstanding story set in his 'Dream Archipelago' - "The Cremation". Quietly venomous it looks at one of the more deadly creatures in the area, and at the man, Graian Sheeld, who falls victim to it. Tom Allen, in "not Absolute", takes a brilliant and long-overdue look at the famous Clock Paradox, giving not only a new angle on Relativity, but a good story as well. David Langford's "Connections", which bases its theme on the principles Allen overthrows, suffers from its inapt placement immediately following that story. There is also an alien look at time from Ian Watson in "A Time-Span to Conjure With" and a peculiar New York fantasy, "Black Glass" from Fritz Leiber. Less impressive are "Flare Time" from Larry Niven (extracted from a forthcoming US theme anthology) and stories by William Wu, David Redd and Darrell Schweitzer.

SHINY MOUNTAIN by DAVID DVORKIN: MAGNUM: 1977: 279pp: 95p: BF

Earth is to be developed as a big tourist attraction by Antique Tours - one of the big powers of the planet Lammon - and Nash is sent there to prove it is the original home of mankind. Once there he defects to see the forbidden mountains and throws in his lot with a primitive, but highly intelligent, tribe threatened by the Lammonites with extermination. Then in Shiny Mountain they find the technological heritage of their ancestors and can fight back. Dvorkin's characterisation is rather superficial and his allegory (Lammon v Earth = modern civilisation v noble savage) unsubtle. The worst problem is the implausibility of a neolithic tribe becoming a space age army in a few years. But the tale has vigour and affection, making it very readable, with a dash of effective satire. (Pa)

MARUNE: ALASTOR 993 by JACK VANCE: CORONET: 1975: 174pp: 75p: JB

Even amid the extraordinary wonders of the Alastor cluster, the world of Marune with its four suns is still noteworthy. So too are the austere and scholarly Rhuncos who inhabit its fortresses, and order their lives according to its changing light patterns. In this readable but lightweight fantasy Vance unravels an improbable intrigue as the suns thread their dance through Aud, Isp and Umber towards their mere total absence - Mirk. (RM)

THE HERMES FALL by JOHN BAXTER: PANTHER: 1978: 271pp: 95p:

A routine observation mission by NASA's Orbiter suddenly acquires greater significance as it tracks the asteroid Hermes and determines that its next orbit will cross the Earth's path. Tension mounts as the orbit is plotted and replotted and an impact point on North America becomes more and more firmly established. Frantically the Americans launch a mission to try to destroy the asteroid before it arrives, but there are unforeseen complications. The book is very competent, and eminently readable, but suffers greatly from the fact that it has all been done so much better before, partly in Anthony Coburn's "Gargantua" and more recently in Niven & Pournelle's outstanding "Lucifer's Hammer".

ALL MY SINS REMEMBERED by JOE HALDEMAN: ORBIT: 1977: 184pp: 85p: PJ

Outstanding novelisation of Haldeman's three stories featuring Prime Operator Otto McGavin. Applying for a job with the Confederacion, McGavin is drafted unwillingly into the TBII, who specialise in using advanced plastic surgery and hypnotic Personality Overlay to substitute their agents for key people in problem areas. In "To Fit the Crime" he goes to the high-gravity planet Bruuch as the famous Dr Crowell to try to find out why the indigeous aliens are dying off rapidly. "The Only War We've Got" takes him to a lethal colony\_world which seems determined to wage interstellar war. Finally in "All My Sins Remembered" he visits a planet of immortal aliens to find the truth behind their myths of planet moving. Haldeman builds up his character of McGavin most convincingly, particularly as he tries to square his actions with his Anglo-Buddhist conscience. Perhaps most outstanding though are the aliens in the first and last stories, marvellously visualised and portrayed. Haldeman is back to the standard of "The Forever War" - let's hope he stays there.

THE FLORIANs by BRIAN M STABLEFORD: HAMLYN: 1976: 174pp: 80p: TO

This is the first novel in a series centred on the theme of co-adaptation - the mutual adjustment of alien life species given prolonged contact. When a space ship from Earth at last visits the human colony on Floria, founded almost two centuries earlier, its crew find an apparently flourishing society. A political upheaval ensues, but it gradually becomes clear that the real problem is not who should hold power, but a much more insidious menace. A fairly entertaining book in which the author develops the characters of his crew members far enough for them to be credible, whilst leaving much to be revealed in later books. (RM)

THE POLLINATORS OF EDEN by JOHN BOYD: PENGUIN: 1969: 212pp: 70p: PC

When Freda Caron's fiancée Paul Theaston stays away on his field trip to the planet Flora for another four months, sending her only a bunch of tulips as apology, she is annoyed. But then she begins to study the tulips and becomes more and more involved with their peculiar behaviour until she begins to wonder if perhaps there is something more sinister involved than mere dumb flowers. With this book, Boyd has written a very intricate and highly entertaining novel, with its minor flaws far outweighed by some brilliant touches of invention.

THE RAKEHELLS OF HEAVEN by JOHN BOYD: PENGUIN: 1969: 184pp: 70p: PC

When John Adams and Kevin O'Hara discover the verdant world of Harlech, peopled with a beautiful race of humanoids, they are determined both to prove the Harlechiens human (i.e. seven to eleven gestation period, social taboos, belief in God and so on) and to convert them to Christianity. In places Boyd's logic is distinctly shaky, but he weaves an amusing, and pertinent, tale as Adams and O'Hara enlist in the Harlech University as teachers of such diverse subjects as 'Modesty' and 'Drama', introducing Earth neuroses and Shakespeare to Harlech with equal abandon. Weird, but good.

THE AQUARIUS MISSION by MARTIN CAIDIN: CORGI: 1978: 313pp: 85p:

In which Man finds he has undersea relations, courtesy of the creator of the Bionic Man. Whales, giant eels (electric), and the like abound, as do cardboard Americans. The writing is amazingly inept; when the author isn't lecturing you the characters are. The plot is by "Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea" out of Conan Doyle's "Maracot Deep", but the book as a whole doesn't leave the bad taste that some of Caidin's electronic machismo does. Harmless SF for people who don't read SF. (MR)

OPERATION ARES by GENE WOLFE: FONTANA: 1970: 218pp: 80p:&PE

A shame that the author of such outstanding books as "The Fifth Head of Cerberus" and "Peace" can produce such rubbish as this trite story of an abandoned Martian colony trying to conquer the Earth. Even giants stumble.

EARTH'S OTHER SHADOW by ROBERT SILVERBERG: PANTHER: 1957-71: 222pp: 75p: CH

A collection of nine of Silverberg's best stories. Most notable in the book is the well-known "Flies" (reprinted from "Dangerous Visions") - a brief and devastating tale of a man whose emotions are twisted by aliens, twice, with horrifying results. Somewhat lighter is "Something Wild is Loose" about a telepathic invisible alien trapped on Earth and trying desperately to get transport home. "Ishmael in Love" takes a sad look at a dolphin who falls for his human trainer, and "To See the Invisible Man" portrays man's inhumanity to man, illustrating vividly that one can be loneliest in a crowd. "The Fangs of the Trees" sees a man torn between his love for his plantation and his sense of duty, while "To the Dark Star" reveals man's darker side as humanity unites against the alien. Lastly there are "Hidden Talent", "The Song the Zombie Sang" and "How it was when the Past Went Away" - a strong collection, and one of Silverberg's best.

THE WORLD INSIDE by ROBERT SILVERBERG: PANTHER: 1970-71: 188pp: 75p: CH

In 2381 there is no longer a Population Crisis. Despite the 75 billion people in the world, all are well fed, comfortable and housed in gigantic 3-kilometer high Urban Monads - vast arcologies built of several cities one on top of the other, each representing a different social class from the highest to the lowest. Fertility is the new God and procreation the divine worship. Wives and husbands are for sharing and Nightwalking to someone else's bed a recognised pastime. But there are still hidden pressures - jealousies, petty hatreds, longings - and it is on these that Silverberg dwells in this set of seven connected short stories. Not one of his best books, but still a cut above the average.

THE BEST OF ROBERT SILVERG: ORBIT: 1957-71: 258pp: 95p: PJ

Ten of Silverberg's best stories collected and presented by the author. The stories are outstanding - "Flies", "To See the Invisible Man", "Sundance" and so on - but the introduction and linking pieces by Silverberg are overly egotistical, and Malzberg's foreword ludicrously overpraises the man by suggesting he is the best writer in English this century. The stories are all available elsewhere - buy and read them there.

THE TRITONIAN RING by L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP: SPHERE: 1951: 212pp: 95p: H

The typically episodic nature of sword and sorcery adventures is perhaps their greatest weakness. In this reprint from the fifties there is just enough action and mordant humour to render its ramshackle structure tolerable. (RM)

WELCOME TO MARS by JAMES BLISH: SPHERE: 1967: 154pp: 85p: PE

A delightful juvenile from the late James Blish. Eighteen-year old Dolph Haertel, while pottering around in his laboratory on top of the garage, discovers antigravity. Determined to produce dramatic proof before revealing the invention to the scientists, he builds a tree-house out of an old packing case, caulks it with epoxy resin and flies it to Mars. Unfortunately a crash landing smashes an irreplaceable valve and he settles down to a Robinson Crusoe existence until his girlfriend, Nanette, having followed his plans, turns up (and also crash-lands) to keep him company. The whole thing is ludicrously implausible, of course, but great fun.

WOMEN OF WONDER ed PAMELA SARGENT: PENGUIN: 1958-73: 282pp: 90p: CAM

A collection of twelve SF stories by women authors about women, ranging from the classic "That Only a Mother" by Judith Merril, to the more recent "Of Mist, and Grass and Sand" by Vonda N McIntyre. The collection has been competently chosen, with such highlights as LeGuin's "Vaster than Empires and More Slow", McCaffrey's "The Ship Who Sang", Wilhelm's "Baby, You Were Great", ~~and~~ and many more, but the production of such a 'theme' anthology only really serves to emphasise how rare good women SF writers are. Sargent's sermonising introduction only makes matters worse.

STARSHINE by THEODORE STURGEON: SPHERE: 1940-57: 172pp: 85p: PE

An oddly mixed half-dozen stories back in print again. "Derm Fool" takes a light-hearted look at a couple who have suddenly started shedding their skins, while "The Haunt" is a light tale of a juvenile hoaxer out-hoaxed. "Artnan Process" is an amusing battle of wits between a pair of Earthmen and a trio of Martians trying to find the secret of a Uranium conversion process, and "The Pod and the Barrier" confronts the problems involved when people stop believing something can work. It is the remaining two stories, however, that stand out in the book. "How to kill Auntie" is Sturgeon in his nasty vein with a vicious old bed-ridden aunt goading her nephew to murder - but whose murder? At the other end of the spectrum is "The World Well Lost" - a beautiful and touching story of two aliens who turn out to be not quite what they seemed.

STARLIGHT by HAL CLEMENT: BALLANTINE: 1971: 280pp: 65p: HD

In this 'sequel' to "Mission of Gravity" Barlennon and his trusty Mesklinites are transported to the gigantic planet of Dhrawn as an exploration team. As always Clement's science is impeccable, and the bizarre 'weather' of Dhrawn is fascinating, as is the construction of the semi-primitive transportation the Mesklinites use, but the story is fairly weak and certainly has none of the inventiveness of the original. Entertaining, but not outstanding.

ICEWORLD by HAL CLEMENT: BALLANTINE: 1953: 203pp: 65p: HD

A curious novel in which a race of superhot aliens smuggle tobacco - to them a very addictive narcotic - from an unsuspecting Earth. As usual, Clement spends more time worrying about the technological problem of such contact than about the story line, but it is still an amusing read.

A VERY LONG WAY FROM ANYWHERE ELSE by URSULA LEGUIN: PEACOCK: 1976: 77pp: 50p: PB

A touching little story about Owen Griffiths, an American teenager, and his love for Natalic Field. Confused by the world and motivated by the conflicting demands of his beliefs and his sexual desires, he tries to come to terms with himself, society, and, above all, Natalic. Contrary to the title, a story that strikes home with poignant familiarity.

ROGUE SHIP by A.E. VAN VOGT: PANTHER: 1965: 205pp: 75p: PJ

One of Van Vogt's many novels made up of short stories - in this case "Centaurus II", "Rogue Ship" and "The Expendables". This book tells of the FTL spaceship "Hope of Man" and its trip to Centaurus and subsequent attempt to return home. For the first half it is fairly standard space opera evolving/degenerating later into a bizarre Van Vogt exploration of the real structure of the Universe.

SLAN by A.E. VAN VOGT: PANTHER: 1946: 156pp: 75p: CF

After 32 years, still one of Van Vogt's best novels, this classic story of a superhuman race on Earth should form part of every SF collection, if only for its massive historical influence on the field.

THE PORTALS by EDWARD ANDREW MANN: 1974: 204pp: 80p: PG

The 'Forbidden Book' motif travels to the campuses and computers of California, but little new ground is broken. Still, the writing is adequate and the climax, though over-hurried, at least goes some way beyond the Lovecraftian lacuna. (RM)

BEYOND THE BARRIER by DAMON KNIGHT: HARLYN: 1964: 152pp: 80p: PJ

Gordon Naismith, lecturer in quasi-matter, agrees to travel to the future as the Shofth to destroy the dreaded Zugs that threaten Earth. As pathetic as it sounds.

WHEN THE KISSING HAD TO STOP by CONSTANTINE FITZGIBBON: PANTHER: 1960: 252pp: 95p: GD

As a topical anti-CND scare story this book may have been of some slight interest when first published. It now comes over simply as dreary and distasteful. (RM)

PERRY RHODAN 37: EPIDEMIC CENTER: ARALON by CLARK DARLTON: ORBIT: 1974: 118pp: 70p: F

Another brief and simplistic tale of good and evil - Rhodan and friends against the corrupt Aras medics. A bit better than some - but still dauntingly mediocre. (RM)



NEW WRITINGS IN SF 30 ed KEN BULMER: CORGI: 1977: 203pp: 95p

"New Writings" has improved considerably since Bulmer's first few disappointing volumes, and this is probably the best under his editorship. Keith Roberts provides a marvellous story of a vague though future Britain with the highways ruled by the Truckers in trucks with names like "On Calvary that is so hye", while under the motorways in rusted shacks live the Rurals, dirty and wild. Ian Watson takes a bitter look at a world devastated by the radiation from Sirius going nova. Martin Ricketts reproduces, without acknowledgement, Fred Saberhagen's 'Berserkers' with a poignant tale of the one man who could defeat them. Three of the stories share as a theme the unreality of the everyday world - Chris Morgan's "My Sister Margarite" with a fantasy world more real than reality, E.C. Tubb's "Read me This Riddle" where the narrator gets too involved in the book he reads, and Brian Aldiss' "The Game With the Big Heavy Ball", where the reality of Jeremy's world is very tenuous. Closing the volume are enjoyable stories from Marie Jakober and Ritchie Smith.

THE CONJURERS by DAVID GURNEY: NEL: 1972: 285pp: £1-25: BT

Above average tale of witchcraft and demonology. In a sleepy British seaside town, Barry Simpson hatches a plot to make a fortune from murder and extortion under the guise of Black Magic. Little does he know what powers he is meddling with, until one day someone answers his pretense invocations. Gurney very skillfully builds up the atmosphere through the book, giving an unusual slant on the Powers of Evil that lurk just beyond the world.

THE SECOND BUMPER BOOK OF GHOST STORIES ed POLLY PARKIN & JAMES HALE: PAN: 1976/7: 333pp: £

I myself prefer the classical M.R. James touch; these modern ghost stories are often either existential or clever. There is some malice here - as there should be - but retribution and remorse seem beyond many modern writers. Most of the stories are excellently crafted; some are arresting, a few touching, none chilling or more than slightly disturbing. One is orthodox Freudian; several take a very righteous moral tone without being unfashionably religious. But where is the treasure of Abbot Thomas? (DH)

THE SPHINX by GRAHAM MASTERTON: STAR: 1978: 75p: 207pp

I picked this book up, flipped through a few pages, and said "This is a straight steal from that Seabury Quinn story...". Then I noticed that Mr. Masterton had had the bare-faced nerve to tack a header quotation from the story at the front of the book (without giving the title - it is "Children of Ubasti"). His version stops short of plagiarism, just, but fails to live up even to the modest talents of Mr. Quinn. Style, characterisation & imagination are rubbishy and even the sex is cheap cardboard. (MR)

UNDER COMPULSION by THOMAS M DISCH: PANTHER: 1968: 170pp: 75p: TR

Another seventeen brief stories by Disch. His particularly bleak, almost Kafkaesque vision, can produce some brilliant stories, as here in "The Roaches", "Come to Venus, Melancholy" and "Descending", but more often his stories just fail to come off, leaving the reader perplexed and unsatisfied.

MUDD'S ANGELS by J.A. LAWRENCE: BANTAM: 1978: 177pp: 75p: BP

A novelisation of three SF stories concerning, in varying degrees, Harry Mudd and his activities - including trading in beautiful women. The story is not actually a very interesting one and J.A. Lawrence has not ~~xxx~~ managed to make it any better, but she hasn't made it any worse either. (Pa)

STAR TREK FOTONOVEL 5: METAMORPHOSIS: BANTAM: 1978: 160pp: 95p

STAR TREK FOTONOVEL 6: ALL OUR YESTERDAYS: BANTAM: 1978: 160pp: 95p

More tugging at the heart strings as love conquers all in one of these books and must be sacrificed in the other. And all in glorious technicolour. (Pa)

THE BLACK MOON by SAUL DUNN: CORGI: 1978: 174pp: 85p: CA

Although labelled as such this is not a sequel to "The Cabal". It is not even part of the series, but is obviously an earlier piece of rubbish with the lead character renamed to try and sell the book. Ignore it.

MASTERS OF COMIC BOOK ART by P.R. GARRIOCK: AURUM PRESS/BIG O: 1978: 128pp: £4-95:FB

Comic book art has come in for a lot of scrutiny recently, but usually on a socio-historic basis. Garriock, however, has selected ten artists, who, he thinks, represent the best in the development of comic book art. Most of the artists are well known (Frank Bellamy, Philippe Druillet, Robert Crumb etc) but a couple are less familiar to the casual reader (such as Victor Moscoso or Wallace Wood). For each artist Garriock presents a couple of pages of introduction and discussion and about ten pages of representative art, much in colour. Fascinating for the newcomer.

THE ART OF SCIENCE FICTION by FRANK KELLY FREAS: DONNING/BIG O: 1977:120pp:£4-50:KF

A short discussion by Freas of his development as an artist, profusely illustrated with his own paintings, mainly in colour. The narrative is a little sparse but reveals some interesting details of his techniques, as well as some fascinating anecdotes (such as the conception of Budrys' "Who" from a Freas drawing). Each full-page illustration is also accompanied by a short paragraph explaining/discussing it. For those who agree that Freas deserves his ten Hugos, this book is a welcome addition to the shelves.

THE ILLUSTRATED EDGAR ALLAN POE by SATTY: WARNER/BIG O: 1977: 246pp: £4-50: S

Satty won great acclaim when he did a series of brilliantly haunting illustrations to accompany Leonard Wolf's "Annotated Dracula". Now he has applied his unique talents to illustrating fourteen of Edgar Allan Poe's short stories. Using a consciously nineteenth-century style, and black and white lithography, Satty provides just the right atmosphere for the mood and feeling of stories like "The Fall of the House of Usher". A superb synthesis of two masters at their best.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST by CHRIS ACHILLEOS: DRAGON'S WORLD: 1978: 92pp: £3-95: CA

Another in the marvellous series of single-artist portfolios from Dragon's World. Achilleos is best known for his mighty-thewed warriors (Kane, Kull, Tarl Cabot, etc) and half-naked women (Raven, "The Female Man", etc) and both are represented here in profusion (including a stunning set of futuristic nudes from Paul Raymond Publications) as well as some of his Western, UFO & other covers. Sadly there is minimal biographical or introductory chat, but the pictures are outstanding.

MANAS MANNA by BOB VENOSA: BIG O PUBLISHING: 1978: 78pp: £3-95: BV

A very unusual collection of art. Venosa's technique of oil and tempera on masonite produces a distorted crystalline effect that looks more like geological formations photographed through a refracting lens than paintings. Some are plain, some very colourful - all have a queer compelling attraction. Venosa's interspersed 'philosophy' is unfortunate, but the book is well worth a close look.

MECHANISMO by HARRY HARRISON: PIERROT PUBLISHING: 1978: 118pp: £4-95: JB

Another big glossy art book. The rationale behind this one (a collection of cyborgs, spaceships, machines & suchlike) seems a little obscure, and the inter-linking chat from Harrison is distinctly banal, but the 30 or so full-page colour illustrations (many from recent paperbacks) make the rest irrelevant. A feast for the eyes, but don't pause to read.

VISIONS CALENDAR 1979: POMEGRANATE/BIG O: £2-95: GM

A calendar by the group of San Francisco surrealist artists who inspired "Visions 1" last Christmas - two of the pictures come from that book. The collection is not the best from the group, and only one or two pictures are outstanding.

PROJECTIONS: THE GILBERT WILLIAMS 1979 CALENDAR: POMEGRANATE/BIG O: £2-95: GW

Gilbert Williams is best known for his glittering Flying Saucers and fluorescent god-like creatures. The twelve pictures here are no exception, bright and bizarre with purple birds flying over turquoise seas and mauve rocks. Entertaining for an occasional glance, I think they would become boring if stuck on the wall for long.

YENDOR by RODNEY MATTHEWS: BIG O PUBLISHING: 1978: 28pp: £2-95: RM

Rather an impostor here (it is a hardback) this book is a disappointing concoction. Matthews' distinctive style is watered down to a juvenile level to go with the ridiculously childish story. A waste of talent.

THE HIGH FRONTIER by GERARD K O'NEILL: CORGI: 1976: 343pp: 95p

O'Neill is the enthusiast behind the "Colonies in Space" movement (also known as the "L5" group) and in "The High Frontier" he presents his case, complete with hordes and hordes of facts and figures to back up his arguments. Unfortunately his enthusiasm is not infective and his 'mistakes' are more obvious to the reader - he talks of a Paradise of fresh air and free space with figures that work out to an average population density greater than that of the city of Oxford; he proposes hurling thousands of tons of matter off the Moon and catching them in a large funnel which stays immobile in space despite the impacts; he talks in glowing terms of the ease of moving to a 'totally different culture' in a neighbouring colony, unaware that such ease of travel would eliminate many of the differences; and so on. An interesting book for one side of the story, but for a more unbiased assessment the best book is still Penguin's large-format "Space Colonies".

MAGIC: SCIENCE OF THE FUTURE by JOSEPH F GOODAVAGE: SIGNET: 1976: 196pp: 75p

Complaints against the closed minds of so many modern scientists seem well-established, and authoritative investigations of the matters about which Goodavage writes does seem called for. The 'Gosh Wow' style which he favours is, however, unlikely to convince anyone, and may retard the work of producing serious investigations of psionics (there is practically nothing about traditional magic in this book) and the machines and techniques (e.g. the Dean Drive and psychic healing) associated with it. The bibliography may be the only worthwhile feature, and a thorough list of checkable references might have made the book worth reading. (Pa)

ASTROLOGY: THE SPACE AGE SCIENCE by JOSEPH F GOODAVAGE: SIGNET: 1966: 254pp: 65p

Joseph Goodavage, 'convinced against his will' of the truth of astrology, wrote this book as a demonstration of its truth. In some places his multiplication of examples (e.g. of similar fates befalling astro-twins) seems worth further investigation. By and large however, much of the book has little to do with astrology, making from Atlantis, Velikovskian theories, numerology and some 'facts' which might make Von E Daniken blush, a case for the impending doom of the world of which astrology can warn us. (Pa)

A DICTIONARY OF LIFE SCIENCES ed E.A. MARTIN: PAN: 1976: 374pp: £1-50: MF

A DICTIONARY OF EARTH SCIENCES ed STELLA E STIEGELER: PAN: 1976: 312pp: £1-50: MF

A superb pair of general reference scientific dictionaries for the home. Even when defining such abstruse terms as 'precipitable water' or 'heterospory' the books are intelligible to the layman, and the hundreds of textual illustrations are immensely illuminating.

THE WORLD IS ROUND by TONY ROTHMAN: BALLANTINE: 1978: 447pp: 95p: RMc

Tony Rothman's splendidly inventive first novel is set on a gigantic world whose days and nights last several months. The main characters belong to an off-planet commercial expedition whose arrival sets in motion a complicated but well-sustained plot. Several indigenous groups become involved and the author gets considerable mileage out of their varied responses to the extreme climatic conditions. Characterisation is adequate and the writing generally good, but the book's outstanding feature is the ingenuity and plausibility of its only slightly too obtrusive scientific infrastructure. (RM)

ZENYA by E.C. TUBB: ARROW: 1974: 157pp: 70p

The 11th in the Dumarest saga. Earl Dumarest, running forever from the Cyclan and seeking his home planet Earth, get entangled with the insane house of Parect on the planet Paiyar. On their behalf he moves to the planet Chard to sort out a local war. As always, above average light entertainment.

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