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Pilgrim Award Winners

J. O. Bailey (1970)
Marjorie Hope Nicolson (1971)
Julius Kagarlitski (1972)
Jack Williamson (1973)
I. F. Clarke (1974)
Damon Knight (1975)
James Gunn (1976)
Thomas D. Clareson (1977)
Brian W. Aldiss (1978)
Darko Suvin (1979)
Peter Nicholls (1980)
Sam Moskowitz (1981)
Neil Barron (1982)
H. Bruce Franklin (1983)
Everett Bleiler (1984)
Samuel R. Delany (1985)
George Slusser (1986)
Gary K. Wolfe (1987)
Joanna Russ (1988)
Marshall Tymn (1990)
Pierre Versins (1991)

Pioneer Award

Veronica Hollinger (1990)
H. Bruce Franklin (1991)
The SFRA Newsletter

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Editorial correspondence: Betsy Harfst, Editor, SFRA Newsletter, 2357 E. Calypso, Mesa, AZ 85204. Send changes of address and/or inquiries concerning subscriptions to the Treasurer, listed below.

Note to Publishers: Please send fiction books for review to:
Robert Collins, Dept. of English, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL 33431-7588.
Send non-fiction books for review to Neil Barron, 1149 Lime Place, Vista, CA 92083.
Juvenile-Young Adult books for review to Muriel Becker, 60 Crane Street, Caldwell, NJ 07006.

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SFRA Newsletter #193 December 1991

In This Issue:

President’s Message (Lowentrot) ............................................................. 4
Conference Update (Lehman) ................................................................. 5
The Shape of Films to Come (Krulik) ...................................................... 6
News & Information (Barron, et al) ......................................................... 8
Letters to the Editor .................................................................................. 13
Editorial (Harfst) •..................................................................................... 13

REVIEWS:

Non-Fiction
Benton, Illustrated History of Horror Comics. (Stevens) ......................... 15
Burgess, Work of Dean Ing: Annotated Bibliography and Guide. (Taormina) 16
Cott, Wandering Ghost: The Odyssey of Lafacadio Heam. (Lowentrot) .... 16
Davis, Lives and Times of Ebenezer Scrooge. (Collings) ....................... 17
Dick, In Pursuit of Valis: Selections from the Exegesis. (Latham) .......... 18
Gifford, American Comic Strip Collections, 1884-1939. (Albert) ........... 20
Harwell, Ranges of Romanticism: Five for Ten Studies. (Heller) .......... 21
Hoffmann & Bailey, Arts & Entertainment Fads. (Barron) ................. 23
Joshi, et al., eds., Necrofile: The Review of Horror Fiction. (Barron) .... 24
Klinkowitz, Slaughterhouse-Five: Reformer Novel and World. (Gordon) 25
Kuehl, Alternate Worlds: Study of Postmodern American Fiction. (Collings) 26
Lewis, All My Road Before Me: Diary of C. S. Lewis, 1922-1927. (Collings) 28
Lloyd-Smith, Uncanny American Fiction: Medusa’s Face. (Latham) ...... 29
Nudelman, Jessie Willcox Smith: A Bibliography. (Albert) ................... 30
______, Jessie Willcox Smith: American Illustrator. (Albert) ............... 30
Smith, Heart at Fire’s Center: The Life and Music of Bernard Hermann. (Larson) 33
Watson, Risking Enchantment: Coleridge’s Symbolic World of Faery. (Collings) 35
White, Enchanted World of Jessie M. King. (Albert) ............................. 36
Zentz, Jupiter’s Ghost: Next Generation Science Fiction. (Morrison) .... 38
Zizek, Looking Awry: Introduction to Jacques Lacan (Collings) .......... 40
Fiction:
Aickman, Unsettled Dust, The. (Morgan, C) ............................................. 42
Allen, Ring of Charon, The. (Stevens) ............................................. 42
Barrett, ed., Digital Dreams. (Morgan, C) ............................................. 43
Coyne, Child of Shadows. (Dudley) ............................................. 45
de Lint, Little Country, The. (Strain) ............................................. 46
Desjarlais, Throne of Tara, The. (Martin) ............................................. 47
Gay, Mindsail. (Morgan, C) ............................................. 48
Kelly, Heroines. (Levy) ............................................. 48
Koontz, Bad Place, The. (Collings) ............................................. 50
Larsen, Bronze Mirror. (Strain) ............................................. 51
Levi, Sixth Day and Other Tales, The. (Stableford) ............................................. 52
Lynn, Tales from a Vanished Country. (Levy) ............................................. 54
Miller, Slice. (Collings) ............................................. 55
McCaffrey, All the Weyrs of Pern. (Hellekson) ............................................. 56
McCaffery, All the Weyrs of Pern. (Strain) ............................................. 57
Morrow, Swatting at the Cosmos. (Levy) ............................................. 58
Niven. Playgrounds of the Mind. (Hellekson) ............................................. 59
Nye. Mythology 101. (Bartter) ............................................. 60
Ore, Illegal Rebirth of Billy the Kid, The. (Levy) ............................................. 60
Priest, Quiet Woman, The. (Morgan, C) ............................................. 62
Rawn, Stronghold. (Wells) ............................................. 62
Steele, Clarke County, Space. (Stevens) ............................................. 64
Straub, Houses Without Doors. (Collings) ............................................. 64
Swearer, et al. Beowulf: A Likeness. (Kratz) ............................................. 65
Thomas, Animal Wife, The. (Tryforos) ............................................. 66

Annual Index:
Author Index ............................................. 67
Title Index ............................................. 81
President’s Message:

Great Yog Goes to the Mountain

Jim MacDonald, AKA Yog Sysop, and his daughter Katzie have just returned to New Hampshire after spending a couple of weeks with us out here in California. Jim was out in the area to attend the World Fantasy Conference in Tucson, World Fantasy being a working con for writers and editors, and Jim being a working writer, as well as the Science Fiction Roundtable System Operator for GEnie. While they were here, we got the two of them over to Disneyland. It rained (despite our six year drought), the place was packed (despite the rain), and we did not manage to do as much there as we would have liked. Still, we did take in Space Mountain and Star Tours, the latter giving one the astonishingly real sensation of being in an X-wing fighter making a desperate run on the Empire’s Death Star.

A few years ago, Sherwood and I organized a meeting of the Mythopoeic Society in nearby Long Beach. For the conference, we flew in from some distance away a scholar who was an award-winning young adult fantasy writer. As a courtesy, I offered to arrange for this professor a quick visit to Disneyland. “Oh,” she said in a definite and slightly arch voice, “I wouldn’t be interested in that.” No? Why not? Surprise and politeness kept me from asking then. But I have not forgotten this exchange (though I do forget most things) and somehow it has seemed to me important and perhaps even paradigmatic. Why not Disneyland? This scholar’s response continues to trouble me, I suspect, because I see too much of myself in it, and it gives me an occasional shiver to think that this frosting of the heart might be an occupational hazard for us academics. (The scholar in question here has never been a member of the SFRA or the IAFA, nor has she been in attendance at the meetings of either organization.)

I have appointed the 1992 Pilgrim Award Committee. Committee members are Martha A. Bartter, Donald M. Hassler, and Arthur O. Lewis. Art Lewis continues on the Committee from last year and will act as convening chair. I have forwarded one nomination to them from Peter Nicholls, and I hope that you will all give the Committee your recommendations and assistance.

Dues reminders will be coming your way soon. Keep an eye peeled for them — that letter with the Corpus Christi postmark is from Dave Mead and it is not junk mail! And remember, while dues have gone up a bit this coming year, SFRA’s cost/benefit ratio is still far the best in our field.
The holiday season will soon be upon us, and I wish you all a happy and bountiful one. For some of our members, though, just staying warm and fed through the holidays will be very difficult. As I send this presidential message off to Betsy Harfst, I will also be mailing packages of food, SF and other daily necessities to the members of our SFRA family in the former East Bloc and Soviet Union (past members, too, as most have been too strapped to renew their memberships). I hope you will all do the same.

Peter Lowentrout

Twenty-Third Annual SFRA Conference

Preparations for the annual Conference on June 18-21 at John Abbott College, Montreal are moving along well.

The Conference theme is—The Alien Within. It invites the analogy between outer and inner space which until actual first contact would seem to be the real focus of our fascination with BEMs. Plus, it expresses almost everyone's sense of minority status with respect to some outside mass. For example, I am an American expatriate within an English speaking minority, which exists within a French minority, existing within a North American English minority, within a world in which for some silly reason most people still do not speak American or precisely reflect its culture. I hope this definition of a theme will serve to invite (inspire?) participation without in any way limiting what people feel free to bring to SFRA #323.

The official Call for Papers will be out hopefully before the end of November with the registration form on the back. I'm planning to hold the line with respect to the cost to attendees for registration while accommodations at the residence, here, will be extremely reasonable. Precise details on that for next month.

Send proposals, suggestions, offers to be panel chairs to me at home or to the college: Steven Lehman, 4319 Esplanade Street (2), Montreal, PQ H2W 1T1 Canada; or Box 2000, Ste. Anne de Bellevue, Quebec, Canada H9X3L9.

Steven Lehman
Conference Director

[See David Ketterer's call for papers on "Canadian Science Fiction" which appears in the News and Information pages of this issue. BH, ed.]
The Shape of Films to Come:

"Requiem for Gene Roddenberry"

October, 1991—The Great Bird of the Galaxy has flown away, to some undiscovered country. We shall not see his like again.

I grew up with “Star Trek,” or rather, I grew into what I have become with “Star Trek.” When the weekly TV series began in September of 1966, I had just entered undergraduate school. I became a faithful viewer, but I was never a “Trekkie” in that I didn’t write fan letters or participate actively in any clubs. However, the series helped to open up to the public the idea that science fiction was about PEOPLE, and it could be worthwhile. I discovered I could talk about my interest in SF more freely, without being frowned upon as wasting my time reading and watching “garbage.”

At one of the first Star Trek conventions, held in Manhattan in the early Seventies, I met and spoke briefly to George Takei, Sulu of the TV series. Speaking candidly, Takei said that he thought it very unlikely that they would ever bring the series back. The sets had been struck, the stage props were all gone. The fans would just have to be content with the current animated series on television and the “Star Trek” books.

Although the Paramount theatrical films of “Star Trek” were of inconsistent quality (“Trek IV” was much better than “Trek V”), the “Star Trek: the Next Generation” television series has improved so greatly over the past three years that its light will certainly remain bright for a few seasons yet. This year’s celebration of “Star Trek’s” twenty-fifth year as a media phenomenon has received much interest, and it is not quite over.

In November, “Star Trek: The Next Generation” will have Leonard Nimoy appear as an aged Spock in one episode. When the Paramount picture “Star Trek: The Undiscovered Country” comes to theaters in December, a Klingon relative of Worf, “Next Generation’s” Chief of Security, will appear, played by actor Michael Dorn. There have been rumors that the original “Star Trek” cast will no longer do feature films, but that the current TV crew will begin to make features, leaving the new series open for a possible new cast. Thus, we have a media crossover that completes the cycle, and the “Star Trek” universe has succeeded in pervading virtually every area of our popular culture.

The phenomenon is so pervasive, in fact, that it would be hard to imagine our media-influenced lives without the catch-words and phrases that come directly from the old TV series. Much fun is made of some of them: “Live long and prosper” is often spoken in jest. Still, people of every age seem impressed when someone has the ability to hold his fingers up in the Vulcan greeting, middle fingers apart.
Gene Roddenberry was able to sell the "sci-fi" concept he had in mind to the network executives by calling it a "Wagon Train to the stars" series. After the pilot was made, a one hour episode called "The Cage," starring Jeffrey Hunter as Captain Christopher Pike, the network rejected it as being too cerebral. They accepted a second pilot, but with a changed cast. They didn’t want a female as second in command, so Majel Barrett, wife of producer Roddenberry, was relegated from "No. 1" to Nurse Chapel for the remainder of the original series. Hers is the voice of the computer on board the Enterprise as well. The network people were also unhappy with the pointy-eared alien. They wanted him out. Roddenberry’s determination and persuasiveness were the only factors that allowed the retention of the character named Spock.

Intrigued as I have been with the "Next Generation" TV series, I used the phrase “Away Task” in my science fiction class, modeled on the Away Teams that are transported to planets. In my class, the Away Task represented homework assignments. At present, I have inaugurated a new system of calendar dating in all of my English classes, modeled upon the “Stardate” numbers of both series. For the date of Monday, November 4, 1991, for instance, we write the date as: 911104.2.

This semester, I have been "future-watching" in my classes. An early project had been to create calendars for the year 2091 A.D., referring to the perpetual calendar reproduced in any good set of encyclopedias. I had my students write journals speculating on various aspects of life in the Twenty-first Century. Many of my students described a bleak, depressing world full of crime, pollution, and disease. There were obvious borrowings from the "Robocop" and "Terminator" films in my students’ writings. But they also see some of these same things on the streets of Brooklyn almost every day. They really don’t see the world improving much in the next century, in spite of all our technological advances. For many, the future is as miserable as the present.

Gene Roddenberry died on Thursday, October 24, 1991; Earthdate 911024.5. Thank God there was a Gene Roddenberry for a brief span, who left a legacy of optimism. As teachers, we had better make the attempt to prepare our students for a bright future, for the need for a cooperative effort to make technology work hand-in-hand with social reform. If we don’t instill some of Roddenberry’s hope for the future in the youth of today, a "Robocop"-like future might become a reality.

The future begins with what we do right now...
News & Information:

CON-SUR or SF in the Latin American Way

Buenos Aires was the place, and the week was Sept. 23 to 27. What had started as a regional event ended up as an international success, since Brazil, Mexico, Uruguay and Venezuela could make it to Con-Sur I, organized by the Argentine Circle of SF and Fantasy (CACYF).

The program included more than 50 different activities, the most outstanding of which were the presentations of the national panoramas of the different countries (including the one of Brazil by internationally known SF author Andre Carneiro), followed by round tables on the future of this genre in the region, seen through the eyes of the writers, editors, and critics of attending countries.

Furthermore, a special homage was made to Hector German Oesterheld, the Argentinian SF writer, creator of the ETERNAUTA, by means of a special series of conferences and round tables taking place during the whole week.

One special highlight of CON-SUR I was the closing session, where the MAS ALLA award was granted to published and unpublished fiction and non fiction, as well as a special award given to Adolfo Bioy Casares, internationally known Argentinian writer who, among others, has written SF works.

A special surprise came in the form of the presentation of Eduardo Carletti's AXXON, a free monthly SF magazine on diskette, consisting of 200 to 500 pages per issue, with a masterful set of drawings, all designed by Rodolfo Contin.

The idea of conventions on an annual basis was suggested and accepted, thus giving new impulse to SF in Latin America.

Ingrid Kreksch

Call for Papers

Twenty-Third Annual SFRA Conference

One of the sessions at the 1991 SFRA Annual Conference (John Abbott College, Montreal, 18-21 June, 1992) will be on “Canadian Science Fiction.” Please send proposed papers for this session to David Ketterer, Department of English, Concordia University, 1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd. W., Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3G 1M8.

David Ketterer

Life, the Universe and Everything X

The 1992 Symposium on Science Fiction & Fantasy will be held on 5-8 February 1992, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. Abstracts are
currently being accepted for 20- and 45-minute papers dealing with science fiction and fantasy literature; future technology and the space program; the creation of fictional worlds and cultures; future shock and the impact of science on modern society; and other topics of interest to a science fiction and fantasy audience. All abstracts must be received by 1 December 1991. Papers will be due by 7 January 1992. Please send abstracts to: Life, the Universe and Everything X, Dr. Marion K. Smith 3163 JKHB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602.

Marion Smith

Society of Utopian Studies Activities

Overlooked for my market survey is *Utopian Studies*, a semi-annual journal that began in 1990, issued by and a membership benefit of the Society of Utopian Studies. You may recall the society’s earlier journal, *Alternative Futures*, 1978-1981, edited by Merritt Abrash and Alexandra Aldridge. Lyman Tower Sargent, the new editor, Political Science Dept, University of Missouri, St Louis, MO 63121-4499 (314-563-5521; fax 314-553-5268), would welcome contributions. Send him four double-spaced copies and follow the current MLA guidelines. You can join the society for $25 (regular), $15 (student/unemployed), $50 (sponsor) or $200 (patron); there is no surcharge for institutions or overseas members. Send dues to Lawrence Hough, Secretary/Treasurer, Political Science Dept, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC 27834. Members also receive a newsletter, *Utopus Discovered*, and a member directory.

Sargent sent me copies of the 1990 issues (a double issue was published in November 1991). The first issue has a descriptively annotated bibliography of utopian (including dystopian) fiction by U.S. women, 1836-1988, 262 titles. Other articles deal with Huxley’s *Island* and Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*. Issue 2 has several articles on Ernst Bloch. Each issue includes a review essay and book reviews.

Sargent also noted that Syracuse University Press now has a series called Utopianism and Communitarianism edited by him and Gregory Claeys of the University of London. He’d welcome proposals for books dealing with utopian themes, whether or not related to SF.

Finally, the 17th annual meeting of the Society will be held in Baltimore, 19-22 November 1992. If you’d like to give a paper or organize a panel, write/call Lise Leibacher, Dept of French and Italian, Univ. of Arizona, Tucson, AZ 85721, 602-621-7350/299-8727. Deadline for proposals is 15 June 1992. —NB.
New Biographical Directory Announced

The third edition of *Twentieth-Century Science Fiction Writers* was announced for November by St James Press, 233 E. Ontario St, Suite 600, Chicago 60611, 800-345-0392. Edited by Noelle Watson and Paul Schellinger, this 8 1/2 x 11 inch, ca. 1000 page volume sells for $115. About 650 writers are profiled in this edition (614 were in the second edition, 1986, edited by Curtis Smith, whose pages totaled about 650 and whose trim size was 7 1/4 x 9 3/4 inches). The book will be reviewed if the publisher supplies a review copy. —NB.

Aldiss-Wingrove History Remaindered

It's not just illustrated histories of 17th century Italian glass paperweights that get remaindered. Case in point is the Avon trade paperback reprint of *Trillion Year Spree*, 1986, still the best single history of the field and a useful supplemental text in a history of SF. The 25 September issue of remainders from Edward R. Hamilton, Falls Village, CT 06031-5000, lists this history, originally $9.95, at $3.95, plus $3 shipping (for any size order), prepaid orders only, no credit cards. Even if you don't need it for classroom use you should own a copy. Your money will be refunded if his stock is exhausted. —NB.

Cost Increase

*Foundation*, the British SF journal, has notified SFRA of a modest cost increase. The yearly price will be $17.00 surface, $20 airmail. —Edra Bogle

The Marvel Story Coming at YA!

That's the text in a burst on the back cover of *Marvel: Five Fabulous Decades of the World's Greatest Comics*, a $45 October book from Harry N. Abrams in typically sumptuous Abrams style. The text is by Les Daniels, author of *Comix: A History of Comics Books in America* (1971). If you're old enough to recall the introduction of The Submariner and The Human Torch in 1939, you'll be awash in nostalgia as you page through this 287 page homage to Marvel, vividly illustrated on almost every glossy page. Seventeen of the principal Marvel superheroes/heroines are profiled, from the two mentioned to Spider-Man (embossed on the cloth cover), Dr. Strange, The Incredible Hulk and its parodic twin, She-Hulk. If you get tired of reading, there are 700 color illustrations. Pow! Biff! Buy! —NB
Best of World Fantasy

Ellen Kushner's *Thomas the Rhymer* and James Morrow's *Only Begotten Daughter* tied for best fantasy novel at the World Fantasy Convention held in Tucson, AZ, October 31-November 3. Other "best" awards went to: Pat Murphy for her novella *Bones*; Neil Gaiman and Charles Vess for their short story *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Vess illustrated and contributed to the story line); Stephen Jones and Ramsey Campbell, eds., of the anthology *Best New Horror*, and Carol Emshwiller for the collection *The Start of the End of It All and Other Stories*. Special awards went to: Arnie Fenner, professional, designer of Ziesing and Ursus Books; Richard Chizmar, non-pro, for *Cemetary Dance*; and David McKean won for best artist. Life Achievement award went to Ray Russell.

K. Farr

Female Heroes & The Fantastic

That's the topic of a planned special issue of the *Journal of the fantastic in the Arts*. Essays may be critical or theoretical but should consider the characterization, status, and function of the hero archetype, particularly its female aspects. Submit a 250 word (one page) abstract immediately (nomi­nally by 15 November 1991) and the completed paper by 15 January 1992 to Gwendolyn Morgan, English Dept, Montana State Univ, Bozeman, Montana 59717-0024, 406-586-3845. [Note: I received the undated v.3, no. 2 issue of *JFA* in late September. The IAFA has paid the publisher, Orion Publishing, Liverpool, NY, to print v.3, no. 3 & 4, but the publisher has apparently gone under, and the future of these issues is in doubt. The IAFA had planned to take over direct publication of the *JFA* with volume 4 and probably will do so. The *JFA* is one of the journals discussed in my market survey in the September issue. —NB.

Borgo Press Market Update

We publish 25 original titles annually (130 proprietary titles have actually been published through October 1991), about one-third dealing with SF topics.

For The Milford Series, we actually want full-length (not short) critiques, at least 60,000-80,000 words, with a preferred length of 160 typeset pages, including all the usual scholarly apparatus. We prefer books which can be expanded into second etc. editions some years hence. A series format guide is available from Dr. Dale Salwak, 2415 Sloan Drive, La Verne, CA 91750.
The I.0. Evans Studies Series includes full-length studies, anthologies, and collections on specific literary movements, figures, or topics. We want books ranging in size from 160-256 pages. Proposals should be sent to Mary A. Burgess, The Borgo Press, P.O. Box 2845, San Bernardino, CA 92406.

Borgo Bioviews include biographies and autobiographies on specific writers, politicians, and other figures. Proposals should be sent to series editor Dr. Jeffrey M. Elliot, 1419 Barliff Place, Durham, NC 27712.

Bibliographies of Modern Authors feature detailed literary guides devoted to one writer. All books must adhere to a very specific series format guide. All books are designed to go through a series of subsequent updated and expanded editions. Note also the Borgo Literary Guides series (generally reference works). Series editor: Robert Reginald, P.O. Box 2345, San Bernardino, CA 92406.

Brownstone Mystery Guides feature bibliographies, critiques, and other studies relating to mystery fiction in its broadest definition (including horror and gothic literature). Proposals should go to Dr. Dale Salwak, series editor.

Essays on Fantastic Literature include shorter studies or collections of essays on science fiction and fantasy, generally ranging in size from 80-128 typeset pages. Series editor: Robert Reginald.

All cited series include some SF topics; only the last is restricted to fantastic literature.

Robert Reginald

Current Work in Progress

Jaroslav Olsa, new '92 (via SSP) in Czechoslovakia: "Fantastic motifs in the Arabian Nights"

Guo Jianzhong, new '92 (via SSP) in China: "A Critical History of Foreign SF"

Richard Erlich, Finally finishing up work on Le Guin for Starmont.

"Dunnlich Literary Enterprises, UnInc." Finishing up CLOCKWORK SOMETHING OR OTHER (we're still arguing): a list of works useful, copiously annotated, for Greenwood Press (with Thom Dunn).

Nancy Steffen-Fluhr: Study of H. G. Wells' marriage novels, 1900-1914; essay on James Tiptree and Charlotte Perkins Gilman.

Russell Blackford, new '92 in Australia: History of Australian SF for Greenwood Press.
Diana Pharaoh Francis new '92: My thesis is a fantasy/science fiction novel which I hope to publish following graduation. (Iowa State Univ, Ames)

Gordon Van Gelder, Assoc Editor, St. Martin's Press, new '92: various projects at St. Martin's; also The New York Review of Science Fiction.

Moises A. Hasson: Index to SF Magazines in Spanish.

Letter to Editor:

Dear Editor:

In the Oct. '91 Newsletter, in my review of Weaver, SF Stars—, the fifth sentence is printed as—"Weaver usually spends only a page or two on each film, although he takes two pages to discuss—". This should be—"although he takes twelve pages to"—. This was correct in the copy I originally sent to Neil Barron [non-fiction editor].

I don't think this requires a printed correction, but I thought you should know about the error.

Sincerely,

Michael Klossner
October 12, 1991

[I appreciate your letter calling attention to this error and I do think the issue needs to be corrected in print. I do not know if this was a human or a scanner error. Nevertheless, please accept my sincere apology. BH,ed.]

Editorial:

Year End Reflections

Growing pains is what we seem to have been going through this past year! With the 1990's move to Arizona, we have had to learn how to become independent of college assistance in Newsletter preparation. To some degree, we have replaced humans with extra mechanical equipment—a new 386 computer joined the 286; a laser printer was added to the existing printers; and a flat-bed OCR scanner moved in with the mechanicals as a heavy-duty Girl Friday.

Over the course of several of the summer and fall issues, some of your reviews have been victims of some of the problems related to our expansion.
The first problem, a human one, relates to the task of learning how to run the new machines and their software. With the complexities of the new programs, this efficiency effort has had some unfortunate pitfalls just when everything seemed to be running smoothly. A second problem, a machine one, stems sometimes from faulty communication between our machines in Arizona and those in Oregon (missing hyphens are about solved, but tildes and stars seem to slip through human proofreading; diacritical marks are still unsolved). Regrettably, humans do not always catch the errors before they are printed. Readers and reviewers have been exceptionally generous in their forgiveness for these mistakes; we appreciate the kindness.

On to other changes! Our first index appears at the back of this December issue. Reviews are listed both by author and by work.

Beginning with the January/February 1992 issue, the name of the SFRA Newsletter will change to SFRA Review. This title better describes another change, the increased number of reviews being printed monthly. The SFRA Review will also boast a distinctive yearly color for all issues in one year. A graphics change which began in the September 1991 issue, appears in the cover logo for SFRA. The letters are now joined together at the top to give a smooth new design.

Looking ahead to next year. Be sure to renew your SFRA membership if you have not done so. Also, send a donation to the Scholars Support Fund while you are thinking about it. Send dues and/or donation to Edra Bogle, 201 Peach St., Denton, TX 76201.

Have a Happy Holiday Season!

Betsy Harfst
Non-Fiction

Horror Comics Revisited


This is the first title in a new series on the history of comics, to be followed this fall by a volume devoted to super heroes of the silver age. According to Benton, the horror comic's antecedents were the pulp magazines and the radio and horror shows of the '30s and '40s. Comic books began to publish an occasional horror story, but the first comic devoted exclusively to horror was, surprisingly, Classic Comics when it departed from the typical classic to devote an issue to Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde.

The book presents an excellent historical narrative of the horror genre, profusely illustrated with covers and story pages—all typically gruesome. This book is NOT for the squeamish, nor for readers who are not horror fans. However, historians and collectors will find it interesting, even if they are not interested in horror itself.

A major portion of the book is devoted to the uproar started in the late '40s by Dr. Fredric Wertham's attacks on comic books. His 1954 book, The Seduction of the Innocent, started a nation-wide campaign against comics in general, which culminated in a hearing before a Senate Committee on Juvenile Delinquency. The result was a “Comics Code” formulated by the publishers to provide standards for wholesomeness and decency.

Although Benton is understandably biased, he is impartial enough to admit to problems on both sides. This discussion of the controversy is one of the most complete which has been published to date, and includes the complete text of the Comics Code.

The book also contains articles on collecting comics, and a checklist of the major horror comics published in the last fifty years. As a reference book, it is remarkably complete. As a history of a minor subculture from the past, it's entertaining. As an introduction to a complete history of comic books, it's an excellent starting place. If future volumes in the series maintain this quality, the series should be a success.

W. D. Stevens
An Unnecessary Compilation


This slim volume begins with a clumsily written interview with Dean Ing, best known as an author of technologically oriented science fiction and much nonfiction on surviving a nuclear holocaust. The meat of the book is a comprehensive annotated bibliography of Ing's work, both fiction and nonfiction, with secondary sources, reviews, and reprints. Material is listed within its genre by publication date and indexed by title. Also included are a chronology of the author's life, excerpts from articles about Ing and from reviews of his work, lists of Ing's awards and media appearances, and finally a short, rambling essay in which Ing himself accounts for the personal biases that inform his work. Small flaws abound in the bibliography itself. Reviews lack authors; entries contain dashes where information should be. Some secondary sources are unhelpfully listed by periodical title only (e.g., Chicago Sun Times) without even a date. Some nonfiction is described as "survivalism" or "history"; other entries are simply labeled "article." Ing is a competent and prolific but minor author. It is hard to believe this book fills a need in the academic community. Not recommended for any but the most comprehensive library.

Agatha Taormina

Biography of a Wanderer


This biography is as difficult to put down as an excellent novel. Avoiding reductionist psychologizing and all-embracing etiological theorizing, Cott's presentation of the sometimes controversial Hearn nevertheless manages to penetrate deeply into the character and life of its subject. And Cott's carefully researched book is all the better for being part anthology: Hearn was more than just the essayist on Japan for which he is generally remembered. He was a journalist of note whose feature articles read today like the most fascinating social history. He was a novelist translator, a folklorist, a noted explicator of Japanese Buddhism, a professor of English Literature at Tokyo Imperial University, and one of the great letter writers of his day. Cott's judicious inclusion in his book of a wide range of Hearn's writing, including ghost stories and even exact transcriptions made by his students of Hearn's university lectures, works wonderfully to bring Lafcadio Hearn
alive in its pages. Too, Cott's prose style in the book has taken on something of Hearn's own, and this works well to meld the biographical portions of the book and the anthologized material.

For most of his life, Hearn was a wanderer. A Greek-Anglo-Irish child born in 1850 on the island of Leucadia, he was abandoned by his parents in Ireland by the age of five. Partly blinded at sixteen, he felt like a social misfit for most of his life. Hearn rejected in adolescence the Roman Catholicism with which he had been raised, believing ardently in the Greek gods. In his late teens, he found himself destitute, homeless and sleeping in the streets and alleyways of London—not the last time he would live so. Leaving England for America, he became one of the best known journalists in Cincinnati, and then in New Orleans. While in the cities, writing often of the exotic and the oppressed, Hearn sympathetically chronicled the lives of African-Americans, Creoles and the practitioners of Voudoo. Living for a time in the Caribbean, Hearn settled finally in Japan, where he married a Japanese woman possessed of a quiet wisdom and became a Japanese citizen and patriot.

At the end of his book, Cott critically examines past Hearn scholarship and includes a chapter by chapter consideration of his sources as well as a chronological bibliography of Hearn's writings. Wandering Ghost: The Odyssey of Lafcadio Hearn is insightful, always interesting and at times even moving. I recommend it most highly.

Pete Lowentrout

Varieties of Scrooge


Davis begins this encyclopedic overview of adaptations of Dickens's Christmas Carol by differentiating between the Carol (i.e., the text as composed by Dickens for publication on December 19, 1843), and the Carol, the "culture-text" that has been rewritten, revised, and re-formulated countless times in the century and a half since its appearance. Davis performs an admirable task in outlining the vicissitudes of what he calls the most frequently adapted text in English literature. He cites Philip Bolton to the effect that by 1950, "at least seventy-five [dramatic] productions had occurred. Indeed this is a goodly number. But since 1950, there have been well over two hundred twenty-five (225) additional live stagings, filmings, radio dramas, as well as TV plays"; neither Bolton nor David offer numbers for print versions, but Davis's "Chronological List of Some Noteworthy Versions of the Carol" suggests that the number is far higher than most readers would expect.
Nor is Davis satisfied with mere enumeration. He traces the varying interpretations of the Carol as it is altered, amplified, revised, and re-made by subsequent cultures: English and American, nineteenth-century and twentieth, adult and child. He highlights especially useful examples in print, stage, radio, and film, providing extensive readings of key versions (including Frank Capra’s *It’s a Wonderful Life* and the ‘deconstructive’ version, *Scrooged* [1988]). He meticulously re-creates the transformation of the Carol from Victorian Christian allegory, to twentieth-century children’s fable, to 1980s allegory of an “unreformed Scrooge [as] an economic hero.” Along the way, we are introduced to an almost bewildering array of Carols: the Carol as fairy tale, fantasy, religious allegory, symbol, myth; and the Carol as interpreted from economic, social, theological, historical, psychological, aesthetic, socialist, radical, Freudian, new historical, New Age, and feminist perspectives. There are even several pages devoted to the Carol as icon for the 1980s political cartoons and to the Disney Carol, with an aside comparing Dickens and Disney in their attitudes toward their own times and their artistic contributions to those times.

Davis deftly moves from one Carol to another, articulating their various themes as expressed through additions, deletions, lightening or increasing of certain roles and episodes, and transformations of characters to meet the needs of the cultural context eliciting that particular variant. He illustrates many of the alterations with reproductions of illustrations, stills from film versions, and adjunct graphics that shed light on the process by which this “culture-text” is written and re-written for each new generation. The Carol, he argues, reversed the usual direction of myth from orally transmitted story to written artifact; almost as soon as Dickens committed it to paper, the process of transformation began, as each succeeding generation came to know the Carol through childhood memories of verbal Carols.

With its supporting illustrations, its impressive listing of variants, and its index, *The Lives and Times of Ebenezer Scrooge* is enlightening, at times delightful, always a source of new interpretations and understanding for this small but valuable touchstone.

*Michael R. Collings*

**A Gnostic Magus?**


Lawrence Sutin is the author of *Divine Invasions: A Life of Philip K. Dick* (Harmony/Crown, 1989), an exemplary biography (see my review in News-
letter 188) of perhaps the greatest American SF writer. In that fine tome, we learned of the existence of a massive manuscript—approximately 8000 long-hand pages—penned by Dick between 1974 and 1981. Called the Exegesis, it is a scrambled series of journal-style entries of varying lengths, all attempting to come to terms with what Dick referred to simply as “2-3-74”—i.e., an overpowering series of dreams and visions vouchsafed to him in February and March of that year. Now, Sutin has sifted this vast mountain of soul-searching meditations into the modest pile of fragments gathered here.

In Divine Invasions, Sutin described Dick’s mystical experiences as “resembling nothing so much as a wayward cosmic plot from a Phil Dick novel,” and, in fact, Dick worked much of the substance of the visions into the so-called Valis trilogy (Valis [1981], The Divine Invasion [1981], and The Transmigration of Timothy Archer [1982]). To give the metaphysical plot summary: what happened in 2-3-74 was that, by an act of anamnesis (stimulated by mystical contact with “Valis”), Dick saw through the heimarmene of the “Black Iron Prison” of our world into the Macrometasomacosmos, the “morphological realm” of the Platonic eidos, in the process revealing himself to be a “homoplasmate,” an incarnation of the Gnostic logos subsisting in “orthogonal time” (I shall not attempt to translate this complex mash of Greek, Latin and Phildickian terminology, instead referring the curious reader to the helpful glossary of “Selected Significant Terms” at the back of the book, as well as to Sutin’s excellent discussion in Chapter 10 of Divine Invasions). More pragmatic, or perhaps cynical, interpreters might infer, rather, that Dick, suffering from schizophrenia and suicidal depression, and stimulated by various drugs (lithium, codeine, megavitamins, and probably other controlled substances), allowed his erudite and fertile imagination to lead him to the brink of madness. Personally, I find neither explanation very convincing and am content instead with the perhaps evasive verdict that, whatever their cause and import, Dick’s visions permitted a sublimely sensitive, profoundly intelligent, questing spirit to produce the Valis trilogy, surely one of the greatest works of imaginative literature ever written by an American.

In Pursuit of Valis can be read in several ways: as an expository prop to Dick’s later fiction, as the tortuous searchings of a mangled soul, as a palimpsest of learned disquisitions on complicated philosophical problems, as a contemporary recasting of Gnostic theology, as a revelation of truth. Underwood-Miller’s schizophrenic assembly and promotion of the volume allow for any and all of these interpretations: Sutin’s sober and scholarly preface identifies the Exegesis as “part philosophical analysis, part personal diary, part work-in-progress notebook for the final novels;” Gnosis magazine
editor Jay Kinney's intelligently analytical introduction calls it a mix of "grand metaphysical speculation and over the top SF wackiness," the Gnostic scrolls rendered as a kind of space opera; and New Age guru Terrence McKenna's reverential (and shamelessly self-promoting) afterword celebrates it as an emanation of godhood (U-M seems keen to hype the New Age angle, judging by the promotional literature accompanying my proof copy). Personally, I question whether it should have been published at all, given its often embarrassing rambling and its autodidactic fanaticism, but considering the goldmine Dick's unpublished manuscripts have proven to small press publishers in the decade since his death, I suppose such gentle oblivion was too naive to hope for.

Students and critics of Dick's work, as well as of religious themes in modern SF, will probably want to acquire this book. All others should read again the misadventures of Horselover Fat, and peruse Sutin's superlative biography, and marvel at how Gnostic magus Dick managed to turn the base metal of a tortured life into artistic gold.

Rob Latham

Early Comic Strips


Denis Gifford is a British specialist who has published a number of copiously illustrated books on graphic arts and film and scholarly catalogues of British and American films. American Comic Strip Collections, 1884-1939 (published in England by Mansell as The American Comic Book Catalogue: The Evolutionary Era, 1884-1939) is clearly targeted for the library and scholarly market, but it is also potentially of great interest for the collector and fan.

Gifford has compiled a chronological list of collections of American daily and Sunday comic strips, in various formats, ending with 1939, the year in which he sees the comic book established "as an ongoing format in its own right." The evolution to which he alludes is the gradual emergence of the sixty-eight-page comic book format as the dominant format for the publication both of reprints of newspaper daily and Sunday strips and, finally, of original works created expressly for the new medium.

Purists will take issue with some of Gifford's formulations. Although the history of the American newspaper comic strip is generally considered to have begun with Outcault's Yellow Kid, first published in an embryonic form in the New York World in 1895, Gifford cites A. B. Frost's Stuff and Nonsense (Scribner's, 1884), comic strips and cartoons that Frost originally drew for Harper's Monthly, as the first collection of comic strips. The first compi-
lation—item no. 3 in Gifford’s catalogue—of Yellow Kid strips was published in 1897, and for the next thirty-two years, the market was dominated by publication in hardback and stiff cardboard covers of the popular strips of the day. While most comic historians have cited Famous Funnies, sold on the newsstands as a monthly title in the spring of 1934, as the first “four-color, modern format comic book to be offered regularly for sale” (Goulart, The Encyclopedia of American Comics, 1990), Gifford cites instead the newsstand appearance of The Funnies in January 1929. The point at issue is, of course, the format (pages and size), and it is indeed Famous Funnies that conforms to the format of the “classic” comic book. Gifford also includes Big Little Books, premium giveaways, and, in fact, any collection in any format of comics previously published in daily or Sunday strips.

Each entry includes a bibliographic notation of date of publication, format, publisher and artist, followed by a description of the contents. Since Gifford is proposing a number of redefinitions of the evolution of the publication of comic strips, a chronology of important dates would have added significantly to the accessibility of the information. There is no bibliography, and Gifford only acknowledges the assistance of a comics curator and two American collectors. Some gaps in information (vague descriptions of format or contents) suggest that some information was obtained second-hand.

The catalogue is of greatest usefulness for its recording of the reprinting of American newspaper strips in the first quarter of this century, and for the information on the ephemeral comic premium giveaways of the 1930s. At $50, it is probably going to find a restricted audience among the collectors who might otherwise purchase it as a guide to collecting. The information, however, will surely be plundered by the compilers of collector’s guides, and Gifford’s research will undoubtedly reach a wider audience than he or the publisher might have imagined.

Walter Albert

Abstract Study of Romanticism


Thomas Meade Harwell attends in ten essays to five ranges of Romanticism: Nature, Poet, Hero, Gothic, and Folklore. Under Nature, he discusses the Romantics’ contribution to the West’s developing definitions of nature and, then, Keats’ view of nature. Under Poet, he discusses the Victorian view of Keats, Keats and Wordsworth as empiricists, and literary critic, Donald
Hayden. Under Hero, Harwell discusses Napoleon as a noble outlaw. Under Folklore appears a study of a South Texas healer as a manifestation of romanticism, “New Light on Pedro Jaramillo.”

Most interesting for students of fantasy are Harwell’s three essays on the Gothic. In the first, “Toward a Gothic Metaphysics: Parts,” he attempts an Aristotelian definition of the English Gothic, separating and defining nine parts. Six of these are essential: horror, suspense, shock, sublimity, suffering, despair. Three more are important and usually present in some degree: spectacle, characterization, and excess. The brevity of Harwell’s treatment leaves open many questions about the natures of these parts.

Some of these questions are taken up in “Toward a Gothic Metaphysics: Postscripts,” in which he first elucidates a distinction between terror and horror. He defines terror as the usual effect of the “explained Gothic” of Ann Radcliffe, which is closer to tragedy, tending to evoke pity for beleaguered characters. Horror is the typical effect of the supernatural Gothic. Harwell finds horror the more satisfying effect. He goes on in this essay to elaborate his discussion of spectacle, the supernatural, Gothic functions, and the sublime.

Harwell argues that the functions of the Gothic are to please, instruct, persuade, and depress, but not to create beauty. This is one of several parts of Harwell’s argument that tries a reader’s patience. While it is possible to make sense of his position, it is difficult to tell whether the sense one makes is the sense Harwell intends. He says, “a felt terror or horror represents the ultimate Gothic pleasure,” without blinking at the paradox. He says that the best Gothic fiction persuades the reader of something, such as “the wages of deception and lust.” On these points, one pines for the clarity and copiousness of Noel Carroll’s fine study, The Philosophy of Horror (New York: Routledge, 1990).

Harwell’s extended review, Maurice Levy’s “Structures Profondes” in the Gothic Novel (reviewed in Newsletter 187), is the third essay on the Gothic. This “full exposition of a major French study” presents Levy’s main concepts and conclusions. Levy locates the origins of the English Gothic impulse in the English Revolution of 1688 and the subsequent Enlightenment in philosophy and science. This is his approach along a “horizontal axis.” On a vertical axis that concerns meaning, he sees the English Gothic novel as a dream that replaces religion and that, when explored in Freudian and Jungian terms, reveals “hidden signs and portents of a collective neurosis, a disturbed sensibility, and even of deep conflicts in the English psyche.” Levy explores Gothic plot and landscape to discover a drama involving conflicting images
of the mother, evil images of the father, and images of the self imprisoned or lost in the labyrinth, emphasizing a fall into the inescapable, with no possibility of ascent. To Levy this reveals the Gothic as "the damaged myth-form of an archetype related to Ulysses' wanderings, the Quest of the Holy Grail, and the roman policier of criminal versus detective."

Much of Harwell's *Ranges of Romanticism* is written at a level of abstraction that will leave most readers gasping. It is on the whole very much a book for mature specialists in English and continental Romanticism.

*Terry Heller*

**Piecemeal Social History**


This is the first in a proposed series on American fads (others are *Mind Society Fads* and *Sports and Recreation Fads*, both 1991), all compiled by two librarians and aimed at the library market although the trade paperbacks are given full bookstore discounts. Of the 122 topics in this initial volume, 14 more or less fall with our scope: Batman, Big Little Books, James Bond, dime novels, *Fantasia*, *Gertie, the Trained Dinosaur*, Freddie Krueger, monster movies, *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, silly TV superheroes, stereoscopy: 3D, Stratemeyer Syndicate, Superman and Tolkien, admittedly a weird mix.

The chronological range is from America's colonial period ("Yankee Doodle Dandy") to Ayotallah songs in 1978/79 to Ninja movies in the 1980s. Fads, by definition, are short-lived enthusiasms, and there are a great many chronicled here—anyone for disco, Elvis is alive, Howdy Doody, Peter Max, minstrel shows, "Laugh-In," or Allan Sherman? The entries range from one to several pages in length and are competently written but not very analytical. Bibliographies accompany each entry, and there are 20 somewhat muddy illustrations that could have been omitted with no loss. I suspect many other fads might have been included, such as (off the top of my head) goldfish swallowing, marathon dancing, Lindbergh and hula hoops. You could probably think of another dozen or two. This lightweight compilation, and probably its companions, should be considered by larger libraries with a strong interest in popular culture. Readers of this newsletter may safely ignore.

*Neil Barron*
Two for Grue


Joshi, who apparently didn’t feel he had enough on his plate editing Lovecraft Studies and Studies in Weird Fiction (both Necronomicon Press), plus a full-time editorial position with Chelsea House, has joined with SFRA members/reviewers Dziemianowicz and Morrison to edit a much needed quarterly survey of contemporary horror literature, primary and secondary. Developed from the review pages of Studies in Weird Fiction, it is intended to provide “extended discussion of contemporary horror literature, one that views the vast ocean of horror fiction and nonfiction discriminately but not narrowly,” to quote the initial editorial. Given the low level of most horror fiction, I’m inclined to view it as a half vast ocean, but let it go.

I hope the size of Necrofile won’t be limited to the initial issue’s 28 pages, for that could constrict discussion and analysis. The initial issue has seven fairly lengthy reviews of individual books, a multiple review of eight novels, shorter reviews of three books, 14 “capsule critiques” by Morrison, the first column of “Ramsey Campbell, Probably,” a column by Thomas Ligotti (I assume the author of this column will vary), the editorial, and thorough listings of horror fiction/nonfiction announced by U.S. and U.K. publishers for the first half of 1991. All this is presented in an attractively designed package, 7x8 1/2inches, stapled.

The criticism in Necrofile is informed and rigorous, and careful editing is evident. Anyone, including libraries seeking guidance in selecting the best of horror fiction and nonfiction, will find this essential and bargain priced.

The newsletter is much more modest in its aims, as its title suggests. About two and a half pages of issue 22 are devoted to descriptions of books and small press magazines and reviews of three nonfiction works and one work of fiction. The double column format is utilitarian and suffers severely in comparison to the professional appearance of Necrofile, which provides a far greater value for the money. If you aren’t looking for the media-oriented coverage of magazines like Fear, and want some intelligent perspectives on the field of horror literature, mail a check now for a charter subscription to Necrofile (specify you want it to begin with issue 1).

Neil Barron
From Cult to Culture


This slim volume, #37 of Twayne's Masterwork series, joins volumes on other standard high school and college classics, such as *Heart of Darkness*, *The Red Badge of Courage*, and *The Wasteland*. The inclusion of a volume on *Slaughterhouse-Five* seems anomalous but it does mark the novel's change of status from cult novel to cultural icon. The company this study keeps suggests that it is meant for students and teachers; judging by Klinkowitz's tendency toward mid-level critical language, the work seems pitched more to teachers wanting a quick study before presenting a standard text outside their literary field.

The volume contains a chronology, essays on the novel's historical context, significance, and critical reception, an extended reading, and a bibliography—the standard format for the series. As with most Twayne volumes, this one is basic, useful, and generally sensible. Klinkowitz is, of course, an expert on his subject (he cites ten of his own works in the secondary bibliography), and his discussions of the novel's use of metaphor and motif to build a sense of simultaneous chronology and of Vonnegut's own role in the novel are excellent. The final essay, exploring the autobiographical and international historical parallels to Vonnegut's text, was fascinating.

The volume is not, however, without problems. First, there is enough repetitiousness and wordiness to suggest that *Slaughterhouse-Five* could have been better served in a shorter monograph. Second, there are moments when the analysis becomes reductive or facile. One quote illustrates that problem:

*Slaughterhouse-Five* is a system rather than an entity, a combination of differences rather than identities. This formal achievement befits the special nature of Vonnegut's theme: that the struggle to say something about a massacre is frustrating, because there is really nothing that can be said.

The idea of the novel as system rather than entity (clearer in context) is quite sophisticated, clever and convincing; while reducing the novel's theme to mere frustration about the unspeakable, it undercuts the sophistication of what preceded it.

Despite these problems and a certain narrowness of vision about the novel's relationship to science fiction, Klinkowitz's study is full of intelligent and perceptive analysis, and serves as a convenient quick study of
Vonnegut's finest novel. Any teacher who wants to go beyond that would probably do better by exploring Klinkowitz's secondary bibliography, while a student using the volume might be discouraged by some of its complexities. However, Klinkowitz's reading of the novel, his research of Vonnegut's war experience, and his expertise in post-modern fiction, all make this work volume valuable in spite of its flaws.

Joan Gordon

**A Literature with Few Readers**


Having attempted John Barth's *Giles Goat-Boy*, Robert Coover's *The Public Burning* and other works of the antirealists, I was relieved to find several comments in Kuehl's study that address what seems to be the most devastating criticism of the "postmodern antirealists"—namely, that few people can read them. Kuehl cites William Burroughs' evaluation of Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* as a "book which nobody can really read," then further notes Burroughs' decision that he "couldn't let that happen to me .... *Cities of the Red Night* is a very carefully elaborated novel, put together somewhat like a roman à clef, with a beginning, a middle and an ending with links and a precise story." Yet Kuehl concludes that "Burroughs is rationalizing here, since, though *Cities of the Red Night* commences coherently, it concludes chaotically. Kuehl repeatedly admits that the purposes and forms of the antirealists run the risk of losing their readers' attention, even acknowledging that "few academics have read *Giles Goat-Boy* despite the fact that it is an academic novel with an academic appeal. Contemporary antirealists, whether reflexive or non-reflexive, will always have a small audience."

These admissions are necessary but unfortunate. Kuehl does an admirable job anatomizing the forms and structures (or lack of same) that characterize the works of the antirealists—notably Barth, Burroughs, Coover, Vladimir Nabokov, Donald Barthelme, Ralph Ellison (a brief but exemplary discussion of *Invisible Man*), William Gaddis, John Hawkes, and others. He places them in historical perspectives that include Hawthorne, Poe, and Eliot. He organizes his discussions around central themes and images of these writers, dividing his discussion into three parts: "The Author as God," "The Universe as Madhouse," and "The Future as Death." Individual chapters discuss "Reflexivity," "The Ludic Impulse," "Maximalism versus Minimalism," "Fragmentation/Decentralization" "The Grotesque and the Devil," "Imaginary Landscapes," "Absurd Quests," "Fictitious History," "Conspiracy and Paranoia," "Entropy," and "Nightmare and Apocalypse."
The listing is important since it suggests the primary value of this study for those interested in science fiction and fantasy. Kuehl avoids overt connections between the postmodern antirealists and science fiction; indeed, the term appears only a handful of times in the text, and then offhandedly. But certainly the concerns of the antirealists are, in large measure, also those of the fantasists, although their approaches and goals differ widely. Kuehl's careful dissection of the antirealist factions may serve best as a means of entry into discussions of how science fiction and fantasy—occasionally even horror fiction—have grappled with similar problems, have illuminated similar difficulties, have defined similar social concerns...but in ways that appeal to far wider audiences and that may eventually prove far more valid and valuable. Frequently, Kuehl's comments about one or more of his chosen authors ring familiarly as he makes points that lead to connections between this narrowly focused, academic, elitist form and science fiction or fantasy. Kuehl does not make those connections explicit, but they are often there for readers with backgrounds in SF and fantasy.

And thus the word "unfortunate" used several paragraphs above. Kuehl's discussions are clear, precise, evocative, and useful—in ways that the works he analyzes are perhaps not. He demonstrates an admirable command of his subject but his subject is one that relatively few readers have encountered, fewer have found worth exploring further, and even fewer yet claim to be able to understand. It is a literature that systematically divorces itself from the expectations and needs of most of its potential readers by deconstructing and/or ignoring traditional elements of plot, character, setting. It is a literature that succeeds primarily by alienating readers. As Kuehl says in his closing interview, "As intellectuals, as academics, the antirealists often lose sight of ordinary humanity. That's why they will never have a wide audience."

As a secondary work that is in some ways more interesting and ultimately more satisfying than the primary works it explores, Kuehl's study is useful; as a work that suggests alternate approaches to questions and concerns fundamental to science fiction and fantasy, it is valuable. Kuehl has included a long interview, conducted by James W. Tuttleton, which often makes critical points even more clearly than happens in the main text. There are also extensively annotated notes, a full bibliography, and an index—all of which amplify this book's usefulness as a research tool.

Michael R. Collings

[The Choice reviewer remarked: "Constituting almost a handbook of the canon of postmodern American antirealistic fiction, Kuehl's study is accessible and of value for readers from the informed generalist through graduate
students and faculty. . . Kuehl is encyclopedic in his approach at the same time that he provides, in effect, a series of mini-essays on various short stories and novels. The study is graced by a 57-page introduction that surveys the American roots of postmodern antirealism and by a concluding 27-page interview, both by James W. Tuttleton, that challenge both Kuehl's ideas personally and his formal textual thesis. . . Some readers will be startled by this study, some offended, but all should be challenged to explore further the implication of what is happening on the contemporary American literary fictional scene."—NB]

The Young C.S. Lewis


"Will books on CSL ever end?" one asks—and the answer, at least as far as All My Road Before Me suggests—is a simple and unqualified "No." Edited by the indefatigable Walter Hooper, with a personal and instructive "Foreword" by Owen Barfield, this compilation of Lewis's thoughts from his 24th to his 29th years is surprisingly readable, more than justifying itself, although not for the reasons many Lewis scholars and fans might wish. There is little here of Lewis the public figure; little of his struggles with agnosticism and belief; little of his emergence as a premier apologist, scholar, and man of letters.

Instead, the diary offers what is (given the overwhelming mass of biographical and bibliographical data available on Lewis) even more valuable. Here we meet the young Lewis, writing for a small audience of himself and Mrs. Moore, chatting about daily events. The book is surprising also in that what emerges for those at times self-indulgent chats is a new picture of Lewis as human, vulnerable, at times frightened that he might not even find his life's work. He records his struggles over Dymer and his fears that poetry may prove not to be his forte—fears that proved well grounded, of course, but the discipline and experience of writing his narrative poem certainly provided essential foundations for his later fictions.

Eminently readable (even if one does occasionally stumble over archaic British academic slang), the diary is well documented, with not only useful footnotes (some provided by Lewis and his brother), eight unpaginated pages of plates, and an exhaustive index to people, places, and ideas, but an accompanying "Biographical Appendix" with lengthy entries for the key figures in the text. The only quibble one might make is in fact addressed by Hooper. The original diary runs in excess of 250,000 words; this edition has deleted
about a third of that. Hooper provides ellipses and assures readers that his excisions incorporated repetitions and enumerations of "domestic chores which I dare say Lewis was happy to forget when they were written down." Still, there is an occasional niggling sense of things missing, plus the fear that Hooper's judgment might not coincide exactly with the reader's.

All things aside, however, the diary can be delightful. Lewis's anti-Eliot cabal is described with wicked humor; his relations with Mrs. Moore appear deeper and more complex than they are frequently made out to be in biographies. The description of a two-week vigil at the side of a man in the throes of insanity is harrowing—especially when one realizes that at the time Lewis was attempting to complete a three-year course of study in one year and simultaneously support a household of three on an undergraduate's allowance. Over the years, Lewis spares no one—neither friend, nor foe, nor himself. He can be alternately blunt, lyrical and rhapsodical, or prosaically matter-of-fact. But throughout, the voice is uniquely that of C. S. Lewis. All My Road Before Me, in conjunction with previously published collections of Lewis's letters, adds immeasurably to our understanding of a complex and intriguing individual. Highly recommended.

Michael R. Collings

Interesting Critical Snapshots


This study is an interesting if rather disorganized series of critical snapshots of classic American horror writers and texts. Chapters are devoted to Charles Brockden Brown, Poe, Hawthorne and Melville, and Henry James. The basic organizing thread is Freudian and post-Freudian theory, especially the concept of the "uncanny" and its psychological ramifications. As with all psychoanalytic critics of literature, Lloyd-Smith reads primary texts for their strategic silences and repressions. Though he labors to avoid mere reductionism in his analyses: "I have attempted to work out a series of different and I hope differently illuminating directions, rather than determine a single position and apply it across a wide range of texts." Thus, his analyses center around "possible psychological structures involved in the processes of reading ... material that we call uncanny, including ... the fear of helplessness and the fear of repetition: of the double and death; of what cannot be spoken." These themes are tracked through the texts of the major figures in the American Gothic tradition listed above, with a bridging chapter devoted to minor writers of the late 19th century and a later chapter on "Women and
the Uncanny." Bookending chapters on Freudian and post-Freudian theory sketch the animating assumptions of the study.

Lloyd-Smith's admirable desire to avoid psychological reductionism also makes for one of his books' major problems: its lack of structural coherence in argument. Lloyd-Smith is basically concerned to trace the evolution of the uncanny from a Gothic formation (in Brockden Brown) to a Romantic one (in Poe) to a Transcendental one (in Hawthorne and Melville) to a Psychological one (in late 19th century authors) to a Symbolic one (in James). This is a very interesting arc of development, but its rationale must be inferred since Lloyd-Smith never fully explicates it. Instead, he relies on a fairly conventional literary-historical schema to provide the larger framework for his argument, devoting himself to close readings of individual texts in chapters that often seem disconnected from one another. These readings are almost always insightful, and they bring to bear many fruitful areas of concern—such as feminism, philosophy of language—in their analyses of the writers and their works. But they don't add up to a new map of the territory of "Uncanny American Fiction"; rather, they function as a series of probings of terrain that remains basically settled and complete.

Rob Latham

A Modern Illustrator Receives Her Due


Jessie Willcox Smith (1863-1935), during her professional career of more than 40 years, was a prolific book and magazine illustrator, with a cover illustration on every issue of Good Housekeeping published from December 1917 to April 1934. She studied with both Thomas Eakins and Howard Pyle and was a member of a generation of noted illustrators taught by Pyle that included N. C. Wyeth, Maxfield Parrish, Frank Schoonover, and Elizabeth Shippen Green. Smith was undoubtedly the leading female American illustrator of her time and her Good Housekeeping covers gave her work the kind of popular artistic identification that was accorded to Norman Rockwell for his Saturday Evening Post covers.

Her magazine covers celebrated childhood and motherhood, an ironic choice of subjects for the unmarried artist, but her work encompassed a wide range of subjects, including numerous fantasy illustrations. Nudelman's two volumes are the first major additions to the Smith bibliography since S.
Michael Schnessel’s *Jessie Willcox Smith*, a biography of the artist published by Crowell in 1977. The introductions by Nudelman to the two Pelican imprints add little to Schnessel’s biographical study, but the extensive color reproductions of Smith’s book and magazine work and the really impressive bibliographical volume are another matter entirely.

JWS: *American Illustrator* is an obvious choice between the two books for a general collection on American illustration. The 30 page introduction to Smith’s life and work seems at first to be a more substantial treatment than the 10 pages of the bibliographical volume, but the two introductions are only two states of the same treatment of the information, and the wide margins and large type of the illustration volume are largely responsible for the impression of a longer study. The heart of this book is in the four sections of color illustrations, arranged thematically or generically (“Mother and Child,” “Scenes from Childhood”, “Fairy Tales,” and “Children’s Classics”). Many of the 105 color plates are full-page reproductions, and the selection demonstrates both Smith’s enormous technical skill and the range of her subjects. Nudelman praises Smith for anchoring her subjects in the natural world, but the “realistic” detail is accompanied by an imagination that achieves wonders in the illustration of fantasy works like *The Water Babies and The Princess and the Goblin*. Even among the more subject-restricted magazine covers are superb fantasy treatments (as in that of *The Little Lame Prince* for the April 1923 *Good Housekeeping* cover). The influence of Pyle, and the affinities with Parrish, are less evident in the later work, but the wide selection of illustrations provides a basis for a new—and expanded—perspective on Smith.

As useful and revealing, however, as this volume of illustrations may be, in *Jessie Willcox Smith: A Bibliography* Nudelman has compiled (and Pelican has masterfully produced) the finest illustrated bibliography ever devoted to a popular illustrator. Each of the full bibliographical descriptions of American and British first editions and early reprints is accompanied by color reproductions of the bindings and of book jackets (where available), as well as representative illustrations. In addition, numerous illustrations accompany the checklist of magazine illustrations, and examples of her poster and calendar art are included.

Given the extent of the illustrative material in the two volumes, the complete collector will want to purchase both books. But whatever the decision on purchase, it is apparent that a re-evaluation of the artist’s status among modern illustrators is long overdue.

*Walter Albert*
A Critical Feast for Epicures Lovecraftian


Though it has arrived tardily to celebrate the centenary of HPL's birth in 1890, this volume of essays may mark a watershed in Lovecraft studies. What it demonstrates, above all its other merits, is that its subject is one of the few significant writers of the present century who is both safely dead (therefore his entire corpus can be evaluated) and not yet so written about that critics in search of tenure must warp the existing fiction into some convenient critical fiefdom that ends up saying nothing of value to the reader. HPL, however, is relatively virgin territory. What the fourteen contributors have to say in *Epicure* about his themes, tropes, methods, influences, observed traditions, and lineage by no means exhausts the possibility of further attention by future researchers, good though most of the essays are. Their work should not escape notice, preserved as it is from a respectable source. They have built a foundation; let us hope the other critics come to erect a superstructure.

Some of the entries will be familiar in altered form to dedicated Lovecraftians. Kenneth Faig's article on HPL's parents is nothing less than a very well edited reduction, omitting most of the speculation and awkward repetition, of his monograph that Necronomicon Press published in 1990s. Will Murray's examination of HPL's relationship to the pulp magazine conventions and personalities of his time, Robert M. Price's discussion of HPL's mythology and Barton St. Armand's study of Lovecraft and Jorge Luis Borges are welcome expansions of their too brief contributions to Necronomicon Press's Proceedings from the centenary conference in Providence. These three are, for me, among the most valuable entries (reviewed in earlier *Newsletters*). Murray, probably by accident, has tapped into one of the hot new critical areas, the sociopolitics of publishing, while St. Armand not only traces the synchronicity of themes Lovecraftian and Borgesian, but also traces the contradictory references to HPL in Borges's writing.

The book is divided into three subject areas, biographical, thematic, and comparative and genre studies. Faig and Murray are in the first part, along with Jason C. Eckhardt's examination of New England Yankeeness in HPL's fiction. Price and St. Armand share the final category with R. Boerem's close study of the role of the "gentleman narrator" in the fiction and Norman R. Gayford's illuminating discussion of Lovecraft's awareness of and references to the spirit of Modernism which was abroad in the literary land during his lifetime.
SFRA Newsletter, 193, December 1991

For me, the most thought-provoking essay among the thematic studies is that of Donald R. Burleson which uses the trope of the narrator in "The Outsider" touching the glass, revealing to him in the mirror his essential otherness, as reflected in HPL's other fiction. Editor Schultz writes persuasively of the growth of HPL's vision of the world following his marriage and sojourn in New York. Peter Cannon takes a typical publish-or-perish topic, HPL's use of the handwritten word, converting it, in his always readable style, into an illuminating and entertaining study. Stefan Dziemianowicz tackles a large topic, the use of isolation and alienation by HPL; though discussions of particular stories prove to contain valuable insights, my impression of the whole is of a certain diffuseness, similar to that experienced reading Robert H. Waugh's "Landscapes, Selves and Others in Lovecraft." I enjoyed the ramble, but I'm not sure that its destination was ever clear. Steven J. Mariconda's "Lovecraft's Cosmic Imagery" is, if anything, too brief for the concepts that he discusses well.

Finally, S. T. Joshi's introduction, though it mostly covers ground overly familiar to initiates, will serve as an excellent background piece for academics who may pick up this volume in their school libraries. Though all the contributors write clearly and to a man (factual observation, not sexist cliche) provide just the right amount of plot summary for the works they treat, Joshi's entry, which covers all three of the book's general categories, is often insightful for the Lovecraftian and invaluable for the neophyte HPL scholar.

I note that only two of the contributors are currently teachers of English in four-year schools, where publication might be career-advancing (two others are at community colleges and one, though not mentioned in his bio, is a high school teacher). The thought does cross my mind that the general excellence of the prose and the feeling of commitment to the subject, rather than to the writer's own ego, may result from this fact. There is an excellent and almost up-to-date critical bibliography (it omits Burleson's deconstructionist study, which must have been in press). University libraries will, of course, want to have the book, and for once I recommend that individual readers consider purchasing it, despite the price.

Bill Collins

A Mercurial, Ungenial Genius


This is a comprehensive and well-researched examination of one of film music's most distinguished, and most notorious, composers. From his first
film score (Citizen Kane) to his last Taxi Driver) and the 49 films in between—including Jane Eyre, The Ghost and Mrs. Muir, The Day the Earth Stood Still, Vertigo, The 7th Voyage of Sinbad, North by Northwest and Psycho—Herrmann was a master at evoking psychological nuances and subtle dramatics through music, often using unique instrumental combinations to suit the dramatic needs of a film. As Smith writes, “Herrmann’s greatest gift lay in finding dramatic tension in the simplest of devices, the subtle interrelationship of [musical] color and rhythm.”

Smith traces Herrmann’s life from his youth in New York, developing his musical talents and gaining a foothold in music at CBS radio, through his association with Orson Welles (part I, 1911-1951) that led to his involvement with Hollywood and his association with filmmakers such as Hitchcock, Schneer/Harryhausen, Truffaut and Martin Scorsese (part 2, 1951-1971), to his final years in London (part 3, 1971-1975). In this meticulously documented account, Smith also examines Herrmann’s turbulent personal life, his mercurial personality and difficulty in maintaining relationships. This, coupled with Smith’s analysis of each of Herrmann’s radio, film television and concert scores, provides an insightful and broad examination of Herrmann and his music, and describes its development both unto itself and as part of the collaborative drama of the cinema. An appendix includes a listing of all his music and a selective secondary bibliography, which regrettably neglects several important articles on the composer, such as Jim Doherty’s excellent examinations of Herrmann’s TV music in Midnight Marquee and the chapter on Herrmann’s fantasy/horror music in my 1984 book, Musique Fantastique.

Author of the Film Composer’s Guide (Lone Eagle Publishing, 1990), Smith effectively describes the development and use of Herrmann’s music, in a mixture of musicological and dramatic terms. The text is quite readable, and quotations from letters, documents and interviews with Herrmann’s friends and contemporaries brings to life scenes and vignettes from Herrmann’s life, respectfully portrayed. As an academic biography, Smith provides a portrait of an ungenial genius, a master of music committed to his craft and his art, whose intolerance for what he regarded as substandard art frequently displaced those around him, yet whose integrity drove him to produce the best work possible, no matter what the project.

“Few American composers followed a more rigid set of personal and creative standards—or lost more friends and work because of them,” Smith writes in his prelude. “Explosive, insecure, paranoiac, Herrmann was, as many observed, his own worst enemy. His selfcultivated notoriety is a pity: it obscures a fascinating, often paradoxical array of virtues.”
Smith effectively peels back the layers of Herrmann’s personality, sliding aside the abrasive arrogance that masked personal insecurity to reveal the deeper feelings and psychology that motivated Herrmann’s art. What comes out of it all is a vivid picture of a multi-faceted artist; perhaps an apology for his social failings, but more importantly an insightful look behind Herrmann’s often blazing fury, to see what lay at the heart of his creativity. As its title suggests, there is indeed a heart at the center of Herrmann’s creative and socially-abrasive fire, a heart of sensitive and delicate honesty and grace that found its expression only through the medium of music. While Herrmann blundered at social intercourse, the music that emanated from within was far more than mere programmatic music. While rooted in a dramatic medium, it revealed the impressionable soul within.

No one served cinema better than Bernard Herrmann, and his incredible music provided not only some of the medium’s finest and most dramatic film music, but left a legacy of modern music which is among the most profound and intriguing of this century. Smith concludes that Bernard Herrmann was not simply a film composer. He was, as Herrmann insisted, a composer who did films, and his music, whether for the medium or not, has left a lasting impression upon contemporary music. Smith’s book effectively brings this to life and carefully traces the roots and developments of this remarkable composer.

Randall D. Larson

Something Other Than Enchantment


Watson’s avowed purpose in Risking Enchantment is to demonstrate that “Coleridge, in his poetry of symbolic encounter, uses the Other World of Faery as a metaphor for the dwelling places of mystery” (28), allowing him to create a symbolic context that “associates the world of Faery with the realm of imagination and Spirit, with the willingness to suspend disbelief and participate in mystery” (2). Watson focuses her attention on poems such as “Kubla Khan,” “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” “The Eolian Harp,” and “Christabel” to generate a reading of those poems and a paradigm for Coleridge’s use of the world of Faery, as defined by reference to folk fairy tale, literary fairy tale, kunstmarchen, and other forms.

While there is much of interest in Watson’s study, there are also several distracting elements. Watson spends well over a quarter of her text establishing basic definitions (“symbol,” “symbolic world,” “faery”), quoting frequently from J. R. R. Tolkien, T. S. Eliot and others, often without attributions
other than terminal parenthetical title references. Occasionally, the marshaling of external authorities threatens to overwhelm Watson’s argument, as when in the span of three pages, she quotes (several at substantial length) Tolkien, Max Luthi, Iona and Peter Opie, Bruno Bettelheim (twice), Charles Dickens, Jane Langton, Coleridge, C. G. Jung, Ursula K. Le Guin, and Maurine. This particular passage unfortunately sounds more like a disjointed dissertation-style overview than an integrated part of a coherent literary discourse.

Even more difficult to work with, Watson attempts to elucidate the complex relationship of metaphor to symbol, and of symbol to “Other” in Coleridge’s philosophy and literary theory. Her handling of metaphor/symbol/Other/God requires that she reproduce the complexity of Coleridge’s philosophical language as translated and transmitted by her own academic approach. One consequence is that Watson’s text is as abstract and distanced as the original philosophical language it was intended to explicate: . . “the poet-narrator’s own encounter—and that of characters within the narrative is conveyed—so as to allow an analogous encounter for the reader. There is an attempt to make secular works speak the Word of Love and Wholeness—to speak, in other words, the language of Sight—an attempt almost always finally and inevitably fragmentary or somehow inadequate because the words must be spoken in a fallen world.”

With extensive notes, a solid bibliography, and a complete index, Risking Enchantment seems most useful for advanced Coleridge scholars who have already come to grips with his often elusive vocabulary. Readers less fully prepared, or those seeking insights into faery and fantasy (in their contemporary meanings), may find themselves risking something other than enchantment.

Michael R. Collings

[Choice’s reviewer was equally unenchanted: “Yet the fairy tale and Christian elements Watson addresses are never synthesized into convincing or illuminating readings...The study attempts to fill a critical lacuna in Coleridge studies but adds disappointingly little to our understanding of the anthologized poems.” —NB]

Enchanted World Revisited


Of the four leading illustrators in what is often referred to as the Golden Age of British book illustration, only Rackham was English; Harry Clarke was Irish, and Edmund Dulac and Kay Nielsen were, respectively, of French and
Danish origin. Jessie M. King, except for a period when she and her husband, artist A. E. Taylor, lived and taught in Paris, spent her entire life (1875-1949) in Scotland. Although she was not as celebrated during her lifetime as her male contemporaries, since her death her work has been gradually re-evaluated.

Like Clarke, a major figure in the modern revival of stained-glass art, King's importance goes beyond her achievement in book and magazine illustration. While studying at the Glasgow School of Art, she won honors in bookbinding and cover designs as well as prizes for drapery studies and interior decoration. Her first international recognition came from book design, but a contract from Routledge led to a series of small books for which she both designed the covers and contributed four black-and-white illustrations.

During these early years, she exhibited drawings based on tales by Hans Andersen and in 1905 contracted with Routledge to illustrate a new edition of Milton's Comus, a work that Rackham was also to illustrate in 1921. The illustrations, as Colin White points out, showed the influence of Aubrey Beardsley but also, in the use of floral embellishments and figures outlined with a halo, characteristics of her own developing style.

The majority of King's books were not issued in the elaborate signed, limited editions that were a feature of the illustrated book market of the first two decades of the century. Although she sometimes provided only decorations for the bindings and end-paper illustrations, her subjects were the tales of Grimm and Andersen, English classics like Alice in Wonderland, Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare, Gulliver's Travels and The Water Babies, and, in common with Edmund Dulac, the Arabian Nights. She delighted in the delicate hues of pastel and elaborate border decorations, and her female figures are often idealized fantasies in balloon dresses that make these ethereal girls and young women seem to be airborne. The Taylors were in Paris when Diaghilev's Ballets Russes electrified the dance and art world, and Jessie, excited by the bold colors of Leon Bakst, incorporated the dramatic red, black and orange colors of the Russian stage designer's palette in her drawings. White includes a color reproduction of a cover design in the new style for Rossetti's The Blessed Damozel (circa 1915) that is all the more startling in juxtaposition with a pastel illustration for "The Sleeping Beauty."

White, author of the fine Edmund Dulac (Scribner, 1976), has written supply and sympathetically on King and on the "evolutionary years of the Glasgow style." There are numerous illustrations in black and white and in color, and photographs, although the color work reproduced in black and white is often muddy in effect. There is a useful chronology, a fully annotated checklist of King's work, and an index. White was given access to the family papers and photographs by the artist's daughter, Merle Taylor, who, in
spite of failing health, spent "many hours" in conversation with the author. *The Enchanted World of Jessie M. King* is an important contribution to the meager list of books on women illustrators and an essential purchase for any reference collection on modern book illustrators.

*Walter Albert*

**The Tao of Dither**


Buried in the pages of *Jupiter's Ghost* is a fine idea for a book: to explore how British and American science fiction has mirrored the dominant paradigms of its times by responding to changes in scientific knowledge during the past two centuries. This is a tall order. John Limon has written such an intellectual history of American fiction in *The Place of Fiction in the Time of Science* (Cambridge, 1990) and Robert Nadeau has explored the role of physics in the modern novel in *Readings from the New Book On Nature* (Univ. of Massachusetts, 1981), but the only such work to focus on science fiction is Karl Guthke's brilliant *The Last Frontier* (Cornell, 1990; reviewed in *Newsletter 184*), which takes 400 pages to show how one scientific idea, the plurality of worlds, developed and influenced SF during the 19th century. In this book Gregory Zentz further aspires to explain the major ideas of modern physics (relativity and quantum mechanics) and their presumed relation to Eastern mysticism, to instruct SF writers on how to incorporate these ideas into their fiction, and to critique the current SF scene. How, you may wonder, can he do all this in merely 158 pages?

I regret to say that he does it dreadfully. Zentz's treatment of the history of SF, which occupies the first half of this book, is a garbled paraphrase of standard works by Gunn, del Rey, and Aldiss and Wingove; his range of texts is extremely limited and his comments on them consistently perfunctory; and his advice to writers is platitudinous and presumptuous, along the lines of "it is important for hard SF to have good science in it." And his view of the current SF scene is curious to say the least. We face, apparently, "the decay of SF as a popular genre" primarily because of "the difficulty of talking about the new sciences" of relativity and quantum physics. This all started, according to Zentz, in the '60s when SF "travel[ed] stylistically inward on . . . a wholesale scale," a trend that was aggravated by "[t]he growth of magazines and trade journals for chemists, biologists, computer hackers, and the like, and the necessity of spending more time on what was in effect study supporting the increasingly reductionist growth of their areas of interest." This de-
velopment "left the writers of hard SF stymied, such that many began to turn to fantasy, out-and-out escape." In particular, predicative hard SF, which Zentz seems to consider the only worthwhile SF, is on the way out:

If the quality of an individual's life is perceived as being proportional to the quality and degree of technology, then when technology ceases making major leaps and settles into a steady, if hair-raising acceleration into abundance—with an adulterated "brave new world" on the horizon, then narcissism obtains.... Ironically, such an inward glance would seem to point directly toward the reading of a fiction where that total immersion of soul that occurs in a combined cognitive and affective literary experience would obtain. Yet this very cognitive element might be what is destroying hard SF.

I've no idea where Zentz got the idea that SF in general and hard SF in particular is dying—certainly not from Locus—and, characteristically, he offers neither details nor documentation.

Bad as his comments on SF are, his treatment of physics is even worse: a hash of incorrect statements of facts and theories and oversimplifications and distortions of the history of physics in general and the relationship between classical and modern physics in particular. One of many examples: in three pages he manages to incorrectly state every major insight of the early days of quantum mechanics—which he seems to think is synonymous with quantum electrodynamics. [It's not: as physicist Richard Feynman explains (using words, not mathematics) in his nonspecialist book QED (Princeton, 1985), quantum electrodynamics is a subfield of quantum field theory which is used to describe the interaction of elementary particles such as electrons, positrons, and photons.] Zentz also repeatedly misrepresents the scientific method, science as an activity ("especially in his grossly distorted accounts of the observation of Supernova 1987A and the purported discovery of cold fusion), and the views of physicists.

Indeed, a fundamental precept of his book—that neither physicists nor SF writers can articulate the ideas of contemporary physics "in terms of conventional language"—is simply wrong. I have been a practicing quantum theorist for about 20 years and have met scores of other physicists, and none of us, I am sure, would agree with Zentz that "today's new physics is left without a semantic foundation for discussion." It is simply not the case, for example, that ideas such as wave-particle duality are so nonsensical or inexplicable as to require such extreme measures as the development of koans, which Zentz advocates in Chapter 4, for their communication. Dubious readers should seek out the aforementioned book by Feynman, Heinz R.
Pagels' *The Cosmic Code: Quantum Physics as the Language of Nature* (Simon & Schuster, 1982), George Gamow's *Thirty Years That Shook Physics* (Dover 1985), or Werner Heisenberg's articulate, accessible essays in such collections as *Physics and Philosophy: The Revolution in Modern Science* (Harper & Brothers, 1958). All of these books are by physicists, all communicate subtle concepts using "conventional language," and not one appears in Zentz's bibliography. *Jupiter's Ghost* is sure to infuriate anyone who understands modern physics at a conceptual level and bewilder everyone else; worse, it will exacerbate the misconception that modern physics is incomprehensible except insofar as it somehow implies the tenets of Eastern mysticism—which it does not.

I have quoted Zentz at length to try to communicate the feel of his unique prose style, but only extended quotation would convey its cumulative numbing impact. Sentences are choked with awkward phrases, grammatical glitches, malapropisms, irrelevant interjections, vague generalizations and unsupported assertions, cliches, redundancies, and non sequiturs galore. Such sentences, often unrelated to one another, clump together in paragraphs, frequently accompanied by quotations which float in a void of disjunction from the surrounding text. Paragraphs, in turn, agglomerate into chapters so incoherent and disjoint as to preclude ascertaining their topic. In the last half of the book even the modicum of structure provided by chronology collapses; reading these chapters is like taking a random walk through a ruin.

But the blame for this excruciating book must not rest entirely with the author. Did no one at Praeger read it in manuscript? Surely no one edited it. Publishing it in this state was a gross disservice to Zentz and to its apparent target markets, libraries and scholars (note the price to page-number ratio). I respect Zentz's enthusiasm for science and hard SF, but this book is in every respect so dreadfully executed that I can recommend it to no one.

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**Michael A. Morrison**

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**A Stultifyingly Abstract Study**


Zizek's subtitle is a misnomer, pointing to the most serious difficulty with this heavily academic, stultifyingly abstract study. It is not an introduction to Lacanian thought, at least not in the sense that Zizek intends to make Lacan's ideas more accessible to readers not already far more than passingly familiar with it. *Looking Awry* is, instead, dense and closely woven academic
analysis, so inescapably studded with the technical jargon of Lacanian thought that a reader not already easily conversant with that vocabulary is almost immediately lost. In addition (or perhaps because of the first difficulty), the text itself approaches sheer unreadability. Sentences are abstract, passive, recursive, self-referential, and repetitious, with half a dozen "i.e." references in almost every paragraph, and an equal number of colons, semicolons and parentheses, often all three embedded into a single structure. Such elements are not in themselves damaging, but coupled with Zizek's narrowly defined critical vocabulary, the text becomes increasingly impenetrable. For general readers, the passage from page to page requires more concentration than usual, and results as often in frustration as in insight.

Zizek's goals are admirable, however. As he outlines them in his introduction, he attempts to elucidate Lacanian philosophy by juxtaposing it with "contemporary mass culture." Thus, Lacan's ideas are set against works drawn from science fiction, detective novels, film noir, etc. Zizek concentrates on Hitchcock's films, but mentions in passing a number of science fiction and fantasy stories. He even devotes several pages to a psycho-sexual mini-explication of Stephen King's *Pet Sematary* as it reflects and skews themes and symbolic values from *Antigone*.

Unfortunately, execution does not rise to the level of intentions. The book remains unreadable; the connections to science fiction, fantasy, or horror are at best peripheral. Even a chapter titled "Toward an Ethic of Fantasy" is so heavily jargon-laden that it seems to ignore its ostensible subject and rapidly loses itself in abstractions and symbolic formulae (see especially p. 158). More damaging are factual errors, such as the attribution of Arthur C. Clarke's "The Nine Billion Names of God" to Isaac Asimov (not a simple typo, since Clarke is never even mentioned in the text). Ultimately, *Looking Awry* becomes the kind of academic text that does perhaps more damage than good through its impenetrable language that at times seems more intent on circumventing communication than in accomplishing it. It is critical discourse designed to perpetuate boundaries that inhibit understanding, rather than removing them. It is difficult to recommend the book to readers other than experts in Lacanian jargon.

Michael R. Collings
Fiction

Overly Subtle Metaphors


Aickman, who died in 1981, is recognised as a distinctive and highly original writer of ghost and horror stories. Both his originality and his shortcoming lie in over-subtlety; his stories do not explain themselves. They are social metaphors, full of significant and unsettling small details of contemporary English middle-class society. They suggest all kinds of deep supernatural conspiracies, yet they deliver no solutions, no easy conclusions, no smooth twists. In general these are stories to be read for reasons of texture rather than plot. This collection contains eight stories from Aickman’s previous collections, three from *The Wine-Dark Sea* and five from *Sub Rosa*. They are typical Aickman stories, sometimes powerful, never fully satisfying. “The Stains”, the best and longest, manages to be threatening and even terrifying in its descriptions of how a middle aged civil servant (who has withdrawn into himself and into the countryside after the death of his wife) finds a peculiar sort of love with a simple country girl as he prepares himself for death.

*Chris Morgan*

New Hard SF Series


Normally, when a book is announced as the first volume of a series, one suspects that it may be a case of “author bloat”, where a story which should take one book is padded to fill several volumes. That is certainly not the case here. The first volume alone is longer than most full-length novels, and there are enough ideas and subplots in it to fill several novels. Allen also pledges that, although there will be more books in the series, all will be able to stand alone.

This first volume introduces a story of epic proportions, reminiscent of the old space operas while maintaining a strong technical background. As it opens, a young physicist conducts an unauthorized experiment in a lab on Pluto. The gravity waves generated by the experiment trigger an alien artifact buried in the moon, which causes the Earth and all the objects in cis-Lunar space to be kidnapped through a wormhole to a space controlled by a Von Neumann machine in the form of a Dyson sphere.
Almost immediately, other artifacts attack the remaining planets and mine their substance with the intent of using the material to form another Dyson sphere. The physicist who caused the catastrophe, and the remaining people in the Solar System, are faced with the problem of finding out what happened to Earth, re-establishing contact, and stopping the demolition of the planets. The success of the latter effort results in the apparently permanent loss of contact with Earth. At the same time, there are hints of even greater problems ahead, both in the Solar System, and in the system of the Dyson sphere.

Although the book ends with some real cliff-hangers, it is complete enough in itself to satisfy—much as a good meal satisfies while letting one anticipate the next. Allen is one of the better new writers, with a wealth of imagination and solid technical background. This book is highly recommended for all fans of hard science fiction, as well as for those who just want entertainment. If the remainder of the series lives up to the opening volume, it will be well worth watching for.

W.D. Stevens

Mixed Quality


An original anthology of SF, fantasy and horror stories about computers is not exactly a new idea, though one hasn’t been assembled in Britain before. By limiting himself to British authors and buying a lot of material from new writers, David Barrett (not to be confused with David Garnett, who has edited two volumes of the British original anthology series Zenith and will be editing a new incarnation of New Worlds as an anthology series) has ended up with a book of considerably mixed quality. Two stories, “The World of the Silver Writer” by Anne Gay and “The Machine It Was That Cried” by John Grant, are very good indeed. Certain other contributors, including Terry Pratchett (who doesn’t normally write short stories and here demonstrates why), Keith Roberts, Ian McDonald and Garry Kilworth, are not at their best. Too many of the pieces are too brief and unpolished.

Chris Morgan
Well-balanced, Valuable Volume


Michael Bishop seems more comfortable with editing the Nebula Awards volume this year, or perhaps his choices for non-winning stories strike me as more appropriate than those in *Nebula 23*. Taking pity on those who have not experienced previous volumes, he includes a clear explanation of the Nebula selection process, and sensible justification for his own additions. He also defends himself vigorously against misguided critics who compare the *Nebula Awards* volumes to "best of the year" collections put out by Gardner Dozois et al.

Ian Watson provides his usual comprehensive overview of the SF field, proving yet again that whatever else may occur in the SF community, agreement about the fiction does not. His review is notable for its eclecticism, its thoroughly British tartness, and its frank bafflement at some "uniquely American resonances...opaque to outsiders," specifically Connie Willis' "Last of the Winnebagoes."

Watson judges the award winning novel of 1988, Lois McMaster Bujold's *Falling Free*, "an out-and-out juvenile." Some of his best friends may be juveniles, but not *Falling Free*: "do members of SFWA really wish this to be seen as their pinnacle, their height of achievement?" Bujold's reply follows. After discussing her aims in writing *Falling Free*, she adds, "The novel may be 'a juvenile,' i.e. a book young people can read (in fact, I hope it may reach as broad an audience as possible); it is emphatically not juvenile, i.e., immature, trivial, or witless." The Nebula Awards volume cannot print the winning novel, of course, but one hopes that readers of these essays will try *Falling Free* and decide for themselves.

While complete novels don't fit in this anthology, Bishop has done the next-best thing with Jane Yolen's *The Devil's Arithmetic*, nominated in the novella category (published in 1988 as a YA book by Viking, and in 1990 as a Puffin paperback); he has summarized the first chapters, and printed the complete ending. Yolen's story makes the horrors of the Jewish Holocaust vividly real and accessible to young readers, a magnificent achievement. As he did by printing Joe Haldeman's vivid "DX" in Nebula Awards 23, Bishop again includes a poem to touch the conscience, Robert Frazier's "The Daily Chernobyl."

The winning novella, Connie Willis' "The Last of the Winnebagoes," also makes a social statement: about conservation of animals, water, and human beings. The winning novelette, "Schroedinger's Kitten" by George
Alec Effinger engagingly explores the alternate world explanation of quantum mechanics, while Neal Barrett Jr.'s "Ginny Sweetheips' Flying Circus," a runner-up, takes a slightly wacky look at one possible (post holocaust?) future. In the short story category, James Morrow's winning "Bible Stories for Adults, No. 17: The Deluge" accounts most incredibly for the obvious gaps in Noah's story, while Jack McDevitt's "The Fort Moxie Branch" rings absolutely true for most writers, especially those whose works seem to have disappeared without a trace.

Nonfiction almost dominates this volume. Greg Bear's tribute to Ray Bradbury, acclaimed a Grand Master of Science Fiction, is followed by Bradbury's own contribution, a poem, "The Collector Speaks," and a ringing challenge to censorship, "More Than One Way to Burn a Book." Two essays "In Memoriam" honor Robert A. Heinlein and Clifford D. Simak. As has become traditional, three Rhysling Award winning poems, by Bruce Boston, Suzette Haden Elgin, and Lucius Shepard, are also included, as is Bill Warren's movie review, "The Year of the Pratfall: SF Movies of 1988." Warren really doesn't like much of anything released in 1988, with one exception; honorably, he summarizes all his criticisms before detailing his praise of Who Framed Roger Rabbit. A most interesting addition comes from Paul Di Filippo, whose essay "My Alphabet Starts Where Your Alphabet Ends" notes the complete dismissal of one of the most skillful and fertile writers of fantasy, Dr. Seuss.

Bishop includes only one story that neither won a Nebula nor made the short list: Gene Wolfe's "The Other Dead Man." While one might wish he could also have printed several of the nominated short stories besides McDevitt's, one can hardly fault the choice to print the Wolfe. Spare, elegant, and understated, "The Other Dead Man" comments forcefully on our cultural commitment to automation and avoidance of death. Nebula Awards 24 is a well-balanced and valuable volume.

**Martha A. Bartter**

**Bloody Mountain Madness**


In the tunnels under Grand Central Station, a vicious serial killer strikes out at the city's homeless, ripping out human hearts with bare hands.

In the world above, social worker Melissa Vaughn discovers thirteen-year-old Adam, a homeless mute child who's been living in the darkened tunnels below the streets, surviving by his wits alone. Leaving her job in the city, Melissa takes the child into the Blue Ridge Mountains, determined to at once rescue him and exorcise the ghosts of her own secret past.
But Melissa’s plans for a pastoral summer in her scenic mountain retreat are shattered when a group of religious zealots claim Adam as their “chosen one” while a wave of mysterious murders grips the town.

Coyne’s narrative is loaded with inconsistencies which continually break the novel’s internal logic. When Reverend Littleton of the New Land Tabernacle Church is strangled by the psychopathic Betty Sue Yates, the town’s people pronounce the cause of his death a heart attack without even a medical examination. Later, when Adam runs off by himself into the woods, Melissa’s landlord soothes her hysterics with an Italian meal, and little notice is taken when Adam returns to the house hours later, his hands and arms covered with blood.

Finally, the novel’s horror is dampened by Melissa’s tendency to over-intellectualize almost every situation, giving the impression that Coyne hasn’t sufficiently developed his point-of-view character.

Joseph M. Dudley

Little but Big


Charles de Lint is one of a few writers of this generation whose fantasy stories happen in today’s world and are faithful enough to time, place, and people for the reader to enjoy the story without questioning its probabilities.

For The Little Country, he has left his familiar Canada for Cornwall, to tell a story that moves within a very small region—Penzance, Newlyn, Mousehole, across the moors past Madron to Zennor, back by Lemorna to the cliffs and Raginnis Hill. The events of the story, as in all good tales, occur within a few days to a small group of characters whom we get to like. The characters we first meet are folk musicians, amateur and professional, and music, as it is in all de Lint’s books and more deeply in this than in most, is a moving force in both stories told.

Both stories? Yes, de Lint has taken devices other recent authors have used successfully to create a unique story that is strengthened by the reverberations in the reader’s memory of the earlier accounts. Just as the major character in Michael Ende’s The Neverending Story reads a book in which its hero’s adventures are repeated in his own story, so does de Lint’s heroine have, with variations, the adventures that she reads of Jodi having. And Jodi meets a mouse-size human, like those in “The Borrowers” tales by Mary Norton. For Jodi, those small folk are the piskies of the Cornish moors. The old superstitions of Cornish coast and moor are part of both tales, just as bits of local dialect are.
The two stories are presented to the reader in alternate chapters, each of which ends in a cliff-hanger crisis, whose denouement must wait while the other story moves forward. The opening story is laid in today's Mousehole; the tale that initiates and foreshadows action in the first tale occurs in a time and place that may also be Mousehole when fishing was its major activity. In both stories, the ancient dolmen, the Men-an-Tol, has an important part in the climax.

Using available techniques distinctively is only a part of good authorship. Another part is to blend the imaginative creation of the story into a broader theme. de Lint's theme in The Little Country is the oneness of the universe, which he describes as the "harmonic vibration to which every element of the universe vibrated" (584). Goodness is being tuned to that harmony; evil, being in dissonance with it. "The magics of the world are far simpler than we make them out to be", he tells us several times.

The book jacket quotes praises from, to name them as I remember them, Jane Yolen, Patricia McKillip, Andre Norton, Gordon R. Dickson, Julian May, Marion Zimmer Bradley, and Greg Bear. They all say it is an excellent book; should the reviewer disagree? Not when I enjoyed it, too.

But only time, and re-reading, will tell me and other readers, whether it is the classic fantasy Dickson proclaims it to be. For now, read and enjoy!

Paula M. Strain

Fictional Version of a Saint's Life


A lively and skillful historical novel, The Throne of Tara recreates the life of Columcille, or St. Columba, as he came to be known, the sixth-century Irish monk who was instrumental in converting Scotland to Christianity. From the beginning, his was a life of controversy; his father wanted the boy named Crimthann (Wolf) and intended his son to be high king of Ireland. His mother, also of royal blood, dedicated him to the church and named him Colum (Dove). These two destinies struggled for fulfillment throughout Colum's life, taking him both to the altar and to the battlefield. He was in the thick of conflicts—not only tribal battles and church/state rivalries, but also the pivotal confrontation between Christianity and the druidic religion, miracles vs. magic.

Adamnan's The Life of St. Columba is the primary source for this fictionalized treatment which adds some characters and motives but captures vividly the sense of the times and customs of early Ireland. Colum is a dominating figure, given to visions and prophecies, but also plagued with an
impulsive temper that often drives him to act vengefully. His vindictiveness is often justifiable, but being in the right does not alter the inevitable consequences. Like most of us, Colum’s prophetic powers work much more clearly on behalf of others.

One minor quibble: I admire the writing style, but find it somewhat distracting. Descriptions are apt and vivid, but a bit too alliterative and resonant for smooth reading. Otherwise an instructive and enjoyable work.

Dale F. Martin

Absorbing First Novel


Gay is the strongest and most talented of all the new British writers of SF. In this, her first novel, she tells the story of Tohalla, no longer a young woman, despised by her close-knit family for an inability to produce lots of children, who has to escape from her background and discover herself as a person before she can learn to achieve happiness. That makes it sound like a love story, which it is though only in part. The setting is an alien world inhabited by small groups of humans, mostly primitive and mostly warring, the several-generations-on results of a crashed colony ship.

More important than this admittedly unoriginal type of background is what Gay does with it. She is a writer of ideas and a great, poetic stylist. Her descriptions are often beautiful, even if the beauty does occasionally interfere with the message. She has the knack of creating believable societies in a few pages. Tohalla moves from her pastoral roots (the Green) to a strange, barren land (the Red), where she learns the story of a young girl, Marchidas, and on through pain and self-discovery to a more civilized community, where she discovers mindsailing. It’s a complex and metaphorical tale, not always an easy read, yet absorbing and satisfying.

Chris Morgan

Male Writer—Female Protagonists


*Heroines* contains four short stories and three poems, all previously published between 1983 and 1988 in either Asimov’s or *Fantasy and Science Fiction*. The book also includes one heretofore unpublished poem as well as an introduction by the author in which he discusses his writing methods, his
views on feminism, and the stories themselves. In that essay Kelly relates the pleasure he felt upon discovering that the mother of one of his daughter's friends had read a story he'd published and assumed, without looking at the byline, that it was written by a woman. A committed feminist, Kelly, unlike most male authors, frequently tries to write from a female perspective and, in fact, selected the stories to be included in this collection because their protagonists are all sympathetically-drawn women.

Two of the stories in Heroines are fantasies. "The Cruelest Month" concerns Nell Cuneen, a hard-driving business woman whose life and marriage have both fallen apart since the accidental death of her daughter Avril. Nell is involved in a loveless and destructive affair with her therapist and has become so neurotic that she can barely function at work. Then Avril's bike, put away since her death, shows up in the hallway. Her dolls appear on the living room sofa. Something strange is happening and Nell finds that she must either pull herself together and face whatever it is, or fall apart completely. The oldest tale in the book and a fairly conventional ghost story, "The Cruelest Month" is, nonetheless a solid piece of work. A later fantasy, "The Last," is anything but conventional, however. It's the story of Hester Pickworth, last of the Pickworth family. Unable to leave the small New England town where she was born because of an ancient curse, Hester finds herself in the middle of a demonic invasion, led by a gigantic biker named Joe, a black man with an enormous radio; a junkie, and a bag lady—figures who seem symbolic of the evils of the big city life Hester can never have. The small-town characters in "The Last" are deftly drawn and stand in strong contrast to the evil invaders.

"Crow," the first of the science fiction stories, involves two teenagers, Lucy and Juan, who live a nomadic existence among the dead towns of New England a decade or so after a bio-engineered plague has wiped out most of the human race. Eventually they run into Hannah, an eccentric, middle-aged woman bent on building a spaceship that will take her to the moon, where a human colony may still survive. Hannah tries to enlist them in her far-fetched plan, but Lucy resists, partly out of sexual jealousy and partly out of a realization that the older woman is living in the dead past. "Faith," the final piece in the book, is a straight-forward love story. The title character, a recently divorced, middle-aged woman, meets and falls in love with a shy, poetry-writing horticulturalist whom, she later discovers, communicates telepathically with his plants.

In both "Crow" and "Faith" the science fictional content of the stories is minimal. What Kelly concentrates on, as he did in the two fantasies, is character development. With the exception of "Last," all of the stories center on relationships and the healing power they can exert. In "The Cruelest Month"
it is the very intensity of her love for her dead daughter that allows Nell to put her grief behind her. In "Crow" it is clear that Hannah’s attempt to resurrect dead technology is doomed, and that Lucy and Juan must face the future on their own. Faith and her psychic horticulturist can heal themselves only through their love for each other. Does James Patrick Kelly succeed in his attempt to write exclusively from a woman’s viewpoint? It seems to me that he does, but female readers may disagree. I can’t judge. Be that as it may, Kelly does succeed in creating believable characters and admirable stories. He’s definitely a writer to watch for in the 1990s.

Michael M. Levy

Suspenseful Novel


The Bad Place, like many of Koontz’s recent works, defies easy classification. It is clearly a cross-genre novel, demonstrating elements of romance, suspense, crime fiction, action-adventure, science fiction, and horror. It is one of Koontz’s strengths that he can weld such disparate approaches so flawlessly that in a novel such as The Bad Place (as in the earlier Lightning, Watchers, Midnight and Strangers) the seams become invisible. What remains is a unified narrative capable of riveting readers bringing multiple expectations to the novel.

In addition, The Bad Place illustrates Koontz’s willingness to take chances. Many of the characters will resonate for his long-time readers: the withdrawing, sensitive but competent male; the aggressive, passionate female; and the villain-in-spite-of-himself, driven by externals (in this instance the macabre circumstances of his birth and physical deformities) into embracing a self-consuming internal evil. The Bad Place echoes “but does not simply recreate) Shadowfires, The Vision, Twilight Eyes, Whispers, and Watchers in characterization and plot; what is different here is Koontz’s inclusion of a Downs’ syndrome narrator—an innocent whose Christic function, in terms of narrative as well as of imagery, provides uniquely objective perceptions of goodness and evil. Koontz never allows himself to break the illusion of Thomas’s limited verbal skills (in itself a stunning achievement), but at the same time, Thomas becomes the focus for pressures that lead to the final confrontation between heroes and villains.

More critical, perhaps, is Koontz’s ability to communicate difficult truths. Thomas is a strongly positive character; he is also unfairly limited physically and mentally. And he dies. Others less deserving of life do not; one of the most reprehensible characters has lived to a ripe old age, isolated in a world
of avarice and self-centeredness—as far as the novel lets us know, he survives. But Koontz manages to weave unpalatable truths into the web of his narrative, allowing each sacrifice, each unjustified success to blend chance, injustice, external forces, internal strengths, human love, and enduring hope into a brilliantly muted conclusion. There are additional touches as well: telepathy, teleportation, time-space dilation, and other science-fictional apparatus. There are monsters—physical as well as psychological. There are discussions of life and death, of good and evil. But ultimately the book is about people, about individuals who make differences in the lives of others. His villains—as is so often the case in his later works—are as much tragic as they are to be hated or feared. Koontz’s heroes are only marginally larger than his readers; they are recognizable, vulnerable, empathetic. They are tempered by their experiences and emerge stronger and more complete than before, with the courage to accept irreplaceable losses and continue striving for a dream. In this sense, The Bad Place provides an ideal transition between Koontz’s earlier books, where the protagonists reach a form of stasis or withdrawal (as in Watchers, for example) and his subsequent Cold Fire (1991), which leaves open the possibility of continuing heroic action.

Michael R. Collings

History or Fantasy?


More a re-creation of China of a millennium ago than a fantasy, Bronze Mirror" intertwines two stories, one being told by the characters of the first. The second tale is the longer and more interesting, since it is laid in and around Lin-An during the Soong dynasty. The protagonists are Lady Phoenix, her maid Pomegranate, and an antique bronze mirror. Other characters enter and leave the tale at the will of the several different narrators, all of whom shape their episode for their own purpose. Filial piety, love, betrayal, death, loyalty, disaster, bliss are all part of the tale. Reminiscent of the Judge Dee stories, it is as rich with the life and society of the time. No elements of fantasy enter this story; nor need they. There is color and action enough.

Fantasy is a part of the tale that opens Bronze Mirror and explains the creation of the second story, told like the tales of Scheherazade, over a number of evenings to the Yellow Emperor, who with all his court exists out of time; all are immortal. The first narrators are the Silkweb Empress, currently estranged from her husband, and the emperor’s chief minister, whose motive in challenging the empress is never clear. The tales told first to the emperor have only one thing in common—a pomegranate, but as the contest
continues into other evenings, the opening episodes interweave into one tale. Other narrators, as court intrigues impel them, join the contest to add their own incidents to the story. The long interest of emperor, empress, and court in the tale they created has a strange effect: as the book ends, they become mortal.

Larsen has a strong sympathy for Chinese history and people, and in China’s exotic differences from our more familiar traditions. She emphasizes this by her style, which is lyrical and evasive, hinting at meanings and suggesting more than stating, as this random sampling of a paragraph shows: “The leathery leaves of the lakeshore shrub rattle wildly in the high-pitched laughter of the wind. Lady Yuan-yu wraps her arms around her head. She doesn’t care. She’ll tell the emperor everything” (214).

Her second novel *Bronze Mirror* differs from *Silk Road*, her first, but interestingly so. Jean Larsen is developing as a writer; will it be as a novelist of history or of fantasy?

*Paula M. Strain*

**Distinctive Collection**


*The Sixth Day and Other Tales* contains stories from two Italian collections: *Storie naturali* was originally published in 1966 under the pseudonym Damiano Malabaila; *Vizio di forma* was originally published in 1977. The contents page does not indicate which stories are from which, but there is a marked shift of style and emphasis half way, which strongly suggests that the first eleven stories are from the 1966 collection and the remaining twelve from the 1977 collection.

The earlier stories, which were presumably written while Levi was still managing a chemical factory in Turin, are mostly whimsical in tone and manner. They include a series which features a salesman named Simpson, whose job is to hawk the daringly innovative products of a company called NATCA, which include the Mimer (a matter-duplicator marketed as a new kind of photocopier) and the kalometer (a device for measuring beauty). Simpson is eventually able to quit his job after pioneering the decoding of various insect languages, whose mastery allows his employers to begin making contracts with social insects to carry out various processes of manufacture too delicate for human hands. Alas, his plans for a happy retirement go somewhat awry because of his increasing dependence on the Torec (a device for recording and playing back subjective experiences). The combination of ironic tone and not-quite-absurd extrapolation featured in these
delightful stories is strongly reminiscent of that featured in the column which David Jones writes for the British weekly New Scientist, which describes the possible applications of the projects undertaken by one Dedalus, an indefatigable R&D man employed by DREADCO.

The earlier stories also include two darker accounts of imaginary research projects. In "Angellic Butterfly" a scientist who believes that human beings are neotenic after the fashion of the axolotl and have the latent capacity to mature into angels proves his case, but finds the result less inspiring than he had hoped. In "Versamina" a chemical compound which converts painful sensations into pleasurable ones also fails to meet hopeful expectations when various applications are attempted. The more biting satire of the later stories is presaged in two one-act dramas: "The Sleeping Beauty in the Fridge: A Winter's Tale", which features a curious experiment in cryonics; and "The Sixth Day", which describes the deliberations of a committee of advisors to the Creator, whose attempts to make a proper job of planning Man become redundant when the impatient boss just goes ahead any old how.

The second group of stories are mostly contes philosophiques which take a bleaker view of the way the world is headed. "Westward" describes a research programme which studies swarming lemmings in order to explore the chemical basis of the stubborn will to live (which the unfortunate rodents have supposedly lost), but sharply questions the utility of the discovery when it is finally made. "Small Red Lights" briefly but very effectively studies the erosion of human freedom by social prohibitions. "Excellent is the Water" is a parable in the form of a disaster story, in which the waters of the earth fall prey to a polywater-like infection. "For a Good Purpose" describes the achievement of self-awareness of the European telephone exchange, and the subsequent sad career of the resultant individual. "The Servant" is a desolate updating of the traditional story of the golem. "His Own Blacksmith; To Italo Calvino" is a story after the manner of Calvino's Cosmicomics, giving a more cynical twist to the surreality. The counterpart here to "The Sixth Day" is "The Hard-Sellers", in which a team of highly-trained salesmen try to talk an unborn soul into an incarnation on earth, and find the integrity of their victim resistant to their slyly tempting offers to discount the risks involved.

The Sixth Day, taken as a whole, is a magnificent collection, distinctive despite its obvious links to the Italian tradition of sciencefictional contes philosophiques established and carried forward by Calvino and Dino Buzzati. As befits the work of a professional scientist, the scientific premises upon which many of the stories are based are more ingenious than those used by Calvino and Buzzati, but—as perhaps befits the work of a survivor
of Auschwitz—there is no compensatory blurring of skeptical perspective or weakening of philosophical acuity. To produce stories which are fun to read while providing such ample food for thought is difficult in the extreme, and this slim collection provides as much evidence of Levi’s greatness as a writer as any of his other works. The majority of its contents are more authentically sciencefictional than the scientifically inspired contes philosophiques of Calvino and Borges, and it certainly deserves to be reckoned the best science fiction collection published in English in 1990; it is unfortunate that we have had to wait so long for a translation.

Brian Stableford

Magical Tales


Elizabeth Lynn is one of those wonderful science fiction and fantasy writers who got their start in the early to mid-1970’s, blossomed in the late 70’s and early 80’s, and then pretty much disappeared from the genre. Writers like Lynn, Lisa Tuttle, George R.R. Martin, Edward Bryant, and John Varley still produce the occasional short story, but, for the most part, as far as their writing goes, they have chosen to turn elsewhere, to horror fiction, perhaps, or television. Whether this is a because they ran out of ideas, or because they found a better way to make a living, or because they felt stifled by the limitations of genre publishing, I don’t know, but their virtual exodus from the field has always seemed to me to be one of the great tragedies of contemporary science fiction. We have the old timers such as an Asimov or an Aldis, and we have the young turks such as a Gibson or a Willis, but an entire in-between generation of talented writers has virtually disappeared.

Thus, the publication of any new work by Elizabeth A. Lynn is cause for rejoicing. Tales from a Vanished Country contains three of Lynn’s fantasies set in the land of Ryoka, two reprints and one original story. The novella “Wizard’s Domain,” which first appeared in the 1980 anthology Basilisk, is a compelling tale of friendship betrayed, second chances, and forgiveness. In the eastern counties of Ryoka the wizard Seramir Firelord has become corrupted by his desire for power and has used his magic to devastate the land. Only the wizard Shea Sealord has the ability to defeat Seramir, but he can’t do it without the aid of Rhune, the former master of his fleet, who has been imprisoned beneath the ocean’s surface ever since he betrayed Shea. “The Woman Who Loved the Moon,” was originally published in the 1981 anthology Amazons. Written in high, fairytale style, it tells the story of three
beautiful warrior sisters who do battle with Sedi, goddess of the moon. The first two sisters die at the goddess’s hands, but the third, Kai Talvela, bent on revenge, defeats the moon and then becomes her lover.

The third tale from a vanished country, “The Red Hawk,” is new, and proves conclusively that Lynn has lost none of her skill. It concerns Tekkele, a reclusive astronomer, who is given temporary control of the winds by Tukalina, the Black Goddess, while that deity goes on vacation to visit her daughter Sedi. Tekkele proves faithful to her charge, but Tukalina’s son, the worthless god Vaikkenen, is jealous of his mother’s faith in her. Vaikkenen first seduces the astronomer and then steals the magical Cloak of Storms that the goddess has given her to control the winds. As one would expect in such a tale, Tekkele bears children who are not entirely human, Vaikkenen misplaces the Cloak, the winds get out of control, and all hell breaks loose. Like “The Woman Who Loved the Moon,” “The Red Hawk” is written in a mannered, fairytale style. Few fantasy writers can produce such elevated prose without sounding silly, but Lynn succeeds admirably.

High fantasy frequently leaves me cold. Perhaps I read too much of it in my misguided youth. Elizabeth Lynn, however, has always managed to bring a breath of originality to the genre and I’ve really missed her work. I’d like to see more of it.

*Michael M. Levy*

**Dark and Menacing Vision**


Miller’s works show an energetic, often frenetic pacing; stylistic explorations that match words to narrative movement; and a vision as dark and menacing in its heroes as in its villains. This return to the haunted world of homicide detective Jack Eichord illustrates Miller’s strengths of imagination and style. As an investigator of serial murders, Eichord embodies Miller’s anatomy of deeply disturbed psyches and more deeply disturbing violence, particularly as he matches wits with the sociopathic Daniel Edward Flowers “Chaingang” Bunkowski.

Beginning with Chaingang’s almost literal resurrection, his ascent from the sewers of Chicago and return to the living (along the way slaughtering a few and eating their hearts), Miller parallels Eichord’s gradual involvement in Bunkowski’s newest sequence of horrors with Chaingang’s methodical preparations for revenge on Eichord. Intercut chapters provide glimpses into the lives and psychologies of these two men and of the people whose lives intersect with theirs.
Unfortunately, the central portions of Slice do not quite match the narrative energy of Slob or Stone Shadow. The novel becomes an exercise in death; little happens narratively for almost nine months, except for Miller’s disquieting recreation of the serial killer’s lust for blood. The result is perhaps accurate psychologically—a nerve-numbing sequence of arbitrary and graphically perverse murders—but after a few samples of Chaingang’s viciousness, the reader may wish that the novel would move more directly to a confrontation between the old enemies.

That confrontation itself seems static. Chaingang has altered (although the change seems unduly abrupt and never quite credible), as has Eichord through his relationship with his barren wife (a near victim in Stone Shadow; their final meeting is ambivalent until a Ninja-type character appears, dispatches his prey and disappears. While related to a sub-plot, the Ninja functions as deus ex machina in this novel—presumably to allow Eichord to remain innocent of shedding Chaingang’s blood. The odd triad of Eichord, his wife, and Chaingang’s newborn son in the final pages suggests more than anything the uneasy shifting of psychological states in Slice. Chaingang seems definitively dead at last, but none of the other resolutions quite fit the world Miller described at the beginning of the novel. Characters have altered too radically, too quickly; other characters have acted abruptly; and even the suggestion of Eichord as adoptive father to Chaingang’s newborn is viscerally chilling.

Michael R. Collings

[An earlier version of this review appeared in Mystery Scene.]

The Final Threads of Pern


A novella about dragon-riders and dragons led off a 1967 issue of Analog twenty-four years ago and created a group of fans whose demands have resulted in eleven full-length books and a few shorter stories. The Analog story, and the full-length book Dragonflight that it expanded to, were science-fiction though the science (bio-engineered dragons, spores from space, a planet with an eccentric orbit, etc.) was so discreetly buried many readers overlooked it. The books that followed concentrated more on what the readers wanted—the history of the colony on Pern and, especially on the dragons and their riders of the latest generation to fight Thread, that blight from interstellar space. Now, in what McCaffrey apparently hopes will be the last of the series, she writes obvious science-fiction.
Science and technology are at the forefront of the story throughout the book. The opening lines of *All the Weyrs of Pern* are about AIVAS (Artificial Intelligence Voice-Activated System), which we met on the last pages of *The Renegades of Pern*. AIVAS is constantly on stage until the next to last page of the story. The plot is a standard one—how technology is recovered by a society regressed to a lower level by disaster, but that won’t matter to McCaffrey’s fans. She has put all the favorite characters of earlier books on stage—Jaxom and his white dragon Ruth, F’lar and Lessa, Menolly, Sebell, Piemur and Robinton. Lesser characters, D’ram, Lytol, Mirrim, Fandarel, and others play their parts as well.

Readers will like the book; it is McCaffrey at her best. Whether they will be satisfied with the evident completion of the tale of Pern remains to be seen. Conan Doyle had to recover Sherlock Holmes from Reichenbach Falls to please his readers.

*Paula M. Strain*

**A Second View**

The latest in the Pern installment is an exciting read indeed. When last we left Pern, the inhabitants had just discovered a computer—AIVAS—that could give them information about their ancestors, Pern’s colonizers. In *All the Weyrs of Pern*, AIVAS’s function—to help destroy Thread forever—is carried out after a 2,400-year delay. AIVAS plans to knock the Red Star out of its orbit through some well-timed explosions. Before his plan can be implemented, some of Pern’s inhabitants have to learn not only how to work computers, but also the rudiments of physics, chemistry, biology, glassmaking, plastic-making, and so on. The dragons are crucial to the plan—especially Jaxom’s Ruth, whose ability to always know when and where he is is of primary importance. The dragons, who can survive about fifteen minutes without oxygen, become mini-spaceships.

Though all the Weyrs of Pern unite to carry out this common function, AIVAS’s presence is not well-liked by those too hide-bound to appreciate the wealth of new technology given them. There are plots to destroy AIVAS; plots to kidnap Masterharper Robinton; plots to kill Jaxom. Those forward-looking enough to appreciate what AIVAS can teach them send their children and dragonriders to learn from what some people have taken to calling “the Abomination.”

The story culminates with a trip to the Red Star to plant the charges. The dragons (who are able to carry “as much as they think they can”) carry matter-antimatter engines set to explode to the surface of the Red Star, with their space-suited riders guiding them. Jaxom and Ruth have to perform a dan-
gerous secret function on the Red Star in order for the plan to succeed. Did they annihilate Thread once and for all, as F’lar had dedicated his life to doing? AIVAS says so, though Thread will still fall this Pass.

This addition to the series is a good one. McCaffrey pulls information, events, people—phenomena from her previous books and puts it to new use here; for example, we learn why there were two Long Intervals in the recorded history of Pern. Some events from *Dragonsdawn* and the Dragonrider trilogy are referred to also; I recommend reading all her Pern books before picking this one up; the book will then make a lot more sense. There is no glossary of terms or list of characters in this book. There are also lots and lots of characters, whom I stopped keeping straight about halfway through the book, though most main characters appeared in her previous books. For Pern fans (who would rather be on Pern than here on Earth) this is a must-read.

Karen Hellekson

**Controversy and Theology**


Although James Morrow has produced conventional science fiction on occasion, what he’s really interested in is writing about religion. Both of his Nebula Award-nominated novels, *This Is the Way the World Ends* (1986) and *Only Begotten Daughter* (1990), are theological fantasies, as are the majority of the stories in this superb new collection from Pulphouse Publishing.

*Swatting at the Cosmos* begins with an introduction in which the author briefly discusses the stories and his reasons for writing them. It seems clear that Morrow has high literary ambitions and that he enjoys stirring up controversy. His “Bible Stories for Adults” series, he says, may well be offensive to some, but he “hasten(s) to point out that we humanists can be hurt too. The concept of Original Sin, for example, offends me to the core.” Not content to merely attack traditional religion, Morrow also goes after some of science fiction’s holiest icons. He labels Heinlein’s famous dictum about never rewriting except at an editor’s request “ridiculous” and insists that Theodore Sturgeon’s assertion that ninety percent of everything is crap is both “false and annoying.” People who quote these statements, Morrow says, should be beaten up.
The volume contains three of the author’s “Bible Stories for Adults,” the only ones he has written so far, despite the fact that they’re numbered 17, 20, and 31. The previously published “No. 17: The Deluge,” a Nebula Award-winner, describes the chaos that occurs when a young woman named Sheila, refusing to be drowned with everyone else, takes to the flood in a canoe and is eventually picked up by Noah’s ark. “No. 31: The Covenant” involves the temptation of a computer named YHWH by another computer named SATAN. “No. 20: The Tower,” which apparently appears here for the first time, envisions a God who lives in a penthouse atop what may very well be Trump Tower.

Also contained in Swatting at the Cosmos are “The Assemblage of Kristin,” in which a group of people, all of whom have received transplants from the body of one dead woman, find themselves drawn to each other irresistibly; “The Eye that Never Blinks,” which combines the old fairytale idea of the wish-granting fish with modern cloning techniques; “The Confessions of Ebenezer Scrooge,” which explains why the world would have been better off if Dickens’ character had never met the various Christmas ghosts and had stayed his miserly, petty self; and “Spelling God with the Wrong Blocks,” in which a pair of science missionaries meet their match on a planet where the android population has taken On the Origin of the Species for its bible.

In summary, this is a delightful, witty, and sometimes wicked short story collection, just the thing to upset the bookburners, confuse readers of Analog, and make the self-righteous froth at the mouth. Strongly recommended.

Michael M. Levy

Sequel to Niven’s Retrospective


Playgrounds of the Mind is the “sequel” to N-Space, the Niven retrospective. This is much like its predecessor, only it covers the last half of Niven’s career. Niven wrote vignettes introducing each work, valuable for the insight they give into his own work. There are cuttings from some of his novels—Legacy of Heorot, which he wrote with Jerry Pournelle and Steven Barnes; Footfall, written with Pournelle; and The Ringworld Engineers, to name a few. Then there’s stuff like “Unfinished Story,” half a page long, and “Bigger Than Worlds,” with illustrative diagrams of a ringworld and Dyson spheres. The whole has a casual, breezy style enjoyable to read.

The problem: there is no acknowledgement page, so I couldn’t tell what had been published before, or where, or when. A good corpsicle story,
“Rammer,” looked completed and polished—but where had it been published? Or hadn’t it? The jacket cover promised both published and unpublished stories; I just don’t know which are which. Also, N-Space had a list of Niven’s works; nothing like that appears in Playgrounds of the Mind. This is more of the same: excerpts from novels (that fail to do justice to the novels themselves, though it’s interesting to see what parts Niven liked best), short stories, essays. Pick it up if you are a tried and true Niven fan.

Karen Hellekson

Comic Potential


Keith Doyle, engagingly maverick college student, seems about to fail Sociology 430. His interests in alien contact (and his paper discussing the impact of Western cultures on other societies) are seen by his professor as irrelevant fantasy. Deep under the old college library, a town full of elves seems in danger of dispossession. Fortunately, the Elf Master runs a tutoring course which selected humans are allowed to attend; equally fortunately, Keith Doyle has a marketing background.

The combination of stubborn student and displaced elves has comic potential which Nye usually handles well; the interaction between Keith and other students seems realistic, though sketchily developed. Elf magic comes across as unusually feeble, the Elf Master as predictably testy, and many of the other characters (including Keith) as slightly dense. Unfortunately, this is required for the plot to work.

The writing also seems uneven. Some passages show a high level of competence, while others (some immediately following) read much less smoothly, may repeat information given more elegantly in the previous passage, or even contain apparent contradictions; the final editing was clearly too casual. Overall, Mythology 101 is a slight but generally cheerful contribution to the growing literature of Little People Abroad.

Martha A. Bartter

Clone on the Range

Ore, Rebecca. The Illegal Rebirth of Billy the Kid. NY: Tor, March 1991. 314 p. $3.95. 0-812-50672-3.

I’m not usually impressed by bookcover blurbs, but Gregory Benford’s comparison of Rebecca Ore to Robert Sheckley on the cover of The Illegal Rebirth of Billy the Kid is right on the mark. Ore’s slightly skewed version of reality, her zest for life, her odd combination of dry humor and moral seri-
ousness, and her tendency towards sentimentality, are all reminiscent of Sheckley at his best. The author’s earlier trilogy, Becoming Alien (1988), Being Alien (1989) and Human to Human (1990), combined an unlikely, almost 1930’s space-cadet plot, with inter-species sex, high-level diplomacy, and some of the best-realized aliens in recent memory. Now, in Billy the Kid, Ore brings together yet another group of unlikely elements, including twenty-first century hippies, a famous gunslinger recreated out of dog meat and human DNA, more inter-species sex, and, would you believe, heroic secret agents from the SPCA.

Simon Boyle, the villain of the book, is a genetic engineer, a maker of chimeras, human simulacra created, primarily, to act as secret agents for the CIA and, secondarily, to become the often-abused playthings of the super-rich. For Boyle and his fellow geneticists almost anything is possible. For example, chimeras can be created that look like famous historical personages, world leaders who need replacing, or creatures out of folklore. Since their primary biological makeup is not human, chimeras have no legal rights, though their use is carefully governed by law. It is illegal, for example, to make a chimera who replicates the personality of a former criminal. Simon Boyle, however, has broken the law by making Billy the Kid. Boyle’s creature firmly believes himself to be the Kid, and, under his creator’s direction, acts out the last months of the outlaw’s life over and over again. Rich women pay Boyle enormous sums of money to sleep with ‘Billy’ just before he is to be gunned down by Pat Garrett. The geneticist, disguised as Garrett, then ‘kills’ the chimera, only to revive him later for another performance.

Boyle has himself a neat little money-making racket until one of his wealthy customers first steals the chimera and then lets Billy get away. Confused, unable to resolve the conflict between the world around him and the nineteenth century world he has been programmed to see, Billy ends up in an SPCA-run shelter for abandoned and abused chimeras. There he meets a disgruntled young SPCA employee, Jane Ayers. Eventually the two of them find themselves on the run from Boyle, the CIA, and, possibly, agents of both the Russian and Mexican governments.

What makes the book work is the skill with which Ore handles Billy’s gradual transformation from one-dimensional puppet to thinking being. As the chimera slowly overcomes his programming, we realize that he is much more than the mere organic robot Society claims him to be. By the end of the book he’s still far from perfect, but he has gained a legitimate claim to full humanity.

If the novel has a fault, however, it lies in Ore’s decision to concentrate entirely on Billy’s development rather than on the larger issues involved. Are legal rights to be limited exclusively to human beings? Can a non-human, thinking being have a soul? Forget about the possibility of aliens from outer space or even artificial intelligence. We already live in a world where gorillas
speak fluent sign language and sport IQ's greater than those of some of the children currently being mainstreamed in our inner-city public schools. It seems to me that more sf writers need to give serious consideration to the legal rights of nonhuman, but intelligent life forms.

I'm quibbling though. *The Illegal Rebirth of Billy the Kid* is an excellent novel, one that should add considerably to Rebecca Ore's growing reputation. Look for it.

*M. Levy*

**Psychological Thriller**


Here Priest continues with the subtlety of narration and the ambiguity of genre which characterized his two previous novels, *The Affirmation* and *The Glamour*. A middle-aged author, Alice Stockton, seems to be the victim of a security cover-up. Her latest book, a biography of six women, has been seized by faceless bureaucrats at the Home Office for uncertain reasons and she is powerless to appeal against the decision; she cannot even discover who has made the order or on what grounds; she is not allowed to keep a copy of the book. At about the same time, her neighbour and best friend (an older woman, Eleanor Hamilton) in the Wiltshire village where she lives alone (except for a cat) has been found dead, apparently murdered. Eleanor's son attends her funeral—except that Eleanor had never mentioned a son and he seems to hate her; certainly Alice takes an instant dislike to him.

This is a psychological thriller, tense and fast-moving. It contains elements of SF in its background—pollution of some of southern England by a French Chernobyl-type accident and enough small differences to make one believe that it's set in an alternate world. But can (or should) the reader believe everything that appears to happen? At least some of the events are the subjective fantasies of one of the characters. Brilliantly constructed, it provides a clever and fascinating read with much food for thought.

*Chris Morgan*

**The Prince Becomes a Star**


First volumes in trilogies have embedded within them the possibility that there will be mass confusion both at beginning and end. Not only does it generally take a long time to develop the characters and to create the setting,
the writer knows there are two more volumes in which any loose ends can be resolved. *Stronghold* doesn’t have the first problem for, while it is first in the Dragon Star trilogy, it chronologically follows the Dragon Prince trilogy. There the multitudinous characters had been already introduced, the setting established, and the high fantasy conflict between good and evil developed. This is not to say that it would be an absolute requirement to have read the first trilogy before beginning *Stronghold*, but undeniably the full effect of Lord Rohan’s present tragedy would be thus enhanced.

When the Dragon Prince trilogy had concluded, the land was essentially peaceful. The science of medicine was developing; technology was rapidly improving living conditions; and Lord Rohan’s highest achievement, the written Law, had restructured many aspects of life in the realm. Now, however, as the second trilogy begins, Rohan and his Sunrunner wife, Sioned, are growing old. They worry not only about their son Poll’s ability to rule but whether he will choose to revert to force when he and his cousin Andry, Lord of Goddess Keep, vie for the people’s loyalty. After having expended his energy on building and advancing his world, Rohan now watches the beginnings of a return to barbarism, religious fanaticism, and superstition—all of which can be attributed to his having allowed Andry to remain Lord of Goddess Keep—Andry who is willing to use any means to prevent the horrible visions in his dreams from becoming fact. Andry, who unethically uses the Star Scroll, creates meaningless rituals for everyday tasks, destroys all other sorcerers through his use of sorcerers’ magic and not only Sun magic but Star magic as well. Worst, in spite of his original good intentions, Andry begins to enjoy his increased power.

Thus, Melanie Rawn has added great depth to her “Dragon” series: the first three books demonstrated a civilizing process; the first of this current trilogy appears to reveal a civilization devolving. From this view, Lord Rohan is almost a tragic hero. But, she offers few clues to where the trilogy will go. To the multitudinous characters in the earlier volumes of the series, more are introduced or gain prominence here. [The list of characters and the genealogy appended are most welcome.] The most interesting new people are the desert nomads under the leadership of Kazander, who will probably highlight one of the remaining volumes, for Andry’s visions of destruction become reality with the incursion of barbaric invaders who destroy everything as they move inward towards the desert and Stronghold.

*Stronghold* concludes with the return to the sword—but with innumerable loose ends. Will High Prince Pol, now unofficial head of the realm, hew to the high ideals of his parents? Can he, son of a Sunrunner and a Sorcerer, stem the return to barbarism? Will he unseat Andry? And by what means? Will there be a much to be desired emphasis on Poll’s ability to communicate telepathically with his dragon?
Like Anne McCaffrey's Pern series, Melanie Rawn's Dragon Star and Dragon Prince trilogies have a pseudo-medieval setting, dangers, and dragons. More than McCaffrey, Rawn introduces a multiplicity of three dimensional characters, develops multilayered plots, and focuses strongly on human relationships. The first trilogy was only in paperback. The paperback *Stronghold* appeared ten months after the hardcover. I fully expect fan groups to emerge honoring this exciting generational fantasy.

*Jennifer Wells*

**Light Entertainment**


Take a Mafia Don, his mistress (who has absconded with his data disks containing stolen nuclear missile codes), the FBI, a Mafia hit man, an Amerind cop, the Church of Elvis, a time-traveler, and a mysterious provocateur: mix well with a large group of tourists and incidental characters, and stir them into a LaGrange colony preparing to secede from the US. The result is a fast-paced story well-based in space technology.

The plot is not a deep one; it's no great challenge to figure out who Blind Boy Grunt is, nor what's on the data disks. On the other hand, the backgrounds are well-drawn and the technical aspects are convincing. Overall, it's an entertaining story and very good for a second novel. Steele is an author to watch.

*W.D. Stevens*

**Complex Vision**


The six longer stories in *Houses Without Doors*, along with six short interludes, recreate the lives of characters trapped in worlds they can neither understand nor escape. Readable as independent stories, the tales nonetheless suggest a larger structure defining complex permutations on reality and illusion. Straub's prose becomes correspondingly elusive; the collection begins with a meticulously detailed treatment of the life and sufferings of the young Harry Beevers (who appears as an adult in *Koko*), and culminates in the waking nightmare of William Standish. His characters' worlds likewise become increasingly surrealistic. "The Blue Rose" anatomizes the effect of
unhealthy familial and social relations on a profoundly disturbed child. “The Juniper Tree” fragments story and structure to suggest the fragmented psyche of an abused child, using film as narrative device and as metaphor. “The Buffalo Hunter” excises its character from external reality, as Bob Bunting loses himself—literally—in words. Finally, the self-absorbed and preoccupied scholar of “Mrs. God” immerses himself in a shadowland where past and present, reality and dream, memory and thought can no longer be defined.

Cerebral, abstract, often symbolic and difficult, just as often highly literary and frustratingly allusive, the novellas testify to Straub’s mastery of substance and style. Never easy, rarely straightforward, the stories impel the reader into worlds of distorted vision and imagination, and of violence and death.

Michael R. Collings

[An earlier version of this review appeared in Mystery Scene.]

Beowulf from Three Perspectives


I was prepared to like this book. It incorporates three subjects in which I have a passionate interest: Beowulf, translation, and photography. The concept is intriguing. The team of creators actually offers a three-part “likeness” of Beowulf: one through a new translation into modern English, the second through new episodes added to the text where the “silence” of the original invites completion, and the third through a photographic essay. The results are interesting, but my high expectations were disappointed. The translation, into clear and often forceful English, offers the book’s greatest pleasure. The other two elements did little more than make me wish for another group of writers/photographers to attempt the same project from a more imaginative perspective. The added episodes lack narrative power. The photographs are, well, prosaic: pictures of landscapes and artifacts where the introduction led me to expect visual equivalents (that is, translations of Beowulf’s verbal images of the verbal text into visual images that seek to evoke similar esthetic response). A commendable effort, a partial success.

Dennis M. Kratz
Paleolithic Myth


Elizabeth Marshall Thomas’s new novel, a companion to *Reindeer Moon* (1987), is another absorbing tale of Paleolithic Siberia. It takes as its inspiration the story of the animal wife, found in many cultures: a man marries a woman who is actually an animal in disguise; she leaves him.

The novel’s narrator is Kori, son of Swift, the shaman and herdsman of *Reindeer Moon’s* tribe of mammoth hunters. The book deals with Kori’s growth as a hunter and his inability to deal successfully with women, who fascinate but mystify him. While hunting one day Kori sees a woman from an unfamiliar tribe, and because she is swimming—a practice unknown to him—he mistakes her for an animal. He decides to abduct her and make her his wife. Her language and ways are strange to him: she makes love differently, and enjoys it; she hunts with arrows and uses snowshoes, and follows different social and religious customs—but he grows to love her. When their son is born, Muskrat (as Kori has named her) makes a magic bundle which includes her son’s umbilical cord to secure his future success as a hunter, according to the beliefs of her people. This shames Kori, who finds the practice alien and distasteful, and he destroys the bundle. Muskrat leaves him, taking her son back to her own people. Though Kori loses his beloved uncle in a skirmish with Muskrat’s people, and deeply feels the loss of his wife and son, he takes up his place in the tribe, and life goes on.

The major strength of Thomas’s novels is in the wealth of anthropological detail she provides. We learn what the tribe ate, how they clothed themselves, arranged and dissolved marriages, how they hunted and what they gathered. But *The Animal Wife* has a narrative force and strong characters, too. Scenes of hunting mammoth and deer are suspenseful as well as informative; the characters are individual personalities we come to care about. *The Animal Wife* is nearly as good as the award winning *Reindeer Moon*, though it lacks the earlier novel’s mythic dimension and some of its poignancy. Kori’s life is more ordinary than Yanan’s (in *Reindeer Moon*), but this new view of ancient tribal life in an unforgiving environment is absorbing none the less. However, *The Animal Wife* is not a fantasy. Perhaps Thomas’s next novel, which will be written from the point of view of an animal, will be a fantasy.

Laurel Anderson Tryforos
INDEX TO BOOK REVIEWS IN THE SFRA NEWSLETTER, 1991

184:Jan/Feb  185:Mar  186:Apr  187:May  188:Jun
189:Jul/Aug  190:Sep  191:Oct  192:Nov  193:Dec

AUTHOR INDEX

Adkins, Sons of Titans (Riggs) / 187
Aickman, Unsettled Dust (Morgan, C) / 193
Alderman, Archivist (Morgan, C) / 186
Aldiss, Last Orders (Ruddick) / 184
Allen, Ring of Charon (Stevens) / 193
Amano, Art of Yoshitaka Amano: Hiten. (Stevens) / 190
Andersen, Diaries of H. C. Andersen trans. Conroy & Rossel (Herrin) / 187
Anderson, Poul, Space Folk (Stevens) / 184
Anderson, Joan, Harry’s Helicopter (Sherman) / 189
Anderson, Kevin, Game’s End (Mallet) / 188
___________, Game’s End (Smith, B) / 188
___________, Gamearth (Mallet) / 188
___________, Gameplay (Mallet) / 188
Anderson, Kevin, & Beason, Lifeline (Werbaneth) / 190
Anderson, Mark, ed., Reading Kafka (Taormina) / 188
Andrew, Mask of the Prophet (Hall) / 186
Anthony, Piers & Fuentes, Roberto, Dead Morn (Collings) / 192
Anthony, Piers, Phaze Doubt (Collings) / 190
April, Berlin-Bangkok (Lehman) / 191
Armitt, Where No Man Has Gone Before (Kramer) / 191
Arnason, Woman of the Iron People (Sanders) / 190
Aronica, et al, Full Spectrum 2 (Larrier) / 186
Ash, Stalking Horse (Sherman) / 187
Ashley, ed., Pendragon Chronicles (Werbaneth) / 191
Asimov, Robot Visions (West) / 192
Atack, Piece of Blue Sky (Elms) / 188
Bailey, Night Watch (Smith, P) / 188
Baker, 'Brave New World': History, Science, & Dystopia (Latham) / 188
Baldick, In Frankenstein’s Shadow (Williams) / 186
Barfield, Owen Barfield on C.S. Lewis (Collings) / 191
Barker, Clive Barker: Illustrator (Dziemianowicz) / 189
Barlow, Expedition (Hicks) / 188
Barrett, Neal, Dawn’s Uncertain Light (Stevens) / 185
Barrett, David, ed., Digital Dreams (Morgan, C) / 193
Barthelme, The King (Carper) / 191
Baum, Dorothy of Oz (de Wit) / 187
Bear, Heads (Hellekson) / 191
Beckwith, Lovecraft’s Providence & Adjacent Parts (Moore) / 185
Bedard, Redwork (Nilo) / 191
Behrends, Clark Ashton Smith (Sanders) / 185
Behrendt, Approaches to Teaching Shelley's Frankenstein (Williams) / 188
Bell, Clare, Ratha and Thistle-chaser (Hui) / 187
Bell, M. Shayne, Nicoji (Collings) / 192
Bell, Margaret, Shadow Gate (Strain) / 192
Benford & Greenberg, What Might Have Been (Collins, W) / 187
Bennett, Cordwainer Smith Checklist (Elms) / 192
Benton, Illustrated History of Horror Comics (Stevens) / 193
Bishop, ed., Nebula Awards 24: SFWA’s Choices for 1988 (Bartter) / 193
Bisson, Voyage to the Red Planet (Levy) / 185
Blackwelder, A Tolkien Thesaurus (Sam Gamgee) / 186
Blackwood, Beyond the Door (Pagliaroli) / 191
Blair, Landscape of Darkness (Brizzi) / 191
Blake, Interior Life (Arbur) / 187
Blakeney, Requiem for Anthi (Hassler) / 187
Blanche & Miller, Ratspike (Liberty) / 186
Bleiler, Richard, Annotated Index to Thrill Book (Barron) / 192
Bleiler, Everett, Science Fiction: Early Years (Barron) / 189
Bloch & Norton, Jekyll Legacy (Arbur) / 185
Bloch, Psycho House (Villano) / 189
Boos, Diary Sketchbook, Books 1 and 2 (Stevens) / 189
Boos & Silver, Socialism & Literary Artistry of William Morris (Ruddick) / 186
Boos, Design of Morris’s ‘Earthly Paradise’ (MacDonald) / 190
Bouchard, Les Gelules Utopiques (Lehman) / 185
Bova, Best of the Nebulas (Carper) / 184
Bowe, Life and Work of Harry Clarke (Albert) / 189
Bowkett, Dualists (Morgan, P) / 186
Boyer, Dragon’s Carbuncle (Larrier) / 184
Boyll, Darkman (Klossner) / 188
Bradfield, Secret Life of Houses (Morgan, P) / 186
Bradford, Tender Prey (Boyle) / 192
Brosnan, War of the Sky Lords (Morgan, P) / 192
Brown & Contento, eds., SF, Fantasy, & Horror: 1990; a bibliography (Barron) / 192
Brust, Cowboy Feng’s Space Bar and Grille (Trammell) / 187
Bryant, Neon Twilight (Levy) / 192
Budd, Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (Dziemianowicz) / 189
Burgess, Work of Dean Ing (Taormina) / 193
Burke, Dark Man: Robert E. Howard Studies (Collins, W) / 184
Burleson, Lovecraft: Disturbing the Universe (Guzzetta) / 188
Byfield, Witches of the Mind (Collins, R) / 191

Cabral, Ciruelo (Stevens) / 189
Cannaday, Bigger Than Life; Creator of Doc Savage (Lewis) / 186
Cannon, Sunset Terrace Imagery in Lovecraft (Collins, W) / 184
Caraker, Faces of Ceti (Strain) / 191
Card, Folk of the Fringe (Heldreth, L) / 184
________, How to Write Science Fiction and Fantasy (Smith, S) / 185
Carpenter, Secret Gardens, Golden Age of Children’s Lit. (Sullivan) / 192
Carroll, Philosophy of Horror (Heldreth) / 187
Cederstrom, Jungian Patterns in Lessing (Wall) / 190
Chalker, Songs of the Dancing Gods, 4 (Runk) / 188
Cherryh, Heavy Time (Hellekson) / 189
Citati, Kafka (Taormina) / 188
Clagett, Friedkin: Films of Aberration, Obsession and Reality (Collings) / 187
Clareson, Understanding Contemporary American SF, 1926-1970 (Collins, R) / 184
Clark, Lewis Carroll (Collins, R) / 190
Clarke, Arthur, Astounding Days: SF Autobiography (Stevens) / 184
Clarke, J. Brian, The Expediter (Hollinger) / 184
Cohen, Max Lakeman and the Beautiful Stranger (Carper) / 191
Cole, Mother of Storms (Morgan, P) / 186
________, Thief of Dreams (Morgan, P) / 186
Collins, Tempter (Collings) / 186
Constantine, Fulfillments of Fate & Desire (Morgan, P) / 186
Cook, Hugh, Lords of the Sword (Jeremias) / 191
Cook, Rick, Wizardry Compiled (Courtney) / 192
Cooper, Clare, Ashar of Qarius (Langer) / 192
Cooper, Louise, Infanta (Morgan, P) / 186
________________, Nocturne (Morgan, P) / 186
Coren, Gilbert: the Man Who Was G. K. Chesterton (Collins, W) / 185
Corman & Jerome, How I Made a Hundred Movies (Klossner) / 185
Cornwell & Kott, Price Guide to Star Trek & Star Wars Collectibles (Barron) / 192
Cott, Wandering Ghost: Lafacadio Hearn (Lowentrout) / 193
Coulson, Star Sister (Stevens) / 185
Coyne, Child of Shadows (Dudley) / 193
Crichton, Jurasic Park (Hellekson) / 185
Crispin & O'Malley, Silent Dances: Starbridge Book Two (Roberts) / 189
Cross, Witch Across Time (Corea) / 187
Crowley, Novelty (de Wit) / 188
Curry & Dean, Winter Scream (Mallett) / 190
Cushing, Peter, Past Forgetting (Klossner) / 189
Cushing, Peter, Past Forgetting: Memoirs of Hammer Years (Klossner) / 189
Cushing, Peter Cushing, an Autobiography (Klossner) / 189
Dahl, Best of Roald Dahl (Barron) / 192
Dahl, Tales of the Unexpected (Barron) / 192
Datlow & Windling, eds., Year's Best Fantasy: 2nd Annual Collection (Heldreth) / 189
Datlow, Blood is not Enough (Moore) / 187
David, Vendetta (Mallett) / 190
Davies, Dollarville (Dudley) / 186
Davis, Paul, Lives and Times of Ebenezer Scrooge (Collings) / 193
Davis, J. Madison, Stanislaw Lem (Heller) / 189
De Lint, Dreaming Place (Langer) / 191
De Lint, Drink Down the Moon (Rothschild) / 184
De Lint, Little Country (Strain) / 193
DeChancie, Castle War! (Osborn) / 190
DeHaven, Walker of Worlds (Phy-Olsen) / 188
DeLamotte, Perils of Night: Study of Gothic (Sanders) / 190
Demers, P. L. Travers (Attebery) / 192
Desjarlais, Throne of Tara (Martin) / 193
Dick, Collected Short Stories of P. K. Dick: Vol. 3. (Collins, W) / 192
Dick, Collected Stories of P. K. Dick, 1 (Collins, W) / 189
Dick, In Pursuit of Valis (Latham) / 193
Dick, We Can Remember It For You Wholesale. Vol. 2. (Collins, W) / 192
Dickson, Young Bleys (Williams) / 191
Dika, Games of Terror: Halloween, Friday 13th, etc. (Moore) / 187
Dixon, Wheeler, Charm of Evil: Life and Films of Terence Fisher (Klossner) / 192
Dixon, Wheeler, Films of Freddie Francis (Klossner) / 191
Dozois, Writing Science Fiction and Fantasy (Smith, S) / 192
Drake, David, Northworld 2: Vengeance (Jeremias) / 192
____________, Surface Action (Hassler) / 185
Dresser, American Vampires: Fans, Victims, Practitioners (Larrier) / 187
Dziemianowicz, Annotated Guide To Unknown & Unknown Worlds (Barron) / 189

Easton, Sparrowhawk (Heller) / 188
Eddings, Ruby Knight (Hitt) / 190
Eddins, Gnostic Pynchon (Attebery) / 187
Edelman, The Gift (Brizzi) / 191
Edgerton, Goblin Moon (Strain) / 190
Effinger, A Fire in the Sun (Carper) / 184
____________, Old Funny Stuff (Levy) / 186
Elliot & Reginald, George Zebrowski: Annotated Bibliography (Bartter) / 185
Elliot, Jeffrey, Jack Dann: Annotated Bibliography (Reuben) / 185
____________, Work of Pamela Sargent: Annotated Bibliography (Bartter) / 185
Ellison, Harlan Ellison Hornbook (Wolfe) / 185
____________, Sleepless Nights in the Procrustean Bed (Wolfe) / 185
Elrod, Bloodcircle (Heller) / 189
Emerson, Ru, Calling of the Three (Zagorski) / 192
____________, Night Threads (Herrin) / 186
____________, Spellbound (Di Nardo) / 188
Eschbach, Scroll of Lucifer (Tryforos) / 191
Everson, Classics of Horror Film (Dziemianowicz) / 190
Faig, Parents of H. P. Lovecraft (Collins, W) / 184
Farmer, Dayworld Breakup (Brizzi) / 190
Farrington, Acts of the Apostates (Stableford) / 186
Feeley, Oxygen Barons (Levy) / 192
____________, Oxygen Barons (Hassler) / 186
Fleischman, Midnight Horse (Rosenblutt) / 191
Foote, Connecticut Yankee in Twentieth Century (Collins, W) / 189
Ford, Casting Fortune (Soukup) / 187
Forward, Rocheworld (Mallet) / 186
Foss, Diary of a Spaceperson (Hicks) / 189
Foster & Greenberg, eds., Smart Dragons, Foolish Elves (Jeremias) / 188
Foster, Alan, Cyber Way (Reynolds) / 186
____________, Metrognome & Other Stories (Stevens) / 189
Fowler, Peripheral Vision (Levy) / 192
Frank, Through the Pale Door: Guide to American Gothic (Morrison) / 185
Frezza, Small Colonial War (Reynolds) / 189
Friedman & De Nevi, Youth in Babylon (Klossner) / 186
Frost, *Monster with a Thousand Faces* (Heldreth) / 187
Fulton, *Encyclopedia of TV Science Fiction* (Klossner) / 192

Gallagher, *Downriver* (Morgan, C) / 186
Garber & Paleo, *Uranian Worlds: Alternative Sexuality* (Gordon) / 185
Gardner, *More Annotated Alice* (Stevens) / 188
Garnett & Ellis, eds., *SF: Critical Approaches* (Bartter) / 190
Garnett, *Zenith: Best in New British SF* (Stableford) / 186
Garnett, ed., *Orbit Science Fiction Yearbook Two* (Morrison) / 189
Gay, *Mindsail* (Morgan, C) / 193
Gemmell, *Knights of Dark Reknown* (Morgan, P) / 186
______, *Last Guardian* (Morgan, P) / 186
Gentile, G, *No Future for Dragons* (Osborn) / 187
______, G, *Dragons Past* (Osborn) / 187
Gentle, *Rats and Gargoyles* (Dudley) / 192
Gibson & Sterling, *The Difference Engine* (Heller) / 188
Gideon, *Greeley’s Cove* (Villano) / 191
Gifford, *American Comic Strip Collections, 1884-1939* (Albert) / 193
Gilluly, *Ritnyn’s Daughters* (Bogstad) / 189
Gilman, *Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman* (Levy) / 191
Gilman, Greer Ilene, *Moonwise* (Strain) / 192
Goldberg, *Unsold TV Pilots* (Klossner) / 192
______, *Skyrocket Steele Conquers the Universe* (Levy) / 191
Graham, ed., *Vathek & Escape from Time* (Billy) / 192
Greenberg & Waugh, eds., *Cults of Horror* (Werbaneth) / 191
Griffin, *Star Commandos: Fire Planet* (Hall) / 191
______, *Star Commandos: Mind Slaver* (Hall) / 191
______, *Star Commandos: Return to War* (Hall) / 191
Gross & Van Hise, eds., *Dark Shadows Tribute* (Klossner) / 190
Gunnarsson, *Human, Beware!* (Hitt) / 192
______, *Make Way for Dragons* (Hitt) / 185
Guthke, *Last Frontier: Imagining Other Worlds* (Stevens) / 184
Guttenberg, *Sunder, Eclipse, & Seed* (Barker) / 191
______, *Sunder, Eclipse, & Seed* (Barker) / 192

Haiblum, *Out of Sync* (Carper) / 185
Hamilton, *Arthur Rackham* (Albert) / 184
Hamlin, *Alley Oop* (Klossner) / 189
Hand, Winterlong (Thompson) / 188
Harper, R., Petrogypsies (Stevens) / 185
Harper, T., Wolfwalker (Stevens) / 185
Harrison, Mark Harrison's Dreamlands (Stevens) / 189
Hartmann, et al., In the Stream of Stars (Stevens) / 188
Harwell, Ranges of Romanticism: Five for Ten Studies (Heller) / 193
Hassler, Isaac Asimov (Lewis) / 192
Hasson, Fantasia & Ciencia Ficcion (Kreksch) / 191
________, Fantasticos Pulps en Castellano (1939-1957) (Kreksch) / 191
Hawke, Cleopatra Crisis, The (Mead) / 185
Hayles, Chaos Bound (Latham) / 189
Heinlein, V., ed., Grumbles from the Grave, (Smith, P) / 185
Heller, Turn of the Screw: Bewildered Vision (Hitt) / 185
Hoffmann & Bailey, Arts & Entertainment Fads (Barron) / 193
Holbrook, Skeleton in the Wardrobe (Stevens) / 192
Howard, R. E. Howard: Selected Letters 1931-36 (Elms) / 192
Hoyt, Lust for Blood: Consuming Story of Vampires (Gordon) / 187
Hubbard, Fear (Mallett) / 189
Huff, Tanya, Fire's Stone, The (Wells) / 192
________, Last Wizard, The (Senior) / 187
Husband, Sequels: Annotated Guide to Novels in Series (Barron) / 187
Hyman, Echoes (Heller) / 189

Indick, Ray Bradbury: Dramatist (Lewis) / 185
Inge, Comics as Culture (Liberty) / 184
Irwin, Best of the Best of Trek (Taormina) / 188

Jacques, Mossflower (Morgan, P) / 186
James, Sorcerer's Stone (Mallett) / 190
Johnson, Norma, The Witch House (Mingin) / 191
Johnson, Shane, Worlds of the Federation (Taormina) / 186
Jones & Goodwin, eds., Feminism, Utopia, & Narrative (Bartter) / 190
Jones, Hidden Turnings (Morgan, C) / 186
________, Hidden Turnings (Bogstad) / 186
Jordan, The Eye of the World (Sullivan) / 188
________, The Great Hunt (Sullivan) / 188
Joshi, ed., H.P. Lovecraft Conference Proceedings (Collins, W) / 192
Joshi, et al., eds., Necrofile: Review of Horror Fiction (Barron) / 193
Joyce & Stephens, eds., Checklist of Kim Stanley Robinson (Barron) / 190
Kandel, *In Between Dragons* (Carper) / 185
Kato, *Yamamoto: Rage in Heaven* (Schuyler) / 189
Katz, *Whalesinger* (Langer) / 191
Kegan, *Baby, The* (Rosenbaum) / 185
Kelly, *Heroines* (Levy) / 193
Kerr, Katherine, *A Time of Exile* (Strain) / 191

__________, *Polar City Blues* (Wytenbroek) / 190
Key, *Angel of Darkness* (Collins, R) / 185
Kilian, *Gryphon* (Wytenbroek) / 185
King, Stephen, *Four Past Midnight* (Sanders) / 191
King, Jr., *Pattern in the Web: Mythical Poetry of Charles Williams* (Patterson) / 192
Kirchoff & Niles, *Flint the King* (Valle) / 192
Klauss, *Silver Kiss* (delint) / 191
Klinkowitz, *Slaughterhouse-Five: Reforming Novel/World* (Gordon) / 193
Knicklebine, *Welcome to Twin Peaks* (Klossner) / 186
Knight, *Monad; essays on science fiction* (Barron) / 192
Knowles, *Purgatorical Flame: Seven British Writers in WW II* (Ruddick) / 187
Koontz, *Bad Place* (Collings) / 193
Kube-McDowell, *Quiet Pools* (Maiore) / 192
Kuehl, *Alternate Worlds: Postmodern Antirealistic Fiction* (Collings) / 193
Kuhn, *Alien Zone* (Morrison) / 188
Kurtz & Harris, *Adept* (Villano) / 187

Lacey, *New Arthurian Encyclopedia* (Williams) / 190
Lackey, *Burning Waters: Diana Tregarde Investigation* (Kaveny) / 187

______, *By the Sword* (Zagorski) / 188
______, *Magic's Price* (Strain) / 191
______, *Magic's Promise* (Strain) / 191
Lagorious & Day, *King Arthur Through the Ages* (Williams) / 191
Lane, *To 'Herland' and Beyond* (Levy) / 187
Langford, ed., *Contours of the Fantastic* (Attebery) / 184
Larsen, Jeanne, *Bronze Mirror* (Strain) / 193

__________, *Silk Road* (Senior) / 187
Larson, *Robert Bloch Companion* (Sanders) / 185
Laumer, *Reward for Retief* (Marx) / 186
Le Guin, *Home-Concealed Woman: Diaries of M. W. Le Guin* (Smith, P) / 191
Lee, *Forests of the Night* (Morgan, C) / 186
Leiber, *Fafhrd & Me* (Collins, R) / 191
Leinster, *Forgotten Planet* (Dunn) / 191
Levi, Sixth Day and Other Tales (Stableford) / 193
Levitas, Concept of Utopia (Hall) / 192
Levy, Natalie Babbitt (Attebery) / 191
Lewis, C.S., All My Road Before Me: C. S. Lewis, 1922-1927 (Collings) / 193
Lewis, Anthony, Annotated Bibliography of Recursive SF (Barron) / 187
Lindstrom, Borges: Study of the Short Fiction (Herrin) / 191
Littell, Bad Voltage (Marx) / 186
Lloyd-Smith, Uncanny American Fiction: Medusa's Face (Latham) / 193
Llywelyn, Red Branch (Heldreth, L) / 184
Longyear, Infinity Hold (Stevens) / 185
Love, Total Devotion Machine (Morgan, C) / 186
Lovecraft, Fantastic Poetry, ed. by S.T. Joshi. (Collins, W) / 184
Lovett & Lovett, Lewis Carroll's Alice (Barron) / 186
Lovett, Alice on Stage: Early Theatrical Productions (Collins, R) / 185
Lucas, Video Watchdog: Guide to Fantastic Video (Klossner) / 191
Lurie, Don't Tell the Grown-ups (Phy-Olsen) / 191
Lynn, Tales from a Vanished Country (Levy) / 193

MacKinnon, Misogyny in Movies: DePalma Question (Liberty) / 188
Magistrale, ed., Shining Reader (Morrison) / 192
Mancoff, Arthurian Revival in Victorian Art (Albert) / 190
Manguel, ed., Oxford Book of Canadian Ghost Stories (Phy-Olsen) / 192
Mank, Karloff and Lugosi (Dziemianowicz) / 184
Marshall, ed., Essays on C.S. Lewis and George MacDonald (Collings) / 192
Masterton, Scare Care (Soukup) / 187
________, Walkers (Moore) / 187
Matthews, Arthur and the Sovereignty of Britain (Thompson) / 186
Matthews, C. & J., Arthurian Book of Days (Thompson) / 190
May, Lloyd Alexander (Levy) / 189
Mayer, Noble-Hearted Kate (Sherman) / 191
____, The Golden Swan (Sherman) / 191
McAuley, Secret Harmonies (Morgan, P) / 186
McCaffery, L, Across Wounded Galaxies: Interviews, Am. SF Writers (Barron) / 185
McCaffrey & Moon, Generation Warriors (Strain) / 187
McCaffrey & Nye, Death of Sleep (Wells) / 187
McCaffrey, All the Weyrs of Pern (Hellekson) / 193
______, All the Weyrs of Pern (Strain) / 193
________, Rowan (Bartter) / 187
McCammon, Mine (Collings) / 192
McCarthy, et al, eds., Legacy of Olaf Stapledon (Latham) / 188
McCarty, *Modern Horror Film* (Morrison) / 184
McCord, *Voyages to Utopia* (Williams) / 186
McDowell, *Toplin* (Umland) / 190
McGlathery, *Fairy Tale Romance: Grimms, Basile, & Perrault* (Bousfield) / 191
________, *Fairy Tale Romance: Grimms, Basile, and Perrault* (Levy) / 192
McKillip, *Sorceress and the Cygnet* (Strain) / 189
McKinney, *Kaduna Memories* (Gordon) / 188
________, *Robotech: End of the Circle* (Gordon) / 188
McMahon, *Vampires Anonymous* (Hollinger) / 191
McQuinn, *Warrior* (Winkler) / 187
Metzger, *Shock Totem* (Corea) / 189
Milan, *The Cybernetic Shogun* (Gordon) / 188
Miller, *Slice* (Collings) / 193
Minary & Moorman, *Arthurian Dictionary* (Sullivan) / 184
Monteleone, *Borderlands* (Umland) / 185
Moon, *Surrender None: The Legacy of Gird* (Jeremias) / 187
Morgan, *Dark Fantasies* (Daws) / 186
Morrow, *Swatting at the Cosmos* (Levy) / 193
Murray, H.G. *Wells* (Hall) / 185
Mustazza, *Forever Pursuing Genesis* (Wolfe) / 188

Newman, *Night Mayor* (Stableford) / 186
Niles, *Feathered Dragon* (Becker, G) / 192
________, *Iron Helm* (Becker, G) / 192
________, *Ironhelm* (Riggs) / 191
________, *Viper Hand* (Becker, G) / 192
________, *Viperhand* (Riggs) / 191
Niven & Barnes, *Achilles’ Choice* (Hellekson) / 192
Niven, *N-Space* (Hellekson) / 186
________, *Playgrounds of the Mind* (Hellekson) / 193
Nolan, *How to Write Horror Fiction* (Neilson) / 189
Nollen, *Boris Karloff: Critical Account of His Work* (Hicks) / 191
Norton, Andre, *Dare to Go A-Hunting* (Martin) / 186
__________, ed., *Tales of Witch World 3* (Martin) / 187
__________, *Jessie Willcox Smith: Bibliography* (Albert) / 193

O’Keefe, *Black Snow Days* (Stevens) / 185
O’Neal, *Abyss of Light* (Jeremias) / 192
________, *Redemption of Light* (Jeremias) / 192
________, *Treasure of Light* (Jeremias) / 192
Ogle, *Blind Turtle* (Schuyler) / 188
Ore, *Being Alien* (Bartter) / 186
___, *Illegal Rebirth of Billy the Kid* (Levy) / 193

Parish and Pitts, *Great Science Fiction Pictures II* (Klossner) / 184
Parrinder & Rolfe, *H.G. Wells under Revision* (Taormina) / 186
Peak, *Cat House* (Collings) / 187
Pearson & Uricchio, *Many Lives of Batman* (Latham) / 190
Penley, et al, *Film, Feminism & SF* (Hollinger) / 190
Pickering, *Understanding Doris Lessing* (Ruddick) / 188
Pike, *Witch* (de Lint) / 191
Pinkwater, *Borgel* (Berman) / 192
Pohl, *Gateway Trip: Tales & Vignettes of the Heechee* (Heller) / 188
Pollack & Matthews, *Tarot Tales* (Morgan, C) / 186
Pollin, *Images of Poe: Catalogue of Illustrations* (Albert) / 185
Pratchett, *Pyramids* (Morgan, P) / 186
________, *Sisters* (Morgan, P) / 186
________, *Wyrd Sisters* (Morgan, P) / 186
Preuss, *Venus Prime: The Diamond Moon* (Ferguson) / 190
Price, *H.P. Lovecraft and Cthulu Mythos* (Dziemianowicz) / 185
______, *Horror of it All: Encrusted Gems from Cthulu* (Neilson) / 185
Priest, *The Quiet Woman* (Morgan, C) / 193
Pringle, *Ultimate Guide to Science Fiction* (Barron) / 189

Ransom, *Jaguar* (Jeremias) / 189
Rawn, *Stronghold* (Wells) / 193
Reed, *Black Milk* (Levy) / 186
Rees, *What do Draculas Do?* (Sullivan) / 191
Reeves-Stevens, J. & G., *Chronicles of Galen Sword #1: Shifter* (Pagliaroli) / 192
Regan, *Jilly’s Ghost* (de Lint) / 191
Resnick, *Bwana & Bully!* (Reilly) / 192
______, *Second Contact* (Arbur) / 186
Rice, *Witching Hour* (Hellekson) / 188
Rickman, *To the High Castle, P. K. Dick* (Latham) / 188
Riley, *Dracula* (Original 1931 Shooting Script) (Albert) / 187
Ringe, *Charles Brockden Brown* (Heller) / 191
Roberson, *Flight of the Raven* (Berman) / 188
Roberts, *Gothic Immortals* (Heller) / 186
Robinson, *Spider, Callahan’s Lady* (Hellekson) / 190
Robinson, Kim Stanley, *Escape from Kathmandu* (Bartter) / 186

Rodden, *Politics of Literary Reputation* (Hall) / 192

Rogers, *Prisoner and Danger Man* (Klossner) / 186

Rovin, *Encyclopedia of Monsters* (Latham) / 187

Rubin, Steven, *Complete James Bond Movie Encyclopedia* (Klossner) / 188

Rubin, Bruce, *Jacobs Ladder* (Klossner) / 184

Ruddick, *Christopher Priest* (de Wit) / 185

Rusch & Smith, eds., *SF Writers Handbook* (Potts) / 188

Russell, *Initiate Brother* (Di Nardo) / 188

Ryman, *Child Garden* (Morgan, P) / 186

Saberhagen, *Matter of Taste* (Gordon) / 188

Sammons, *Splatterpunks: Extreme Horror* (Umland) / 185

Savage, William, *Comic Books and America* (Liberty) / 189


Saxton, *Jane Saint & the Backlash* (Morgan, P) / 186

Schake & Huttar, eds., *Word and Story in C. S. Lewis* (Stevens) / 192

Schoe, *Seeing Red* (Nilo) / 189

Schultz & Joshi, eds., *Epicure in the Terrible: Lovecraft* (Collins, W) / 193

Schultz, *Lovecraft: Letters to Henry Kuttner* (Collings) / 188

Schweitzer, *Pathways to Elfland: Writings of Lord Dunsany* (Collins, R) / 184

Scherer, *White Isle* (de Wit) / 189

Scott, Michael, *Death’s Law* (Morgan, P) / 186

Scott, Kathryn, *Dark Shadows Companion* (Klossner) / 186

Scott, Randall, *Comics Librarianship* (Strain) / 186

Shatner, *Tekwar* (Larrier) / 185

Sheffield, *Summertide* (Stevens) / 186

Shelley, *Mary Shelley Reader* (Pfeiffer) / 190

Shiner, *Nine Hard Questions About the Universe* (Sanders) / 190

Silverberg, *Letters from Atlantis* (Langer) / 188

Singer, *Charmed* (Barker) / 187

Sirota, *Demon Shadows* (Taormina) / 188


Skerl & Lydenberg, eds., *W.S. Burroughs at the Front* (Morrison) / 190
Sleator, Strange Attractors (Holtzman) / 192
Smith, Steven, A Heart at Fire’s Center: Bernard Herrmann (Larson) / 193
Smith, L J, Heart of Valor (Nilo) / 188
Smith, Frederik, ed., Genres of ‘Gulliver’s Travels’ (Kramer) / 187
Smith, Julie, Call it Madness (Strain) / 187
Smith, Ronald, Poe in the Media (Taormina) / 190
Smith, Sherwood, Wren to the Rescue (Sherman) / 191
Staines, trans., Romances of Chrétien de Troyes (Kratz) / 187
Stamey, Double Blind (Bogstad) / 186
Stasheff, Warlock Rock (Reilly) / 185
Steele, Allen, Clarke County, Space (Stevens) / 193
______, Orbital Decay (Carper) / 187
Stephens, Christopher, comp., Checklist of Wolfe, et al (Barron) / 185
______, SF & F Paperback First Edition: Complete List (Barron) / 190
Stephensen-Payne et al, Philip Jose Farmer: a bibliography (Barron) / 185
Stephenson-Payne, Piers Anthony: a bibliography (Barron) / 185
Sternfield, Look of Horror: Scary Moments from Scary Movies (Taormina) / 184
Stinson, Anthony Burgess Revisited (Ruddick) / 190
Straub, Houses Without Doors (Collings) / 193
Sutin, Divine Invasions: Life of P. K. Dick (Latham) / 188
Swearengin, et al, Beowulf: A Likeness (Kratz) / 193
Swycaffer, Warsprite (Gordon) / 188
______, Web of Futures (Messina) / 189
Talmadge-Bickmore, The Apprentice (Lowry) / 189
Tardivel, Pour La Patrie (Lehman) / 185
Tatar, Hard Facts of the Grimm’s Fairy Tales (Attebery) / 189
Tepper, Raising the Stones (Arbur) / 185
______, Raising the Stones (Levy) / 185
Thomas, Animal Wife (Tryforos) / 193
Thompson & Carter, Firstborn (Zsarko) / 191
______, Riverwind the Plainsman (Valle) / 192
Thwaite, A.A. Milne: Man Behind Winnie-the-Pooh (Sullivan) / 188
Timson, Far Magic Shore (Morgan, P) / 186
Tolkien, War of the Ring (Collings) / 188
Tolnay, Celluloid Gangs (Klossner) / 189
Touponce, Isaac Asimov (Lewis) / 192
Tropp, Images of Fear (Morrison) / 188
Turner, Cinema of Adventure, Romance & Terror (Klossner) / 185
Turtledove, World of Difference (Reynolds) / 186
Van Hise, Trek Crew Book (Klossner) / 190
______, Lost in Space 25th Anniversary Tributer Book, (Klossner) / 190
______, ed., Best of Enterprise Incidents (Klossner) / 190
______, Stephen King and Clive Barker (Collings) / 188
Vardeman, Space Vectors (Dudley) / 187
Von Gunden, StarSpawn (Dunn) / 191

Walker, Nancy, Feminist Alternatives (Hollinger) / 184
Walker, Mary, Scathach and Maeve’s Daughters (Langer) / 187
Wallace, Agony of Lewis Carroll (Stevens) / 187
Watson, Jeanie, Risking Enchantment: Coleridge’s World of Faery (Collings) / 193
Watson, Ian, Salvage Rites & Other Stories (Morgan, C) / 186
Waugh, Comics (Albert) / 190
Weaver, SF Stars and Horror Heroes: Interviews (Klossner) / 191
Weis & Hickman, Elven Star (Taormina) / 192
Weis, Margaret, King’s Test (Taormina) / 191
____________, Lost King (Taormina) / 186
Wells, First Book of the Kingdoms: Wrath of Ashar (Herrin) / 184
______, Second Book of the Kingdoms: The Usurper (Herrin) / 184
West, Pamela, 20/20 Vision (Williams) / 185
West, Mark, ed., Before Oz: Juvenile Fantasy Stories (Albert) / 186
White, Enchanted World of Jessie M. King (Albert) / 193
Wilkie, Through Narrow Gate: Consciousness of Russell Hoban (Collins, R) / 187
Williams, Walter, Facets (Levy) / 184
Williams, Charles, Letters to Lalage: C. Williams to Lois Lang-Sims (Albinski) / 191
____________, Outlines of Romantic Theology (Spencer) / 189
Williams, Ian, Lies That Bind (Morgan, C) / 186
Williamson, Jack, Into Eighth Decade (Levy) / 190
____________, Mazeway (Reilly) / 192
Willis, No Clock in the Forest: Alpine Tale (Winkler) / 192
Wilson, A.N., C. S. Lewis: A Biography (Collings) / 184
Wilson, David, Coachman Rat (Morgan, P) / 186
Wilson, Robert, The Divide (Carper) / 191
Wingrove, Chung Kuo, Book One (Morgan, P) / 186
Winter, Faces of Fear (Neilson) / 186
Winterson, Sexing the Cherry (Albinski) / 186
Wolverton, On My Way to Paradise (Hall) / 187
____________, Serpent Catch (Mallett) / 189
Womack, Heathern (Heller) / 191
Wood, Plan 9 from Outer Space (Klossner) / 186
Wrede, Dealing with Dragons (Arbur) / 185
Wylie, Unbalanced Earth: Dreams of Stone (Morgan, P) / 186
Unbalanced Earth: Lightless Kingdom (Morgan, P) / 186
Yolen, The Dragon’s Boy (Bartter) / 191
Zahn, Star Wars: Heir to Empire (Hellekson) / 190
Zentz, Jupiter’s Ghost: Next Generation SF (Morrison) / 193
Zizek, Looking Awry: Jacques Lacan Through Culture (Collings) / 193

TITLE INDEX

20/20 Vision, West / 185
A.A. Milne: Man Behind Winnie-the-Pooh, Thwaite / 188
Abyss of Light, O’Neal / 192
Achilles’ Choice, Niven & Barnes / 192
Across Wounded Galaxies: Interviews, Am. SF Writers, McCaffery, L / 185
Acts of the Apostates, Farrington / 186
Adept, Kurtz & Harris / 187
Agony of Lewis Carroll, Wallace / 187
Alice on Stage: Early Theatrical Productions, Lovett / 185
Alien Zone, Kuhn / 188
All My Road Before Me: C. S. Lewis, 1922-1927, Lewis / 193
All the Weyrs of Pern, McCaffrey / 193
All the Weyrs of Pern, McCaffrey / 193
Alley Oop, Hamlin / 189
Alternate Worlds: Postmodern Antirealistic Fiction, Kuehl / 193
American Comic Strip Collections, 1884-1939, Gifford / 193
American Vampires, Dresser / 186
American Vampires: Fans, Victims, Practitioners, Dresser / 187
Angel of Darkness, Key / 185
Animal Wife, Thomas / 193
Annotated Bibliography of Recursive SF, Lewis / 187
Annotated Guide To Unknown & Unknown Worlds, Dziemianowicz / 189
Annotated Index to Thrill Book, Bleiler / 192
Anthony Burgess Revisited, Stinson / 190
Apprentice, Talmadge-Bickmore / 189
Approaches to Teaching Shelley’s Frankenstein, Behrendt / 188
Archivist, Alderman / 186
Art of Yoshitaka Amano: Hiten., Amano / 190
Arthur Rackham, Hamilton / 184
Arthur and the Sovereignty of Britain, Matthews / 186
Arthurian Book of Days, Matthews, C. & J. / 190
Arthurian Dictionary, Minary and Moorman / 184
Arthurian Revival in Victorian Art, Mancoff / 190
Arts & Entertainment Fads, Hoffmann & Bailey / 193
Ashar of Qarius, Cooper / 192
Astounding Days: SF Autobiography, Clarke / 184

Baby, The, Kegan / 185
Bad Place, Koontz / 193
Bad Voltage, Littell / 186
Before Oz: Juvenile Fantasy Stories, West / 186
Being Alien, Ore / 186
Beowulf: A Likeness, Swearer, et al / 193
Berlin-Bangkok, April / 191
Best of Enterprise Incidents, Van Hise, ed. / 190
Best of Roald Dahl, Dahl / 192
Best of the Best of Trek, Irwin / 188
Best of the Nebulas, Bova / 184
Beyond the Door, Blackwood / 191
Bigger Than Life; Creator of Doc Savage, Cannaday / 186
Black Milk, Reed / 186
Black Snow Days, O'Keefe / 185
Blind Turtle, Ogle / 188
Blood is not Enough, Datlow / 187
Bloodcircle, Elrod / 189
Borderlands, Umland / 185
Borgel, Pinkwater / 192
Borges: Study of the Short Fiction, Lindstrom / 191
Boris Karloff: Critical Account of His Work, Nollen / 191
"Brave New World": History, Science, and Dystopia, Baker / 188
Bronze Mirror, Larsen / 193
Burning Waters: Diana Tregarde Investigation, Lackey / 187
Bwana & Bully!, Resnick / 192
By the Sword, Lackey / 188

C. S. Lewis: A Biography, Wilson / 184
Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, Budd / 189
Call it Madness, Smith, J / 187
Callahan's Lady, Robinson / 190
Calling of the Three, Emerson / 192
Casting Fortune, Ford / 187
Castle War!, DeChancie / 190
Cat House, Peak / 187
Celluloid Gangs, Tolnay / 189
Chaos Bound, Hayles / 189
Charles Brockden Brown, Ringe / 191
Charm of Evil: Life and Films of Terence Fisher, Dixon / 192
Charmed, Singer / 187
Checklist of Kim Stanley Robinson, Joyce & Stephens, eds. / 190
Checklist of Wolfe, et al, Stephens / 185
Child Garden, Ryman / 186
Child Garden, Ryman / 186
Child of Shadows, Coyne / 193
Christopher Priest, Ruddick / 185
Christopher Priest, Ruddick / 185
Chronicles of Galen Sword #1: Shifter, Reeves-Stevens, J. & G. / 192
Chung Kuo, Book One, Wingrove / 186
Cinema of Adventure, Romance & Terror, Turner / 185
Ciruelo, Cabral / 189
Clark Ashton Smith, Behrends / 185
Clarke County, Space, Steele / 193
Classics of Horror Film, Everson / 190
Cleopatra Crisis, The, Hawke / 185
Clive Barker: Illustrator, Barker / 189
Close Encounters?: Science and SF, Lambourne, et al / 191
Coachman Rat, Wilson / 186
Collected Short Stories of P.K. Dick: Vol. 3., Dick / 192
Collected Stories of P. K. Dick, 1, Dick / 189
Comic Books and America, Savage / 189
Comics, Waugh / 190
Comics Librarianship, Scott, R / 186
Comics as Culture, Inge / 184
Complete James Bond Movie Encyclopedia, Rubin / 188
Concept of Utopia, Levitas / 192
Connecticut Yankee in Twentieth Century, Foote / 189
Contours of the Fantastic, Langford, ed. / 184
Cordwainer Smith Checklist, Bennett / 192
Cowboy Feng's Space Bar and Grill, Brust / 186
Cowboy Feng's Space Bar and Grille, Brust / 187
Cults of Horror, Greenberg & Waugh, eds. / 191
Cyber Way, Foster / 186
Cybernetic Shogun, Milan / 188

Dare to Go A-Hunting, Norton / 186
Dark Fantasies, Morgan / 186
Dark Man: Robert E. Howard Studies, Burke / 184
Dark Shadows Companion, Scott, K / 186
Dark Shadows Tribute, Gross & Van Hise, eds. / 190
Darkman, Boyll / 188
Dawn's Uncertain Light, Barrett / 185
Dayworld Breakup, Farmer / 190
Dead Morn, Anthony & Fuentes / 192
Dealing with Dragons, Wrede / 185
Death of Sleep, McCaffrey & Nye / 187
Death's Law, Scott / 186
Demon Shadows, Sirota / 188
Design of Morris's, Boos / 190
Diaries of Hans Christian Andersen, Andersen / 187
Diary Sketchbook, Books 1 and 2, Bode / 189
Diary of a Spaceperson, Foss / 189
Difference Engine, Gibson & Sterling / 188
Digital Dreams, Barrett, ed. / 193
Divide, The, Wilson / 191
Divine Invasions: Life of P. K. Dick, Sutin / 188
Dollarville, Davies / 186
Don't Tell the Grown-ups, Lurie / 191
Dorothy of Oz, Baum / 187
Double Blind, Stamey / 186
Downriver, Gallagher / 186
Dracula (Original 1931 Shooting Script), Riley / 187
Dragon's Boy, Yolen / 191
Dragon's Carbuncle, Boyer / 184
Dragons Past, Gentile, G / 187
Dreaming Place, De Lint / 191
Drink Down the Moon, De Lint / 184
Dualists, Bowkett / 186

Echoes, Hyman / 189
Elven Star, Weis & Hickman / 192
Enchanted World of Jessie M. King, White / 193
Encyclopedia of American Comics, Goulart / 189
Encyclopedia of Monsters, Rovin / 187
Encyclopedia of TV Science Fiction, Fulton / 192
Epicure in the Terrible: Lovecraft, Schultz & Joshi, eds. / 193
Escape from Kathmandu, Robinson / 186
Essays on C.S. Lewis and George MacDonald, Marshall, ed. / 192
Expediter, The, Clarke / 184
Expedition, Barlow / 188
Eye of the World, Jordan / 188

Faces of Ceti, Caraker / 191
Faces of Fear, Winter / 186
Facets, Williams / 184
Fafhrd & Me, Leiber / 191
Fairy Tale Romance: Grimms, Basile, & Perrault, McGlathery / 191
Fairy Tale Romance: Grimms, Basile, and Perrault, McGlathery / 192
Fantasia & Ciencia Ficcion, Hasson / 191
Fantastic Poetry, Joshi, ed. / 184
Fantasticos Pulps en Castellano (1939-1957), Hasson / 191
Far Magic Shore, Timson / 186
Fear, Hubbard / 189
Feathered Dragon, Niles / 192
Feminism, Utopia, and Narrative, Jones & Goodwin, eds. / 190
Feminist Alternatives, Walker / 184
Films of Freddie Francis, Dixon / 191
Film, Feminism & SF, Penley, et al / 190
Fire in the Sun, Effinger / 184
Fire's Stone, Huff / 192
First Book of the Kingdoms: Wrath of Ashar, Wells / 184
Firstborn, Thompson & Carter / 191
Flight of the Raven, Roberson / 188
Flint the King, Kirchoff & Niles / 192
Folk of the Fringe, Card / 184
Forests of the Night, Lee / 186
Forever Pursuing Genesis, Mustazza / 188
Forgotten Planet, Leinster / 191
Four Past Midnight, King / 191
Friedkin: Films of Aberration, Obsession and Reality, Clagett / 187
Fulfillments of Fate & Desire, Constantine / 186
Full Spectrum 2, Aronica, et al. / 186
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Game's End</td>
<td>Anderson, K</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game's End</td>
<td>Anderson, K</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamearth</td>
<td>Anderson, K</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gameplay</td>
<td>Anderson, K</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games of Terror: Halloween, Friday 13th, etc.</td>
<td>Dika</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateway Trip: Tales &amp; Vignettes of the Heechee</td>
<td>Pohl</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Warriors</td>
<td>McCaffrey &amp; Moon</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genres of</td>
<td>Smith, F.</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Zebrowski: Annotated Bibliography</td>
<td>Elliot &amp; Reginald</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift, The</td>
<td>Edelman</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilbert: the Man Who Was G. K. Chesterton</td>
<td>Coren</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gnostic Pynchon</td>
<td>Eddins</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goblin Moon</td>
<td>Edgerton</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golden Swan</td>
<td>Mayer</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Omens: Prophecies of Agnes Nutter, Witch</td>
<td>Gaiman &amp; Pratchett</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gothic Immortals</td>
<td>Roberts</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Hunt</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Science Fiction Pictures II</td>
<td>Parish and Pitts</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greeley's Cove</td>
<td>Gideon</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grumbles from the Grave,</td>
<td>Heinlein, V. ed.</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gryphon</td>
<td>Kilian</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.G. Wells, Murray</td>
<td>Murray</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.G. Wells under Revision</td>
<td>Parrinder &amp; Rolfe</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.P. Lovecraft Centennial Conference Proceedings</td>
<td>Joshi, ed.</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.P. Lovecraft and Cthulu Mythos</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard Facts of the Grimm's Fairy Tales</td>
<td>Tatar</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harlan Ellison Hornbook</td>
<td>Ellison</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry's Helicopter</td>
<td>Anderson, J</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head's</td>
<td>Bear</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart at Fire's Center: Bernard Herrmann</td>
<td>Smith</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart of Valor</td>
<td>Smith</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heathern, Womack</td>
<td>191</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy Time</td>
<td>Cherryh</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroines</td>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidden Turnings</td>
<td>Jones</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidden Turnings</td>
<td>Jones</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hollywood Gothic: Tangled Web of Dracula</td>
<td>Skal</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-Concealed Woman: Diaries of M. W. Le Guin</td>
<td>Le Guin</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hooray for Hellywood</td>
<td>Friesner</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horror of it All: Encrusted Gems from Cthulu</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Houses Without Doors, Straub / 193
How I Made a Hundred Movies, Corman & Jerome / 185
How to Write Horror Fiction, Nolan / 189
How to Write Science Fiction and Fantasy, Card / 185
Human, Beware!, Gunnarsson / 192

Illegal Rebirth of Billy the Kid, Ore / 193
Illustrated History of Horror Comics, Benton / 193
Images of Fear, Tropp / 188
Images of Poe: Catalogue of Illustrations, Pollin / 185
In Between Dragons, Kandel / 185
In Frankenstein's Shadow, Baldick / 186
In Pursuit of Valis, Dick / 193
In the Stream of Stars, Hartmann, et al / 188
Infanta, Cooper / 186
Infinity Hold, Longyear / 185
Initiate Brother, Russell / 188
Interior Life, Blake / 187
Into Eighth Decade, Williamson, J. / 190
Iron Helm, Niles / 192
Ironhelm, Niles / 191
Isaac Asimov, Hassler / 192
Isaac Asimov, Touponce / 192

Jack Dann: Annotated Bibliography, Elliot / 185
Jacobs Ladder, Rubin / 184
Jaguar, Ransom / 189
Jane Saint & the Backlash, Saxton / 186
Jekyll Legacy, Bloch & Norton / 185
Jessie Willcox Smith: American Illustrator, Nudelman / 193
Jessie Willcox Smith: Bibliography, Nudelman / 193
Jilly's Ghost, Regan / 191
Jungian Patterns in Lessing, Cederstrom / 190
Jupiter's Ghost: Next Generation SF, Zentz / 193
Jurassic Park, Crichton / 185

Kaduna Memories, McKinney / 188
Kafka, Citati, / 188
Karloff and Lugosi, Mank / 184
King Arthur Through the Ages, Lagorio & Day / 191
King's Test, Weis / 191
King, The, Barthelme / 191
Knights of Dark Reknown, Gemmell / 186
Landscape of Darkness, Blair / 191
Last Frontier: Imagining Other Worlds, Guthke / 184
Last Guardian, Gemmell / 186
Last Orders, Aldiss / 184
Last Wizard, Huff / 187
Legacy of Olaf Stapledon, McCarthy, et al, eds. / 188
Les Gelules Utopiques, Bouchard / 185
Letters from Atlantis, Silverberg / 188
Letters to Lalage: C. Williams to Lois Lang-Sims, Williams / 191
Lewis Carroll, Clark / 190
Lewis Carroll's Alice, Lovett & Lovett / 186
Lies That Bind, Williams / 186
Life and Work of Harry Clarke, Bowe / 189
Lifeline, Anderson, K, & Beason / 190
Little Country, De Lint / 193
Lives and Times of Ebenezer Scrooge, Davis / 193
Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Gilman / 191
Lloyd Alexander, May / 189
Look of Horror: Scary Moments from Scary Movies, Sternfield / 184
Looking Awry: Jacques Lacan Through Culture, Zizek / 193
Looking Backward, 1988-1888: Essays on Bellamy, Patai / 188
Lords of the Sword, Cook / 191
Lost King, Weis / 186
Lost in Space 25th Anniversary Tributer Book, Van Hise / 190
Lovecraft's Providence & Adjacent Parts, Beckwith / 185
Lovecraft: Disturbing the Universe, Burleson / 188
Lovecraft: Letters to Henry Kuttner, Schultz / 188
Lust for Blood: Consuming Story of Vampires, Hoyt / 187
Machine, Metaphor, and the Writer: Jungian View, Knapp / 192
Magic's Price, Lackey / 191
Magic's Promise, Lackey / 191
Make Way for Dragons, Gunnarsson / 185
Many Lives of Batman, Pearson & Uricchio / 190
Mark Harrison's Dreamlands, Harrison / 189
Mary Shelley Reader, Bennett & Robinson, eds. / 190
Mary Shelley Reader, Shelley / 188
Mask of the Prophet, Andrew / 186
Matter of Taste, Saberhagen / 188
Max Lakeman and the Beautiful Stranger, Cohen / 191
Mazeway, Williamson / 192
Metrognome & Other Stories, Foster / 189
Midnight Horse, Fleischman / 191
Mindsail, Gay / 193
Mine, McCammon / 192
Misogyny in Movies: DePalma Question, MacKinnon / 188
Modern Horror Film, McCarty / 184
Monster with a Thousand Faces, Frost / 187
Moonwise, Gilman / 192
More Annotated Alice, Gardner / 188
Mossflower, Jacques / 186
Mother of Storms, Cole / 186

N-Space, Niven / 186
Natalie Babbit, Levy / 191
Nebula Awards 24: SFWA’s Choices for 1988, Bishop, ed. / 193
Necrofile: Review of Horror Fiction, Joshi, et al, eds. / 193
Neon Twilight, Bryant / 192
New Arthurian Encyclopedia, Lacey / 190
Nicoji, Bell, M. Shayne / 192
Night Mayor, Newman / 186
Night Threads, Emerson / 186
Night Watch, Bailey / 188
Nine Hard Questions About the Universe, Shiner / 190
No Clock in the Forest: Alpine Tale, Willis / 192
No Future for Dragons, Gentile, G / 187
Noble-Hearted Kate, Mayer / 191
Nocturne, Cooper / 186
Northworld 2: Vengeance, Drake / 192
Novelty, Crowley / 188

Old Funny Stuff, Effinger / 186
On My Way to Paradise, Wolverton / 187
Orbit Science Fiction Yearbook Two, Garnett, ed. / 189
Orbital Decay, Steele / 187
Out of Sync, Haiblum / 185
Outlines of Romantic Theology, Williams / 189
Owen Barfield on C.S. Lewis, Barfield / 191
Oxford Book of Canadian Ghost Stories, Manguel, ed. / 192
Oxygen Barons, Feeley / 192
Oxygen Barons, Feeley / 186
P. L. Travers, Demers / 192
Pacific Edge, Robinson / 188
Parents of H. P. Lovecraft, Faig / 184
Past Forgetting, Cushing / 189
Past Forgetting: Memoirs of Hammer Years, Cushing / 189
Pathways to Elfland: Writings of Lord Dunsany, Schweitzer / 184
Pattern in the Web: Mythical Poetry of Charles Williams, King, Jr. / 192
Pendragon Chronicles, Ashley, ed. / 191
Perils of Night: Study of Gothic, DeLamotte / 190
Peripheral Vision, Fowler / 192
Peter Cushing, an Autobiography, Cushing / 189
Petrogypsies, Harper, R. / 185
Phaze Doubt, Anthony / 190
Philip Jose Farmer, Stephensen-Payne et al / 185
Philosophy of Horror, Carroll / 187
Piece of Blue Sky, Atack / 188
Piers Anthony, Stephenson-Payne / 185
Plan 9 from Outer Space, Wood / 186
Playgrounds of the Mind, Niven / 193
Poe in the Media, Smith, R. / 190
Polar City Blues, Kerr / 190
Politics of Literary Reputation;, Rodden / 192
Politics of Literary Reputation;, Rodden / 192
Pour La Patrie, Tardivel / 185
Price Guide to Star Trek & Star Wars Collectibles, Cornwell & Kott / 192
Prisoner and Danger Man, Rogers / 186
Psycho House, Bloch / 189
Pulphouse, Hardback Magazine, Rusch / 191
Purgatorical Flame: Seven British Writers in WW II, Knowles / 187
Pyramids, Pratchett / 186
Quiet Pools, Kube-McDowell / 192
Quiet Woman, Priest / 193
R. E. Howard: Selected Letters 1931-36, Howard / 192
Raising the Stones, Tepper / 185
Raising the Stones, Tepper / 185
Ranges of Romanticism: Five for Ten Studies, Harwell / 193
Ratha and Thistle-chaser, Bell / 187
Rats and Gargoyles, Gentle / 192
Ratspike, Blanche & Miller / 186
Ray Bradbury: Dramatist, Indick / 185
Reading Kafka, Anderson, M / 188
Red Branch, Llywelyn / 184
Redemption of Light, O’Neal / 192
Redwork, Bedard / 191
Requiem for Anthi, Blakeney / 187
Reward for Relief, Laumer / 186
Ring of Charon, Allen / 193
Risking Enchantment: Coleridge’s World of Faery, Watson / 193
Ritnym’s Daughters, Gilluly / 189
Riverwind the Plainsman, Thompson & Carter / 192
Robert Bloch Companion, Larson / 185
Robot Visions, Asimov / 192
Robotech: End of the Circle, McKinney / 188
Rocheworld, Forward / 186
Romances of Chretien de Troyes, Staines, trans. / 187
Rowan, McCaffrey / 187
Ruby Knight, Eddings / 190

SF & F Paperback First Edition: Complete List, Stephens / 190
SF Stars and Horror Heroes: Interviews, Weaver / 191
SF Writers Handbook, Rusch & Smith, eds. / 188
SF: Critical Approaches, Garnett & Ellis, eds. / 190
SF, Fantasy, & Horror: 1990; a bibliography, Brown & Contento, eds. / 192
Salvage Rites & Other Stories, Watson / 186
Scare Care, Masterton / 187
Scathach and Maeve’s Daughters, Walker / 187
Science Fiction: Early Years, Bleiler / 189
Scroll of Lucifer, Eschbach / 191
Second Book of the Kingdoms: The Usurper, Wells / 184
Second Contact, Resnick / 186
Secret Gardens, Golden Age of Children’s Lit., Carpenter / 192
Secret Harmonies, McAuley / 186
Secret Life of Houses, Bradfield / 186
Seeing Red, Schow / 189
Sequels: Annotated Guide to Novels in Series, Husband / 187
Serpent Catch, Wolverton / 189
Sexing the Cherry, Winterson / 186
Shadow Gate, Bell, Margaret / 192
Shadow Warrior, Zettner / 187
Shining Reader, Magistrale, ed. / 192
Shock Totem, Metzger / 189
Silent Dances: Starbridge Book Two, Crispin & O'Malley / 189
Silk Road, Larsen / 187
Silver Kiss, Klause / 191
Sisters, Pratchett / 186
Sixth Day and Other Tales, Levi / 193
Skeleton in the Wardrobe, Holbrook / 192
Skyrocket Steele Conquers the Universe, Goulart / 191
Slaughterhouse-Five: Reforming Novel/World, Klinkowitz / 193
Sleepless Nights in the Procrustean Bed, Clarke, ed. / 185
Slice, Miller / 193
Small Colonial War, Frezza / 189
Smart Dragons, Foolish Elves, Foster & Greenberg, eds. / 188
Socialism & Literary Artistry of William Morris, Boos & Silver / 186
Songs of the Dancing Gods, 4, Chalker / 188
Sons of Titans, Adkins / 187
Sorcerer's Stone, James / 190
Sorceress and the Cygnet, McKillip / 189
Space Folk, Anderson / 184
Space Vectors, Vardeman / 187
Sparrowhawk, Easton / 188
Specter Haunting Europe, Monleon / 190
Spellbound, Emerson / 188
Splatterpunks: Extreme Horror, Sammons / 185
Stalking Horse, Ash / 187
Stanislaw Lem, Davis / 189
Star Commandos: Fire Planet, Griffin / 191
Star Commandos: Mind Slaver, Griffin / 191
Star Commandos: Return to War, Griffin / 191
Star Sister, Coulson / 185
Star Wars: Heir to Empire, Zahn / 190
StarSpawn, Von Gunden / 191
Stephen King and Clive Barker, VanHise / 188
Strange Attractors, Sleator / 192
Stronghold, Rawn / 193
Summertide, Sheffield / 186
Sunder, Eclipse & Seed, Guttenberg / 191
Sunder, Eclipse, & Seed, Guttenberg / 192
Sunset Terrace Imagery in Lovecraft, Cannon / 184
Surface Action, Drake / 185
Surrender None: The Legacy of Gird, Moon / 187
Swatting at the Cosmos, Morrow / 193
Tales from a Vanished Country, Lynn / 193
Tales of Witch World 3, Norton / 187
Tales of the Unexpected, Dahl / 192
Tarot Tales, Pollack & Matthews / 186
Tekwar, Shatner / 185
Tempter, Collins / 186
Tender Prey, Bradford / 192
Thief of Dreams, Cole / 186
Things That Go Bump in the Night, Yolen / 187
Throne of Tara, Desjarlais / 193
Through Narrow Gate: Consciousness of Russell Hoban, Wilkie / 187
Through the Pale Door: Guide to American Gothic, Frank / 185
Time of Exile, Kerr / 191
To 'Herland' and Beyond, Lane / 187
To the High Castle, P. K. Dick, Rickman / 188
Tolkien Thesaurus, Blackwelder / 186
Toplin, McDowell / 190
Total Devotion Machine, Love / 186
Treasure of Light, O'Neal / 192
Trek Crew Book, Van Hiaw / 190
Turn of the Screw: Bewildered Vision, Heller / 185
Ultimate Guide to Science Fiction, Pringle / 189
Unbalanced Earth: Dreams of Stone, Wylie / 186
Unbalanced Earth: Lightless Kingdom, Wylie / 186
Uncanny American Fiction: Medusa's Face, Lloyd-Smith / 193
Under Alien Stars, Service / 191
Understanding Contemporary American SF, 1926-1970, Clareson / 184
Understanding Doris Lessing, Pickering / 188
Unsettled Dust, Aickman / 193
Unsold TV Pilots, Goldberg / 192
Uranian Worlds: Alternative Sexuality, Garber & Paleo / 185
Usurper, The, Wells / 184

Vampires Anonymous, McMahon / 191
Vathek and the Escape From Time, Graham, ed. / 192
Vendetta, David / 190
Venus Prime: The Diamond Moon, Preuss / 190
Video Watchdog: Guide to Fantastic Video, Lucas / 191
Viper Hand, Niles / 192
Viperhand, Niles / 191
Voyage to the Red Planet, Bisson / 185
Voyages to Utopia, McCord / 186
Walker of Worlds, DeHaven / 188
Walkers, Masterton / 187
Wandering Ghost: Lafacadio Hearn, Cott / 193
War of the Ring, Tolkien / 188
War of the Sky Lords, Brosnan / 192
Warlock Rock, The, Stasheff / 185
Warrior, McQuinn / 187
Warsprite, Swycaffer / 188
We Can Remember It For You Wholesale. Vol. 2., Dick / 192
Weo of Futures, Swycaffer / 189
Welcome to Twin Peaks, Knicklebine / 186
Whalesinger, Katz / 191
What Might Have Been, Benford & Greenberg / 187
What do Draculas Do?, Rees / 191
Where No Man Has Gone Before, Armitt / 191
White Isle, Schweitzer / 189
Winter Scream, Curry & Dean / 190
Winterlong, Hand / 188
Witch, Pike / 191
Witch Across Time, Cross / 187
Witch House, Johnson / 191
Witches of the Mind, Byfield / 191
Witching Hour, Rice / 188
Wizardry Compiled, Cook / 192
Wm. S. Burroughs at the Front, Skerl & Lydenberg, eds. / 190
Wolfwalker, Harper, T. / 185
Woman of the Iron People, Arnason / 190
Word and Story in C. S. Lewis, Schakel & Huttar, eds. / 192
Work of Dean Ing, Burgess / 193
World of Difference, Turtledove / 186
Worlds of the Federation, Johnson / 186
Wrath of Ashar, Wells / 184
Wren to the Rescue, Smith, S / 191
Writing Science Fiction and Fantasy, Dozois / 192
Wyrd Sisters, Pratchett / 186
Yamamoto: Rage in Heaven, Kato / 189
Year's Best Fantasy: 2nd Annual Collection, Datlow & Windling, eds. / 189
Young Bleys, Dickson / 191
Youth in Babylon, Friedman & De Nevi / 186
Zenith: Best in New British SF, Garnett / 186
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dues Schedule</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>Overseas****</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>$60</td>
<td>$65</td>
<td>$70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint*</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student**</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emeritus***</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dues ________ Other ________

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