SFRA Newsletter

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President's Message

"Intellectual": Not a Dirty Word

Last month I spoke of interesting books I had read recently: now I am half-way through, and very much enjoying, another one. It is *The Thinking Reed: Intellectuals and the Soviet State from 1917 to the Present* [ISBN 0-86091-198-5], by Boris Kagarlitsky. I think I might not have come across it had I not met the author in Moscow, or if he had not been the son of someone well known to the SFRA membership: Julius Kagarlitski, 1972 Pilgrim Award winner. But now that I have discovered it, I would like to recommend it to the SFRA leadership.

One of the most interesting observations I made reading *The Thinking Reed* was that there seems to be virtually no feeling of "two cultures" in Kagarlitski's discussion of the way intellectuals are regarded in socialist thinking or in the way intellectuals regard themselves. Well educated people are perceived as potentially powerful political forces, no matter what their disciplines.

I read the remarkable *Perestroika* by Mikhail Gorbachev around Christmas 1987, but I have been skeptical till now that very much had changed, or would change for the better in the Soviet domain. Boris Kagarlitski's book gives the clearest picture I have seen of the historical situation of the intellectual in the USSR (and in the Czarist period before the revolution). It, along with the recent elections in the Soviet Union, has increased my optimism and renewed my faith in the power of people to determine their own destiny. But beneficial changes don't just happen without good leadership, of course, and charismatic leadership presents a serious threat to rational decision-making, as we have seen in the U.S. and in Iran, as well as in other countries around the world.

What affects the lives of intellectuals in the Soviet Union is not without meaning for the rest of the world. As teachers, critics, writers—as "intellectuals," in short—I think we need to be acutely aware of the relationship between knowledge and power. Recently (partly because I have taken on the responsibility for an Honors Program at my college) I've had to renew my understanding of the term *noblesse oblige*. Studying and teaching SF, I try to promote in my students a healthy skepticism about the future to help insure they retain the legacy of freedom they might otherwise lose by taking it for granted. And I believe that Boris Kagarlitski's book is a useful guide to the threats that freedom faces, and the struggles that can preserve it.
SFRA's Twentieth Meeting

Even as I write this, arrangements are being finalized for the annual meeting at Oxford, 22-25 June, under the sponsorship of Miami University of Ohio, with Bill Hardesty as the Conference Director, and the selection of the Pilgrim Award winner will soon be made by the awards committee. Those of you who have ever been involved in planning for a conference spanning several days can appreciate how much effort goes into making an event like this become a successful reality.

If you are planning to attend, but haven't yet decided to participate in the program, there's still time to get actively involved. Please contact Bill Hardesty as soon as you can. Chances are, whatever your research or teaching interests are, there will be others at the meeting who share your concerns and who would appreciate a forum for discussion. Especially if this will be your first time attending an SFRA annual meeting, I urge you to take part in the discussion. Being on the program is one way to guarantee that you will be included in the lively exchanges of opinion that make the meetings worthwhile intellectually, and afterward you will have established many networking contacts.

For those who haven't yet decided to come to Oxford, I urge you to take the plunge. I think you'll enjoy it. In any given year about a quarter to a third of the membership typically comes to the annual meeting. A fair proportion are the "regulars" who form the core of the members, and I look forward to seeing these people every year. But this group is constantly evolving, and without new blood — your blood — we would be doomed to the attrition that overtakes any stagnant organization.

SFRA needs you — more accurately, we need each other. Please join us at our annual meeting in Oxford this June!

— Elizabeth Anne Hull

N.B.

By Neil Barron

Founded about three years ago "as a search for scientific themes within literature," the Society for Literature and Science now has 460 members. President Stephen Weininger says that although the society began its life "as an academic subject" it has recently
"broadened its critiques of science." It now has a permanent section within the Northeastern Modern Language Association, and its topic for the Spring 1990 convention in Toronto is "The Knife-Edge of Genre: Science Fiction and Horror." Papers should address the ways in which horrific elements shape the genre of SF. Terror and fright obviously can serve kinetic or dramatic purposes within works, but they presumably can also affect theme and characterization. Papers may deal with examples in any print or visual medium.

Proposals should be sent by September 1, 1989, to Joseph W. Slade, Communications Center, Long Island University, 1 University Plaza, Brooklyn, NY 11201 (Phone 718-403-1052). Slade is a new member (at my invitation) of SFRA, and he says a number of SLS members are interested in science fiction — a notable one being SFRA’s Martha Bartter, author of a recent Greenwood Press study of the atomic bomb in American SF. Membership in the SLS is $25 a year ($30 outside North America) and it brings you a quarterly newsletter, with the fourth issue of each year (August) devoted to a bibliography of literature and science. Send memberships to Judith Laross Lee, SLS Executive Director, Communications Center, Long Island University, University Plaza, Brooklyn, NY 11201-5372.

The Southern California C. S. Lewis Society has announced its twelfth annual summer workshop, on the topic: "The Four Loves in the Life and Writings of C. S. Lewis." The "loves" referred to are Lewis’s anatomy of love into "affection, friendship, eros and divine love." The workshop will meet at the Benedictine monastery, St. Andrew’s Priory, in Valyermo, CA, July 24-29, 1989. Program director is Nancy-Lou Patterson (University of Waterloo, Ontario) along with leaders of the Society. Tuition plus room and board in the monastic guesthouse (situated in the foothills of the San Gabriel mountains) is $250 if paid before June 3, $275 thereafter. Enrollment limited to 32 persons, 2 per room. There is a $50 non-refundable registration fee, with full payment due June 26. Checks, made to "Southern California C. S. Lewis Society," should be sent to 1212 West 162nd St., Gardena, CA 90247.

An International Conference on Cyberpunk Fiction meets June 28-July 1, 1989, at the University of Leeds, England. The full title is "Cyberpunk and After: Fiction Approaching the Millenium." Coordinators are T. A. Shippey for the University of Leeds, and George Slusser for the University of California – Riverside. It's already too late for submitting papers — one assumes the "Call For Papers" we received was a mere matter of form.

More accessible is the Conference on The Fantastic Imagination and New Critical Theory, meeting February 28-March 4, 1990 at Texas
A&M University. The founders are not talking about the old "new criticism" of the 40s and 50s. The brochure mentions "semiotics, deconstruction, Marxism, feminism, psychoanalytical or anthropological criticism, and Bakhtin studies." The idea is to apply one or more of these to one or more "fantastic texts." Inquiries and abstracts are due by June 30, 1989, to Brett Cooke, Dept. of Modern and Classical Languages, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843. (Phone 409-845-2198).

-- Neil Barron

Editorial

Notice how fat the last two issues have been? Beginning with the April issue we quietly moved back to our standard 44-48 page size, thanks to the gentlemanly noblesse oblige of two small press publishers: Ted Dikty of Starmont House and Alan Bard Newcomer of Hypatia Press, Eugene, Oregon.

Hypatia does the printing for Starmont House. Our big break began with a call from Ted Dikty, in response to my editorial in No. 164, lamenting the sinking assets of the treasury and the resulting cutback in the newsletter. Ted said he was certain that Hypatia could give us a better deal. And he was right.

In fact Newcomer said he was willing to produce the newsletter for us "more or less at cost" in return for being listed as publisher (see the inside front cover — ordinarily nobody but Neil Barron reads it) and the right to list us (publisher of ...) on his stationery. And maybe some book deals might come along later?

We hope so. Meanwhile we're still producing camera-ready copy here in Boca Raton, shipping it overnight to Alan, who prints and binds it and ships the magazines back to Boca. So your newsletter has already travelled 7,000 miles before it starts the last leg of its journey to your mailbox via the local P.O. (Now if we can only convince my university that it ought to open a "secondary bulk mailing outlet" in Eugene, Oregon, we'll have it made—Alan can then deposit the issue directly in the P.O. for us.)

Meanwhile, we have cut our expenses by about 45%. We have also changed typefaces (Times Roman does not reproduce well in Hypatia's xerographic process, so we switched with this issue to Helvetica) and eschewed halftones. We plan to experiment with some in the next issue, though.

— Bob Collins
[Editor's Note: The current issue exhausts the backlog of reviews I mentioned last month. Now that we've found a new publisher (see Bob Collins' editorial in these pages for details), I hope to be able to return to a (more or less) normal format, with each issue featuring at least one review-article along with the usual review section.

Unfortunately, due to the various scheduling difficulties which have been detailed in previous newsletters, I was forced to return the review-article on 1988 cyberpunk novels we were holding to its author. However, I have commissioned individual reviews of the major books covered in it, the first of which appears in this issue (Joe Sander's review of Bruce Sterling's Islands in the Net). Future issues of the newsletter will review William Gibson's Mona Lisa Overdrive, John Shirley's A Splendid Chaos, etc. (Since these titles are only now beginning to appear in paperback editions, these reviews will still be fairly timely.) The review-article on J.G. Ballard we were also holding is currently being abridged by its author and will appear in a future review section (it will cover Ballard's new short novel Running Wild, making only brief mention of significant recent reprints and theme anthologies Ballard has published).

To make up these losses, abridgements and other shake-ups, we hope to have for you, next issue, substantial review-articles covering current books by two Pilgrim winners: H. Bruce Franklin's War Stars: The Superweapon and the American Imagination and Darko Suvin's Positions and Presuppositions in Science Fiction. But with all the changes that have been coming lately (the happiest of which is the new publisher — hooray!), I wouldn't hold my breath. —Rob Latham]

Non-Fiction

Guide to Gothic Criticism


The 2614 items listed in Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV's annotated bibliography, The Gothic's Gothic, provide a detailed guide to critical writing about the Gothic mode from the end of the eighteenth century to 1979, when the journal Gothic began providing bibliographic
material. The book is thus a tribute to the vitality of the Gothic mode over almost two centuries. By gathering material overlooked by other bibliographers and by drawing attention to the relevance of commonly neglected material, Fisher manages to illuminate some of the darker recesses of the Gothic house of fiction. Serious researchers will learn much from this book, but I suspect its chief value is in charting new directions for scholarly inquiry.

The first part of the book is devoted to listings on individual authors. Poe receives significantly more attention than any other writer, partly because Fisher is a Poe specialist and partly because Poe's Gothicism has provoked substantially more interesting commentary than any writer's before or after him. In addition to the authors one expects to find (Walpole, Lovecraft, Faulkner, Joyce Carol Oates), there are listings for such figures as James Kirke Paulding, William Gilmore Simms, Stephen Crane and George Eliot. Some of the most interesting material appears in the gatherings of miscellaneous material at the end of the author section. It is there, for instance, that one finds important articles on Thomas Nelson Page's ghost stories and Clarence Housman's supernatural fiction. Page, who is remembered mostly for his nostalgic tales of the antebellum South, was able to acknowledge the horror of racism only in his supernatural tales. Housman's tale of a female werewolf who causes trouble between two brothers is a forgotten masterpiece. Those who are tired of seeing the same handful of stories reprinted over and over again in anthologies will find that Fisher's book can point them in new and worthwhile directions.

There are even more surprises in the subject listings that make up the second part of The Gothic's Gothic. In addition to the expected surveys of criticism on the traditional tale of terror and the Gothic novel, there are sections on such topics as German influences, orientalism, drama, annuals and gift books, anti-Gothic materials, and the Minerva Press. Other sections provide a guide to motifs (vampires, Faustian figures, doubles, etc.), related genres (detective fiction, science fiction, etc.), and other issues (racism, sexuality and gender, etc.). In all of these areas, Fisher's bibliography is a treasure mine of new information. Moreover, the book is particularly easy to use; the intelligent arrangement of material and the three indexes make locating any piece of information simple.

No bibliography can pretend to be complete, but this one does an unusually good job of providing a full portrait of critical work on the Gothic. In the author section, Fisher provides separate listings for many figures not covered in other bibliographies of the genre, but not for either Fitz-James O'Brien or F. Marion Crawford, the two most
effective American writers of supernatural fiction in the period between Poe and Lovecraft. The omission of Crawford can be attributed to the failure of scholars to pay adequate attention to his work, but the lack of a separate author listing for O'Brien is puzzling.

Fisher also has separate listings for Rhoda Broughton, Charlotte Riddell, and Violet Hunt, but not for Amelia Edwards or Vernon Lee (aka Violet Paget), writers who seem to me to merit more attention. It is possible that Fisher has overlooked some items, but the more likely explanation for these omissions is that scholarship on the ghost story has failed to acknowledge the importance of these writers. After all, our entire view of the Victorian and Edwardian ghost story has been shaped by only a handful of critics and editors; J. Sheridan Le Fanu and M.R. James are customarily singled out for praise while other equally good writers are ignored. Edwards thus receives no attention even though she produced a body of work that ought to rank her as one of the two or three Victorian masters of supernatural fiction. Vernon Lee was one of the few writers who actually enlarged the boundaries of the Gothic; her daring experiments with the ghost story and heroic fantasy should have received substantially more attention from scholars and critics. In Lee's hands, the tale of terror became a richly subtle device for exploring the agonies of women in a world controlled by men. Strangely enough, the recent feminist re-evaluation of the literary canon has failed to give Lee her due. Fisher's bibliography is doubly valuable: it can serve as a convenient guide to both the work done on the Gothic and the work that still needs to be done.

—Alfred Bendixen

Theater of Cruelty


Before it became an adjectival synonym for the gruesome and horrible, the Grand Guignol was a legitimate theater of cruelty that flourished in Paris from 1897 to 1962. To put its achievements in perspective, it should be noted that the Grand Guignol opened its doors when the melodramas of Sardou were still in fashion, enjoyed its heyday at the same time that the tragedies of Anouilh and Giraudoux were being performed, and briefly co-existed with the absurdist theater of Genet, Ionesco and Beckett. Though so-called “serious” theater changed dramatically over this period, the Grand Guignol's repertory did not. Night after night, it supplied its patrons with a steady diet of bloody thrills that, in the words of Mel Gordon, “tapped into the collective phobias of its spectators” and acted out their “deepest
instincts and underlying, repressed impulses for sex and savage retribution" (hence the name Grand Guignol, which translates loosely as "adult puppet show"). It may be stretching things to suggest, as some critics have, that the excesses of the Grand Guignol were the ideal dramatic means for evoking emotions of terror and pity in an audience that had until only recently enjoyed public executions as a form of popular spectacle. But to those who dismiss the Grand Guignol as an aberrant episode of theater history falls the task of explaining its popularity and longevity.

In his brief historical essay, Gordon traces the origins of the Grand Guignol to the Zola school of literary realism and the faits divers, catchpenny yellow broadsheets that supplied the masses with sensationalized accounts of true crimes as a form of entertainment. Even as it crossed the border from frankness to exploitation, though, the Grand Guignol evolved a highly professional theatrical style. Under its founder, Oscar Metenier, and its two most creative managers, Max Maurey and Camille Choisey, it became a theater of effects, alternating comedies with horror stories on the evening bill, taking advantage of its claustrophobic interior to create atmosphere, and almost always reserving its physical horrors (achieved through clever use of make-up, props and sleight-of-hand) for the climax of a story of emotional and psychological cruelty. Though common, visceral horror was not a given: as Gordon recounts, one of the most effective contes cruel mounted by the Grand Guignol ends with a man reacting to the sound of his family being murdered over the telephone.

The bulk of this book is comprised of synopses of 100 of the 1200 plays thought to have been performed at the Grand Guignol (divided into "Horrors," "Comedies" and "Dramas"), and complete scripts of "The System of Dr. Goudron and Professor Plume" (adapted by Andre de Lorde from Poe's "The System of Dr. Tarr and Professor Feather") and "The Laboratory of Hallucinations." An unavoidable drawback is that one can only imagine from Gordon's text a type of theater that cries out to be witnessed live. But since we'll probably never see the likes of the Grand Guignol again, this book is a satisfying surrogate.

—Stefan Dziemianowicz

Funniest Literary Criticism Ever Written


"Parody," says David Langford, "is a deadly vehicle for literary
criticism." There are, of course, deadlier ones — most obviously the one lately revealed by the Tehran School of Literary Analysis — but none which are as much fun. The problem is that, as with most critical approaches, you really need to have read the originals to get the benefit. However, Langford is nothing if not eclectic, so this collection merrily sets L*w*s C*rr*ll alongside ls**c As*m*v and D*m*n R*ny*n alongside M*ch**l M**rc*ck. It also cheats by including a couple of straightforward funny stories (one a comic fairy tale, the other a comic space opera), pretending that the former is a parody of the Gr*mms and the latter of D*c Sm*th. On the other hand, the introduction includes no less than seven highly idiosyncrasy-dense parodies, and the cover quotes add four more. The blurb and biographical sketch are also parodic but the list of the author's other works isn't.

Langford has not had the best of luck with his longer parodies (written in collaboration with John Grant). Earthdoom!, which satirizes disaster novels, was published by Grafton but never distributed to bookshops because of an unspecified hitch at the warehouse, while the follow-up Guts!, which makes fun of the recent boom in gruesome horror, was accepted and paid for by the same company but never published because the editorial staff had no confidence that the distributors would actually move it out of the warehouse. One American publisher returned the former book (after a very long delay) saying that he was sorry to keep it so long but he just had to let everyone in the office read it because it was so incredibly funny — but that of course he couldn't actually publish it because Americans don't understand the British sense of humor. The consequence of this tragicomedy of the absurd is that the only chance readers currently have to sample the funniest literary criticism ever written on either side of the Atlantic is to buy this book. It has a brief excerpt from Guts! in it as well as side-splitting analyses of the prosaic lapses of everyone from P**rs Anth*ny to Fr*nk H*rb*rt. Well, almost everyone — I expect I'll be in volume 2, if I ask nicely.

—Brian Stableford

Revised? Hmmm...


With one major category of exceptions, this is an especially comprehensive bibliography, sure to be a staple for scholars of Dick's work and a great help to collectors of it. The major problem is an unexplained raggedness in the handling of materials appearing in the 1980's just before and after Dick's death in 1983. Item 2, in the "Books" section,
for example, is listed as Bishop Timothy Archer, "scheduled for release in Spring 1982." The book did appear in 1983 as The Transmigration of Timothy Archer. Editor Levack claims to have attempted "to cite all published works through late 1984," but clearly this item was not updated since 1981. No coherent publishing history is given for this recent material, and here it is 1989, when one might expect such loose ends to be tied up. The 80's have seen the publication of many of Dick's early unpublished manuscripts, yet this volume is at best unreliable and at worst silent on this phenomenon. All this raises the question of how — even whether — the book has been "revised" since its original appearance in 1981.

These questions are a pity because, otherwise, the volume could serve as a model for bibliographies. There are all sorts of attractive features: lists of unpublished manuscripts, of works in other-than-print media, of pseudonyms (only one), and of collaborations. There is an index of connected stories and one of continuing characters, a non-fiction index, a verse index, a magazine checklist, and a publication chronology. Many foreign language editions are cited (with an acceptable apology for incompleteness). The annotations by Steven Owen Godersky are concise and intelligent, and the covers of 190 works are reproduced in black-and-white. A sampling of secondary material is presented, and here, although no attempt is made to be inclusive, one wishes the 1983 Taplinger series volume of essays Philip K. Dick, edited by Joseph D. Olander and Martin H. Greenberg, had been cited.

— Thom Dunn

[Editor's Note: Neil Barron has supplied the following information on the above title: "This was, and to some extent still is, the most comprehensive bibliography of Dick, although it is growing increasingly dated. I was therefore pleased when Meckler announced a revised and updated edition. In response to my request for a review copy, Meckler senior vice-president Anthony Abbott replied: 'It has come to our attention that among experts the book is not really considered enough of an update on the original edition to warrant the name Revised Edition. It does correct a number of entries and provides information about hitherto unknown foreign editions of Dick's work, but it does not bring the bibliography any further than the... first edition. The book is dandy for someone who doesn't have the first edition, but those that do, a couple of them at least, don't think the update warrants a new printing.""]
Till We Have Proof


In *The C.S. Lewis Hoax*, Kathryn Lindskoog, author of several books about Lewis and his works, presents evidence that Walter Hooper, now Lewis’s literary executor and an Anglican priest, is a liar, thief, hypocrite, forger, and possible pervert. Unfortunately, Lindskoog's book is filled with problems, and we are left not knowing what to believe.

According to Lindskoog, Hooper is a literary executor with little regard for fact, truth, or the integrity of a text. For example, she says he released an edition of *The Screwtape Letters* that makes dreadful changes in Lewis’s text, such as moving the story to contemporary America. Lindskoog gives evidence that Hooper stole papers from Lewis, that he has made fraudulent claims about his own background, has distorted details in Lewis's biography, and has greatly exaggerated his relationship with Lewis. As evidence of this last she quotes passages of the diary of W.H. Lewis (C.S. Lewis's brother), previously unavailable to the public, which express fears that Hooper would make the false claims he has in fact made about his relationship to C.S. Lewis. Lindskoog argues, less convincingly, that some of the posthumously-published Lewis material — particularly a rather un-Lewis-like fragment called *The Dark Tower* — was forged by Hooper or an associate. She does, however, succeed in casting doubt on the authenticity of this and other works.

Most unpleasant are Lindskoog's insinuations that Hooper is, or is linked to, a homosexual with a perverse sense of humor who (she says) has spiked some of the posthumous Lewis material with sexual references and in-jokes. One piece of her "evidence" is the original cover of Lewis's *Letters to Arthur Greeves*, which had the title *They Stand Together* (according to her, a "homosexual euphemism" on both sides of the Atlantic) over "a sketch of Oxford's Magdalen Tower which thrusts up" between pictures of Lewis and Greeves. But, as a recent column in *Publishers' Weekly* has pointed out, this title is a quote from Lewis's *The Four Loves*, describing the moment when a friendship is born: "And instantly they [the new friends] stand together in an immense solitude." As that columnist goes on to say, if Lindskoog didn't know the quote, she should have, and if she did and didn't mention it, she herself has done something shameful.

There are other problems with Lindskoog's arguments and her book. She fails to account for the actions of Owen Barfield, who appointed Hooper a trustee of Lewis's estate and defended him
against earlier attacks. Why? Was Barfield, an old friend of Lewis's, taken in? How? Also, two of her "star witnesses" against Hooper, Len and Mollie Miller (Mollie was Lewis's housekeeper), are characterized in the recently-published memoir Lenten Lands, by Douglas Gresham (C.S. Lewis's stepson), as "evil" people who insinuated themselves into the Lewis household in the hopes of financial gain. We cannot, of course, know the truth of this, but it certainly renders their testimony suspect.

Given that Lindskoog is tracing what purports to be a convoluted trail of half-truths through a murk of hypocrisy and deceit, her book should be closely argued, clear, painfully accurate, and straightforward — like Lewis's own work. Instead it is almost always roundabout, indirect, and filled with innuendo, at best presenting what might be evidence rather than making arguments. Perhaps she was suffering from fear of libel prosecution. But her book is not always scrupulously accurate, is at times clichéd or badly written, repetitive, and made murky itself by an argument that mostly seems to proceed by nonsequitur. There are also strange inconsistencies in the author's tone and stance. It is hard, for instance, to say what she thinks of Hooper: is he sinner? pathologue? profiteer? trickster? She begins and ends with feeble comments about enjoying a good hoax, as if any of this, if true, could be considered funny; but even she does not maintain this silly point of view throughout.

Though we cannot ignore Lindskoog's evidence, which makes it seem as if Lewis's works have been inherited by Screwtape, we come away from her book frustrated and confused rather than enlightened. She does not seem, at best, a very clear thinker. We are left hoping that the Reverend Hooper, for the sake of Lewis's work if for no other reason, will respond to Lindskoog's claims, and do so soon.

— William Mingin

Schlock and Art


Neither a biography nor a critical study, this is the most up-to-date of several anecdotal accounts of Corman's colorful career as director and producer of both exploitation and art films. The rambling, eighty-four-page text is followed by credits, synopses and "behind the scenes" stories about each of Corman's films, and biographies of Corman stock players. Libraries should supplement Gary Morris's Roger Corman (1985), a critical work, with either this book, Ed Naha's The Films of Roger Corman (1982) or McGee's own Fast and Furious
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(1984), a history of the early years of American International Pictures (AIP). All three popular works collect often hilarious stories about Corman’s cutrate but often surprisingly sophisticated filmmaking.

—Michael Klossner

Baum's Durable Creation


Jack Snow was an Oz buff and Oz book author, and this volume was originally published in 1954 by Reilly and Lee, Baum's publisher for many years. Baum was prolific in his creation of memorable and forgettable characters, from the Nome King to Jack Pumpkinhead to the fraudulent Wizard. More than 600 of them and the parts they played in the first 39 Oz books through 1951 are profiled, along with 500+ illustrations, most of them by John R. Neill, who wrote three Oz books in the early 1940's. A chronological list with plot summaries of the 39 books, with page references to where the characters' first appear, is followed by bios of the authors and illustrators.

As a former Oz freak, I'm glad to see this book back in print. I wish the publisher had added a few pages to make the story reasonably current, listing the handful of Oz books published since 1951, most of them by the International Wizard of Oz Club, and updating the bios. A good recent overview is provided in *The World of Oz* (1985) by Allen Eyles. The best single volume devoted to Baum's durable creation is *The Wizard of Oz* with the original Denslow illustrations, a volume in the Critical Heritage series issued by Schocken in 1983, and edited by Michael Patrick Hearn. The complete text is followed by a number of valuable essays.

—Neil Barron

Another Cheap Checklist


This is the thirty-second of the working bibliographies, the earlier ones compiled by Benson, the recent ones by Stephenson-Payne. (See issue #164 for a review of four others.) This one is photocopied on 8 1/2 by 11 sheets in a standard report cover (most are 8 1/2 by 5 1/2 stapled). The format is standard: birth/death dates, awards, pseu-
donyms, then the bibliography in lettered parts. A: stories (by title, numbered); B: fiction books (by title; contents keyed to section A), including all English language reprints in chronological sequence; C: series; D: poems and songs; E: poem and song collections [none]; F: articles by; G: miscellaneous (introductions, forewords, editorials, interviews); H: non-fiction [none]; I: edited books [none]; J: media presentations; K: articles about (no logical sequence evident, and citations are incomplete and amateurish); L: reviews (of books); M: books about [three, including Diskin's 1980 primary and secondary bibliography]; N: phantom titles [three]. The running title for these booklets is Bibliographies for the Collector. That's a bit misleading since the compilers don't include any of the points essential for the careful collector.

Forthcoming in 1989 are bibliographies of Piers Anthony, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Frank Herbert, Andre Norton, Frederik Pohl, Clifford D. Simak, and Gene Wolfe. For the pittance the compilers charge, you can't go wrong.

—Neil Barron

"I Am Not a Number —"  


In The Prisoner, a seventeen-episode, British-made TV series, an ex-spy is held captive in The Village, a luxury prison for political misfits where it is almost impossible to tell who are the jailers and who the prisoners. Produced by its star, Patrick McGoohan (who also wrote and directed three episodes), the series was the first in which the hero did not win at the end of each installment. Fans still remember the bizarre costumes, sets and locations, the effective music, the excellent acting and cerebral scripts exploring such themes as loyalty, violence, authority, revolt, paranoia, individualism and repression. All episodes of the 1968 series are now available on videocassette from MPI Video.

White and Ali provide credits, a synopsis, abundant stills and a commentary on each episode, as well as fifty-five pages of excerpts from original scripts which differed from the versions broadcast. Many of the authors' comments are nitpicking rather than enlightening. They compile vast amounts of trivia but add little of substance to McGoohan's well-known explanation of the allegory behind The Prisoner: the West is as inhospitable to dissent as the East; freedom is a myth and elections are a farce; escape from systematic repression is impossible and only a few exceptional individuals can maintain their personal integrity. More information on the quarrel between McGoohan and
script editor George Markstein (whom McGoohan fired and who now calls *The Prisoner* "the biggest load of rubbish") and a comparison of *The Prisoner* with *The Secret Agent*, McGoohan's more down-to-earth spy series, might have been revealing. Nevertheless, until a better book appears on what White and Ali call "the most unusual, the most provocative and the most controversial television series ever produced," libraries should own *The Official Prisoner Companion*.

— Michael Klossner

### Fiction

**Japanese SF Anthology**


Although Japanese SF, inspired by Verne and Wells, emerged at the turn of the century from a long tradition of myths and blossomed in the late 1950's with the initial publication of Japanese fanzines, it wasn't until 1970 that a Japanese SF novel (Kobo Abe's *Inter Ice Age 4*) was translated into English. And only now does an anthology of Japanese SF fiction in English appear in the form of this slim, handsome, uneven collection which includes ten authors' work, a foreword by Grania Davis about translation, a brief introduction to the history and nature of Japanese SF by Apostolou, and an even briefer reading list (six authors, ten books) of Japanese SF fiction in English.

If, however, fantasy celebrates the magic which a culture has marginalized and SF explores the technology which has destroyed the magic, it is something of a misnomer to call many of these stories SF. Kobo Abe, for instance, composes a delightfully Cortazar-esque political parable, Ryo Hanmura a slightly facile existential allegory, and Sakyo Komatsu a frenetic psychohorror a la Poe. But some interesting SF pieces do surface, including Morio Kita's Handkesque experiment, Shinichi Hoshi's study of sexism, and Tetsu Yano's novella about an alien world intersecting this one. These fictions, which vary widely in length, content, and quality, rhyme with Apostolou's introductory assertion that "surprisingly few Japanese SF writers are genuinely interested in science or technological advances."

— Lance Olsen
We Have a Winner


Like Consider Phlebas, Banks’ widely praised 1987 science fiction novel, The Player of Games is set in the Culture, a galaxy-spanning community of men and machines that provides all its citizens with unlimited material comforts while making almost no demands upon them. Most of the humans live on Orbitals (constructs larger than planets) or on General Systems Vehicles (enormous ships controlled by artificial intelligences called, simply, “Minds”). Yet other civilizations exist in this universe, and the organization Contact is dedicated to finding such others and establishing relationships with them.

The members of the Culture devote most of their energies to various means of occupying the vast quantities of leisure time at their disposal. Jernsu Morat Gurgeh has devoted his entire life to games; a master of both theory and practice, he lives only to win. Yet he is bored, for almost all the challenge has disappeared. Two opportunities to dispel his boredom offer themselves almost simultaneously: the chance to play a new, quite talented opponent at the game of Striken, and an invitation from Contact to visit a distant empire to play a very complex game central to their culture. These two opportunities are linked when the drone Mawhrin-Skei persuades him to cheat at Striken and then blackmails him so that he is almost compelled to accept Contact’s invitation.

“Azad” is both the name of the empire and of the game. Gurgeh discovers that its ramifications are extensive. Everyone in the empire plays (education consists of how to play): how well one does determines one’s political and social status; betting is fanatic (sometimes involving the life of the player); moreover, people regard the game itself as a representation of the real world. Gurgeh wonders whether an outsider and a rank newcomer can succeed at this game, and the story’s suspense is generated from his doubts. How will he do, this man who has dedicated his entire life to winning games? I’ll never tell.

But this I will say: The Player of Games is a fast-paced tale of political intrigue set in a technological society of almost mind-boggling complexity. Both the Culture and the Empire of Azad are developed in tremendous depth. Gurgeh is not a person of great depth or complexity, yet he is quite fully realized. The web of relationships in which he becomes entangled is far more interesting, though: what is his position vis-a-vis the drones that almost constantly accompany him? how does he fit into the Culture and the Contact? is he being manipu-
lated? by whom and for what reason? As one reads, the questions multiply rather than diminish. One almost comes to the point of wondering how it all can be resolved, yet Banks contrives a conclusion that brings all the plot's threads together in a way I found satisfying.

Further, this novel has a very thoughtful thematic substrate. Is life itself merely a game? Gurgeh thinks so at the beginning, but perhaps his opinion has changed by the end. An element of satire may also enter into the depiction of the Empire of Azad: in some ways, it looks suspiciously like Earth. Both these elements carry the novel far beyond the realm of the typical, rather superficial space opera; in some sense, Banks has transformed the genre. Banks' first two novels, The Wasp Factory and Walking on Glass, were of a type which might be described as horror fantasy. His last two are real science fiction of the highest caliber. Read this one, and read Consider Phlebas. And hope Banks goes on writing SF rather than horror.

—Robert Reilly

Sky Lords and Genetically-Enhanced Ladies


John Brosnan is an Australian writer living in London and is perhaps better known for his books on film. The Sky Lords is his third novel under his own name (he has collaborated pseudonymously with Leroy Kettle on a number of horror novels), and it is excellent science fiction.

The future world depicted here is bleak. Genetic engineering, which initially had shown enormous beneficial potential, has gotten out of hand. Slowly, the farmland is being encroached upon by fungal blight, and the matriarchal city of Minerva scarcely has enough to feed its population. At regular intervals, the gigantic starship Lord Pangloth arrives to collect tribute: food for the thousands who live aboard it. The Minervans, unable to supply them, decide to fight, with disastrous results. The sole survivor of the battle is Jan, the genetically enhanced daughter of Minerva's leader and the only citizen not prepared to prefer death to capture.

This novel examines the ways different sorts of people attempt to cope with change, within the structure of a high adventure. Jan, along with the other women of her city, have many of the qualities frequently attributed to male heroes (she is not likely to curl up in a corner and have a good weep), and her efforts to come to terms with her captivity on the starship provide the material for thoughtful action. The Sky Lords is well worth reading.

—Pauline Morgan
Definitely Not in Kansas


In this impressive first novel, John Cramer achieves something rare in science fiction — a study of actual science, of its tedium, its subtle joys, its eternal funding disputes, its tension between experimentation and theory. The author, who is a professor of physics and a science writer for *Analog*, wrote this book in response to a challenge from Morrow editor David Hartwell, who put the blame for weak science in SF squarely on the shoulders of those who have a solid scientific background but choose not to work in the genre. Cramer’s answer is a densely compact amalgam of contemporary physics, involving shadow matter, superstring theories, superconductors, and much more. The book concludes with an afterword distinguishing the “straight stuff” from the “rubber science” of speculation and fictional invention.

The story takes shape around David Harrison, an experimental physicist who finds himself trapped in an alternate universe with two young children, pursued by villains intent on stealing his secrets, challenged by an exploitative postdoctoral adviser, and aided by friend Paul Ernst, a theoretician. Although the narrative is slow to get started and is hindered in its opening scenes by wooden dialogue, Cramer (assisted by SF author Vonda N. McIntyre) has written a competent novel to significant effect. All who teach the writing of SF or who teach through the medium of SF should check it out.

— Thom Dunn

Stylistically Bewitching


This talented new writer has followed one stylishly written book — *The Enchantments of Flesh and Spirit* (1987) — with another. *The Bewitchments of Love and Hate* is not without its faults, but its flaws are certainly not to be found in the author’s style, which is exquisite.

Volume one introduced the Wraeththu, the hermaphrodite race that has rapidly replaced humankind, not just by weight of numbers but also by their ability to change young human males into Wraeththu by infecting them with their blood. The second volume is narrated by Swift, a Wraeththu born in a big rambling house, headquarters of a warlike and intolerant tribe. Actually, the house is an oasis of calm until Cal
arrives, becoming the catalyst for the book’s violent action.

Cal forms the main link between the two volumes. In the first, Cal and Pellaz (the narrator) stayed briefly in the house to which Cal now returns, their paths having diverged irreconcilably. Thus, the narratives run parallel in time for a while before The Bewitchments of Love and Hate carries the Wraeththu into their future. The first part of the story is a bit slow and is, in fact, a self-confessed indulgence on the part of the author, but its leisurely pace allows relationships to build and be explored. The pace picks up in the book’s second half, which culminates in internecine war between Wraeththu tribes.

I still find Wraeththu reproduction a little hard to swallow (and it plays an important part in this novel), but this cavil aside, the two books are well worth reading if only for Constantine’s beautiful way with language.

— Pauline Morgan

Cleverness and Other Pitfalls


*Machine Sex and Other Stories* is a collection of SF stories by a new Canadian writer, Candas Jane Dorsey. The book’s back cover boasts “thirteen speculations on the human dimension of advancing technology, space exploration and cultural change, by a brilliant new voice in SF.” The only problem with this description is that Dorsey is not really a “brilliant” new voice; she is a new voice trying to be brilliant. There is a world of difference.

The stories in this volume range from the cyberpunk title story to the stream-of-consciousness tale of a dying woman, “Time is the School in Which We Learn, Time is the Fire in Which We Burn.” Both titles give some indication of Dorsey’s self-conscious attempt to be clever. She has obviously read widely in the field and, having read some “good” SF, has decided to write some herself. The endlessly artful stylistics, the clever disjunctions of time and place, the artificial, philosophical language, and the discreet ambiguity of most of the endings and many of the stories themselves, become very wearying after the first two or three stories, and are quite predictable from the very first one. There is little sense of this writer writing from her soul or heart, or even from her own observations of human life. It is as though she sat down with volumes of SF short stories and copied this style of dialogue from one, that type of prose from another, and so forth. Although her human characters are sometimes quite realistic, they are
presented so cleverly and say so many clever things, that their realism becomes strained.

This is not to say that Machine Sex is an incorrigibly bad book; far from it. Some of the stories are very interesting, and many of the concepts are original. A concern for human dignity is evident in many of the tales, and the author’s portrayals of loneliness, psychological and physical abuse, sexuality, compassion and friendship are often solid and convincing – that is, when she forgets to be clever. The stories “The Prairie Wanderers,” “Black Dog,” “You’ll Remember Mercury,” and “Time is the School...” particularly recommend themselves because of the strength of their themes and characterization. The concepts presented in “Black Dog” and “You’ll Remember Mercury” are fascinating; and, when the author is not deliberately being obscure and ambiguous, the writing can be surprisingly good.

This author is new and therefore has much to learn about her art. She is trying to follow in a tradition of good writing, which is not a bad goal at all. She has fine role models in Judith Merril and Spider Robinson, two of Canada’s best SF writers, as well as several good American and British authors. She seems to have tried to emulate some of their styles, without following her own writing instincts, which is what she needs to do now. She shows real promise here and there in this collection. A good editor would do this writer a world of good.

—J.R. Wytenbroek

Highly Enjoyable

Evans, Christopher & Robert Holdstock, eds. Other Edens II. Unwin Hyman, London, 1988, 269p. £3.95 pb. 0-04-440154-X.

There’s a wide-ranging mixture of SF and fantasy in this anthology of sixteen new stories; most of the tales are quirky and thought-provoking, and there’s more entertainment than in the previous volume. There’s an alien language lesson, “Confluence Revisited” by Brian Aldiss; a glimpse of far-future Martians in Michael Moorcock’s “Mars”; and a highly unusual talent described by Ian Watson in “The Resurrection Man,” a kind of aside to his novel The Fire Worm. And time travel makes a comeback, with three stories featuring the theme: the best is “Getting Together” by Josephine Saxton, in which the time travel mechanism is pressure exerted on groups of acupuncture points.

Several of the contributions are from new authors, notably Scott Bradfield’s “Dazzle,” about an intelligent dog, and “Roman Games,” a clever and allusive piece about a nun and a dragon by Anne Gay. On the whole, it’s a highly enjoyable book.

—Chris Morgan
Chtorr Series Revised


Following a five-year hiatus, David Gerrold has returned to the threatened Earth of his "War Against the Chtorr" series, expanding the first two volumes (previously published by Timescape/Pocket in 1983 and 1985) and adding a third volume to the saga of James Edward McCarthy and his private/public struggles against alien invaders. The original volumes 1 and 2 suggested how seriously Gerrold approached the venerable theme of alien invasion of an unprepared earth. The aliens — primarily monstrous pink fuzzy worms with insatiable appetites for human flesh, but with a multitude of minor forms as well — were intriguing and truly alien; no matter how hard the humans struggled to understand the invaders, they only discovered more problems. Gerrold had imagined a complete alien ecology suddenly transplanted, through an unknown and still as yet unidentified agency, onto earth; but his characters did not have the advantage of his knowledge and, as they worked through problem after problem, found themselves facing more difficulties than resolutions. The action was fast-paced, the characters strong and independent, and the series as a whole promising.

In the new versions of volumes 1 and 2, and the additional third volume, Gerrold makes the series even more weighty, more serious, more philosophical — but without losing the sense of humor, of alien intrigue, and of exciting human action. Each volume carries McCarthy a bit closer to understanding himself; at the same time, each defines a specific phase in the expanding Chtorr invasion plan, making the human position on earth increasingly untenable and widening the spectrum of personal, ecological, social, cultural, and racial disaster. And — as of the conclusion of volume 3, at least — there is no positive end in sight.

The "War Against the Chtorr" series is unusually ambitious in that it develops at least three separate strands of SF extrapolation. On one level, the United States has recently suffered a crushing political defeat and has been militarily emasculated by the rest of the human community (on the order of the treatment Germany received following World War II); the series thus applies specific historical perspectives
to contemporary American society and culture. On a second level, a series of plagues has annihilated roughly three-quarters of the human population; the series thus parallels such novels as Stephen King's *The Stand* (1978) and Robert McCammon's *Swan Song* (1987) in detailing how a fragmented human society might reassemble itself. And on a third level, there are the Chtorrans, a multiplicity of alien life forms struggling with humanity to control the earth. It takes temerity to attempt to develop all three levels within the confines of a single series, and Gerrold does a creditable job, primarily because each of the three narrative strands relates to the underlying philosophical considerations Gerrold develops.

For Gerrold has carefully reworked the first two volumes to incorporate an intensive philosophical base, and, to varying degrees, all three books offer strong doses of didactic speculation. The novels embody the author's deep concerns for individual responsibility and integrity and for the artist's creative freedom. Jim McCarthy's gradual progression from sometimes whiny, sometimes overly apologetic, almost always self-abasing hero-in-spite-of-himself to self-sufficient, responsible agent forms the core of the series — and simultaneously parallels Gerrold's conception of the writer, and of the fully human personality. (In fact, Gerrold has here transmuted into fictional form ideas and approaches he has himself used in his own teaching of Creative Writing at Pepperdine.) In spite of the weight of didacticism, which the author acknowledges in the introduction to Book 3, the series succeeds on all of its levels.

My only reservations lie partly beyond the narrative. Solomon Short's headnotes to each chapter are usually pointed and witty; the Chtorrann jokes at the end of chapters in Book 2 ("Q: What do you say to a Chtorrann attacking a battalion? A: Don't play with your food.") add cultural depth to the threat posed by the aliens. But in spite of McCarthy's use of limericks as an aid to concentration in Book 3, many of the limericks that conclude chapters are of doubtful relevance (except to highlight sexual themes) and of doubtful quality as well. Aside from this, however, the "War Against the Chtorrr," as presently constituted, provides entertainment as well as intellectual and emotional stimulation — and promises still more, since Book 4 is due out in the spring of 1990.

—Michael R. Collings

**Imaginative Cross-Temporal Fantasy**

The Hidden World continues the powerful, cross-temporal fantasy begun in Archon! (1987). Sam Joyce and his daughter Chrissa have unwittingly been drawn into the past to quite different historical periods. Sam, having forgotten everything about his life in the 1980's, is now the mad Fool who dwells at the centre of a sacred grove in medieval France. Chrissa is in the same area but is separated from her father by centuries; she, too, has little memory of her previous life but, as she finds herself pursued by representatives of the Inquisition and is drawn deeper into the crisis of the thirteenth century community, she comes closer to encountering the burning man who had haunted her dreams in the twentieth, and who will (one supposes) provide the key to her and her father's temporal displacement.

In other words, this is the second volume of a trilogy, and the story is still unfinished. But the plots of the first two books have been cleverly twisted together, paralleling each other as both Sam and Chrissa start to discover who they are and why they are being manipulated. Time folds back on itself as the intricate century-spanning plot begins to explain itself, expanding on the events of volume one. So far, this trilogy has shown imagination, and the author clearly has done some deep historical research. I hope the final book reaches the same high standard.

— Pauline Morgan

Sexy Hardware


If you like paranoid conspiracy fiction a la Richard Condon and Robert Ludlum, you'll probably enjoy this book. If you like your suspense novels thickly larded with apocalyptic political pontificating (of the Libertarian sort), you'll be ecstatic. If you want science fiction, you'll be disappointed; this isn't an SF novel, despite what the blurbs say.

Although the book is set in the near future and does contain some speculative science, Hogan — who made his mark with medium-hard SF novels like Inherit the Stars (1977), The Gentle Giants of Ganymede (1978), and The Code of the Lifemaker (1983) — is not interested in exploring scientific change in Mirror Maze. The science and technology of this political adventure (fission/fusion reactors, SDI lasers and radars) are just sexy high-tech gimmicks to tart up the suspense plot, which deals with international machinations of the ultra-rich-and-powerful to subvert — through bureaucratic obfuscation, financial collusion and, of course, the deployment of a gorgeous female assas-
sin — the legitimate Constitutionalist triumph in the U.S. elections of 2000 A.D. Not SF, and not recommended.

—Dave Mead

**Quiet Horror**

Grant, Charles L. *In a Dark Dream*. TOR, NY, February 1989, 310p. $17.95 hc. 0-312-93159-X.

Charles L. Grant is expert at showing horror lurking just beneath the surface of everyday reality. His latest chiller, *In a Dark Dream*, is another of his "daylight ghost stories."

The story is set in a small town which, one summer, becomes beset by nightmares and omens promising disaster. The dreams seem to be emanating from the daughter of police chief Glenn Erskine, and they seem to express the viewpoint of a psychopathic killer just released from an asylum. Grant does not turn this scenario into a slasher script; he instead concentrates on Erskine's family and their very human concerns: adolescent sexuality and independence, marital friction, job stress. The horrific events arise from these concerns and amplify them. This is true for other characters in the novel as well; typically, Grant deals more with the psychological effects of horror than with supernatural happenings. Thus, the horror builds slowly, out of events that seem at first only slightly out of the ordinary, and comes to an affecting climax revolving around Erskine's young daughters and their pitiful attempt to halt the nightmares.

Though *In a Dark Dream* is well written and engaging, something undercuts the horror. Perhaps Grant downplays the creepiness too much, as an antidote to the slash-and-maim gore horror fans have been getting lately; perhaps there is just too much ambiguity. In any case, *In a Dark Dream* is a classy thriller that will provide readers with a few frissons and some real entertainment.

—Laurel Anderson Tryforos

**Dark Dystopia**


In his latest novel Garry Kilworth tries his hand at an English dystopia, painting a picture of near-future London which is horribly believable and desperately bleak. The eponymous abandonati are London's poorer people (much diminished in numbers by disease, malnutrition, violence, and so on) who have apparently been left to manage as best they can after society has collapsed and the rich have gone away. Just where they have gone is not known to the characters,
though underground bunkers and another planet are suggested as possibilities. Of course, because starvation and disease are such great levellers, it may be that the rich are still there, indistinguishable from the rest.

Wisely, Kilworth avoids the omniscient overview, concentrating on Guppy, an inoffensive man of indeterminate age whose brain has been so befuddled by a couple of decades of rough living and periodic alcoholism that he hardly remembers the world before the collapse. Filthy, half-starved and covered in sores, he creeps through a harsh world. But he finds friendship in the shape of Rupert, who has dreams of building a spaceship, and Trader, who possesses a small stock of tinned food. Together they go on a journey across the city.

The book is deceptively simple, containing subtle references to myths and visions, demonstrating that humor, friendship and hope can grow in the least fertile ground, and making the reader think of social responsibility without ever being overtly didactic. It's a clever and poignant novel, depressing in parts but far more entertaining than any plot summary could suggest.

— Chris Morgan

Frightening and Optimistic


In Midnight, Dean R. Koontz again demonstrates the technical craftsmanship and narrative skill that characterize his novels. Told with clarity and power, Midnight explores mysterious, almost inexplicable happenings in a small California coastal town isolated from the rest of the world by the overwhelming presence of a high-tech think-tank and its monomaniacal owner. When an FBI agent arrives to investigate a series of murders, the sister of one of the victims checks into the local motel to begin her own private investigation, and a young girl living just outside Moonlight Cove discovers that her mother and father are no longer quite human, the reader is suddenly immersed in level after level of mystery, horror, and fear.

Midnight builds on themes and images Koontz has explored elsewhere: the aliens-among-us motif of Twilight Eyes; the genetic degeneration and reintegration of his Leigh Nichols novel, Shadowfires; the eerie blend of science fiction, fantasy, horror, realistic novel, and psychological thriller in his most recent works — Whispers, Phantoms, Strangers, Watchers, and Lightning. A master at his chosen form, Koontz creates in Midnight a powerful tale of monsters — human and otherwise — and of machines that infiltrate and ultimately control
human lives ... and, at least in Moonlight Cove, human bodies. His story is at once minatory and exciting, frightening and optimistic. My only quibble is with the title: while consistent with his recent predilection for one-word titles, the word "midnight" actually has little to do with the story. Other than this, the novel is highly satisfactory reading.

—Michael R. Collings

The Colours of Evil


Paradys is a city on the edge of reality, one foot in this world, one in another, allowing the supernatural egress into the lives of ordinary people. Volume I of The Secret Books of Paradys, The Book of the Damned, contains three stories, each woven about a colour; the colour appears as a jewel, a stained glass window, and the central character who, in two out of the three stories, has eyes to match. By drawing three very different portraits of Paradys, separated in time, Lee creates potent images of change supported both by the connecting threads of colour and by the unchanging aspects of human nature.

Just as the real and surreal blur within Paradys, so the sexuality of the characters is ambiguous. Jehanine, in "Malice in Saffron," spends her days in a nunnery, but at night she puts on boy’s clothing to join a vicious gang of thieves in the back streets. But by altering her dress she finds she is also altering her language and her attitudes; thus, Lee makes provocative statements on the cultural inflections of gender difference.

The third story, "Empires in Azure," is perhaps the most successful; narrated by a woman on the fringes of its events, it is more immediate as her Paradys is relatively modern, equipped with telephones and cars. But it is "Stained in Crimson," the initial tale of the triptych, that best shows Lee’s exquisite use of language, slowly drawing the reader in, painting in words an indolent city, populated with would-be artists and poets.

Volume II, The Book of the Beast, in which colour also plays an important part, is actually a divided novel rather than a gathering of stories. In the first part, "The Green Book," a student, Raoulin, lodging in an old house, discovers that it is haunted by a green-eyed ghost who tells him how, rejected by her husband, she trapped him into making love to her and thus released "the Beast." "The Purple Book," the centre section, tells how the Beast originally came to Paradys in
Roman times. The narrative then returns to Raoulin who, in his distress, is succoured by Ruquel, whose father has battled with the Beast before and has vowed to rid the city of it.

Though of the same high quality as the first volume, The Book of the Beast is more accessible, the whole being one story rather than three unconnected ones. The language is plainer too. In both books Lee produces a picture of a changing city, but with constants. In the first, it was human evil that "damned" the characters, while here it is the Beast and the fear it provokes. But, of course, the Beast that hides in the darkness is richly symbolic, representing the evil in humankind; unwittingly released from its lair, it must be exorcized before the characters can sleep easy again.

Both books are examples of excellent writing, having beneath their alluring surfaces plenty of depth to be explored. I look forward to further installments in The Secret Books of Paradys.

—Pauline Morgan

A Talent for Good SF


History, it is said, belongs to the victors, to interpret and revise as they wish. The city-states of Greece united after Thermopylae, and history, written by the Greeks, records the sacrifices of Leonidas and the other heroes who fell in the Pass, helping to preserve Hellenic civilization from the onslaught of the Persians.

In the universe of Jack McDevitt's A Talent for War, two hundred years have passed since Christopher Sim and the Seven died off Rigel resisting the invasion of the alien Ashiyyur. The exploits of Sim and the other heroes of the Resistance already are quickly receding into legend. For the novel's narrator, Sim and the Seven are figures from schoolboy lessons and the heroic subjects of drama, painting and sculpture. But when Alex Benedict is given cause to examine the history, the legends, and the men and women of the early years of the Resistance, he finds that the interpretations do not always match the historical data, that the legends often seem too politically convenient, and that the motivations of the principals are at times inexplicable. As Benedict sifts through the historical records and the cultural products of the Resistance, a new pattern seems to emerge, one that compels him to follow a trail of apparent deceit and corruption to discern what may be the truth behind the legends and the genuine history beneath the layers of interpretation.
A Talent for War is one of those rare books in SF that challenges the limits of formulaic fiction. Despite cover art and blurbs that try to place the novel firmly within the confines of the space-war tradition, Jack McDevitt’s tale transcends that subgenre. Readers who want more than another iteration of the formula will appreciate the story’s narrative sophistication and good writing and will forgive its few small lapses into space opera. McDevitt has written a fine science fiction novel, one that deserves a wider readership than the vagaries of the paperback marketplace otherwise allow.

— Peter C. Hall

Drabble Rousers


A Drabble, as here defined, is a story of exactly one hundred words. Because of the editors’ SF leanings, they have asked many SF authors (among others) for contributions, and this book contains exactly one hundred varied entries, from professionals and amateurs, the famous and the unknown. Among the contributors are Isaac Asimov, Brian Aldiss, Robert Holdstock, Terry Pratchett, Gene Wolfe, Harry Harrison, Larry Niven, Bob Shaw and John Brunner. What can an author write about in so few words? Not a lot, which calls for much cleverness and originality. At least half the pieces have some SF, fantasy or horror connection, and there are, inevitably perhaps, some time-travel and vampire clichés. On the whole, it’s an entertaining read, with particularly memorbale contributions from David Wingrove, Garry Kilworth and Brian Stableford.

— Chris Morgan

A Balanced Collection


Andre Norton’s long, distinguished career has produced an oeuvre of memorable SF and fantasy novels. Moon Mirror is a collection of Norton’s shorter fictions dating, for the most part, from the mid-seventies.

“How Many Miles to Babylon?”, the only 1988 entry, describes a young girl’s coming to terms with her newly found psychometric powers. As a science fiction concept, this one’s hardly original; yet Norton’s skill at pacing and her talent for alluring characterizations almost compensate — that is, until the peremptory ending shortchanges the reader’s initial sense of wonder. The title story is an involving,
if somewhat convoluted, fantasy about the meeting between a lowland warrior and a female of the “Hill Cat” race, and the awakening of their ancient identities. Despite its strong narrative hook, the tale suffers from being forced into short story form; there is not enough background given, nor enough time spent with the characters, for the reader to truly share in their epiphany.

“Teddi” is a cautionary tale that owes its theme, in part, to mid-seventies’ environmental concerns. The story takes place on an overpopulated earth, where a race of genetically augmented “Littles” dominates and enslaves a race of Nats (Naturals), until the Nats develop a telepathic link with an alien race and are able to free themselves from their oppression. Though the premise seems credible, the story ultimately fails to rise above the weakness of its execution. Other cautionary tales include the absorbing “Desirable Lakeside Resident,” in which a young girl has a telepathic encounter with a new life form brought back from the moon; “The Long Night of Waiting,” a thoughtful tale of a mysterious disappearance; and “Outside,” wherein children learn to break the bonds of a dead past and make a new future by escaping the decaying domed city built by their ancestors. Two other stories, “The Toymaker’s Snuffbox” — a folktale reprise about a toymaker, a magic snuffbox, and an evil queen — and “One Spell Wizard,” which recounts the misadventures of an unscrupulous wizard whose spells last only a day, show Norton at ease with the reworking of humorous old fables.

Overall, Moon Mirror is a balanced collection, demonstrating both Norton’s strengths and weaknesses as a writer. Many of the author’s characteristic interests are in evidence — the displacement and alienation of individuals, telepathy as a means of communion, the power and mystery of nature, civilization arising from the ruins of some self-inflicted devastation — and her attachment to the form of an adolescent hero’s (or heroine’s) rite of passage. Still, Norton’s talent seems to find its best expression in the novel, where she has the space to allow her remarkable narrative skills to overcome her often derivative ideas.

—Barry H. Reynolds

Playful Imagination


Homegoing is a light, humorous and entertaining SF mystery, without deep complications of character or theme. Sandy Washington, the human protagonist, has been raised by the Hakh-hli, a kangaroo-like race of aliens who have been exploring the universe for 3000 years.
sent out with a number of similar ships to seek planets for colonization. The Hakh-hli tell Sandy they saved him from his dying mother’s womb after taking her from a disabled spaceship found drifting in orbit during a limited nuclear war. Using recordings of earth broadcasts and a special group of Hakh-hli who are raised with him, they train Sandy to become their goodwill ambassador to earth, when they reapproach the planet years after the war with the express intention of trading superior technical knowledge for fuel and other materials.

The Earth they return to is greatly changed. Ecological disasters, war, and the AIDS epidemic have combined to alter the climate and decimate the population. Furthermore, a shell of debris, mainly left from the partly successful Strategic Defense Initiative, holds humans on the planet, for no ship can penetrate the layer of junk safely. These changes have forced alterations in human society that seem to leave earth in better social and ecological harmony than before the war.

Sandy and his friends on the landing crew are welcomed politely by earth’s security forces, but he quickly comes to suspect them and then his friends of deeper plans than they share with him. Though the core of the plot is the unfolding of these plans as each side penetrates the other’s ruses and Sandy tries to sort out his position in a developing conflict, much of the novel is given over to Sandy’s rather comic filling in of his ignorance about human behavior and customs, especially concerning courtship and sex. Sandy’s discoveries about humans and Hakh-hli show the two species to be essentially alike in their imperative for species survival, and they lead to an almost warm-hearted conclusion.

Critical readers will find problems. For example, Sandy is a film buff whose favorite movies hail from the good old days of the 1940’s and 1950’s, yet he never suspects anything amiss when given a nude snapshot of Marilyn Monroe and told she was his mother. While this might be explainable, it is awkward, and many such minor problems will occur to readers who think carefully about how Pohl sets up Sandy’s education and his initial contacts with other humans. Despite such problems, Pohl’s playful imagination has produced a very entertaining book.

—Terry Heller

A Piece of Fun


Here is a fifth sortie into Pratchett’s most delightful creation, the Discworld, and the return of some earlier characters. The inept wizard
Rincewind and his walking luggage, familiar from both *The Colour of Magic* and *The Light Fantastic*, leave the Unseen University just before the Sourcerer turns up. Although only a child, the Sourcerer can do anything with magic he wants to and, if he is not stopped, will unintentionally end the world. Only the Archmage’s Hat knows this. The Hat gets itself stolen by Conina the barbarian (who would much rather be a hairdresser), and Hat, Rincewind, Conina and walking suitcase set off to find a real wizard to put a stop to all the nonsense. On the way they meet a number of improbable characters, but in a world that is actually a disc poised on the backs of elephants who are standing on the shell of a giant turtle, the improbable becomes the increasingly likely.

This book must not be taken seriously, no more seriously than it takes itself. This is a piece of fun, and is recommended to all SF readers with a sense of humour.

— Pauline Morgan

**The Death of God...?**


The resurrection of politically active religious fundamentalism may well be the key social phenomenon of the eighties worldwide. And surely the twin furors over Martin Scorsese’s *The Last Temptation of Christ* and Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* are the most obvious contemporary examples of art impacting violently on the public consciousness.

Science fiction has long attempted to deal with fundamentalist religion, but with little success. Most SF writers, following Robert Heinlein’s lead, have demonstrated little more than contempt for the phenomenon. The few positively portrayed religious characters in SF — in the novels of James Blish and Walter M. Miller, Jr., for example — are rarely evangelicals. Last year Pamela Sargent, in her *Venus of Shadows*, made an earnest and generally successful attempt to examine the fundamentalist impulse. She drew believable, intelligent characters and showed the attractions such a faith might hold for them. Now, in *The Tides of God*, the last of the Ace SF Specials, Ted Reynolds attempts a somewhat similar exploration.

The story is set in the thirty-third century, a period of world peace and rational discourse. Scientifically, however, the earth has not advanced very far beyond our day because progress over the centuries has been slowed and, at times, reversed by a regular series of dark ages induced by a periodic resurgence of fundamentalist belief. God,
it seems, or at least something which claims to be God, rather than being universal and transcendent, is actually a localized phenomenon. Traveling in an enormous orbit through the galaxy, it periodically returns to within a few light years of our solar system, at which times its telepathic emanations cause an increase in religious belief, mysticism, and irrational behavior. The invariable result is the collapse of civilization. Now, however, an alien race, the Krocerians, who have been similarly affected by the God-being, have contacted earth and given humanity a gigantic spaceship, the Hound of Heaven. Its mission is to intercept the approaching being and destroy it before it can once again trigger the destruction of everything humans and Krocerians have built.

Reynolds' basic idea is a good one and he begins well, but the book has several problems. The ultra-rational human crew of the Hound falls prey to the irrationality-inducing emanations of the God-being in a highly predictable fashion. Christianity is rediscovered and violent sectarian strife breaks out; the ship's security chief develops a paranoid desire to make mass arrests and then, undergoing his own conversion, becomes a death-dealing inquisitor; the ship's captain, a politician, begins to wonder if she can make a deal with the God-being and use it to gain control of the earth; and so on. We've seen similar things before.

About three quarters of the way through, The Tides of God regains some of its strength when we realize that Reynolds is allowing things to go further than we had expected. There's an absolutely chilling scene in which the Hound's head scientist, the book's chief exponent of rational thought, meets the God-being on his own ground and is defeated. In another successful scene, a twelve-year-old girl, exploring off-limits sections of the ship, discovers a hidden nest of Krocerians and an enormous being who claims to be Satan.

The ending of the book, however, simply doesn't satisfy. Reason triumphs in a backhanded sort of way and the God-being is defeated, but explanations are decidedly lacking. Was the enemy God or merely a powerful, but entirely natural, life form with delusions of grandeur? If the former, how could it be destroyed? If the latter, then what explains the appearance of Satan in the cargo hold? We're told late in the game that the Krocerians have a hidden agenda, that they don't really want the God-being destroyed, but what they actually do want is unclear.

Like most Ace SF Specials, The Tides of God does try to do more than the typical genre novel, and for this Reynolds is to be commended. Unfortunately, his book reuses too many plot elements we've seen before and then manages to end in a theological muddle. This is
an ambitious first novel, but a badly flawed one.

—Michael M. Levy

The Powers That Be


Throughout this fantasy trilogy, Elof the smith has gradually moved closer to finding the truth of his own nature. In volume one, *The Anvil of Ice* (1986) [published in the U.S. as an Avon paperback in February 1989; further volumes forthcoming —Ed.], he began life as an unwanted child and became a Mastersmith and tool of the powers that vie for supremacy in this world. Volume two, *The Forge in the Forest* (1987), took him 3000 miles across a continent to become second only to the king in the city of Morvannc. But Elof has doubts, the greatest being that love alone will bind Kara to him forever. In trying to tie her to him magically, he only succeeds in driving her away. Thus begins his final journey. This time it takes him and his faithful friend Roc across the sea to the almost legendary land of Kerys. By returning to his people’s ancestral home, he is also returning to his own roots.

There are three interwoven battles within this trilogy. There is the war between the Powers in the form of the Ice, which seeks to scour life from the land, and those who wish to see it flourish. Caught up in this war are people like Elof and Kara whom the Powers manipulate. Aiding the Ice, by their desire and conquest, the Ekwesh war with Kerbryhaine on one continent and Kerys on another, the struggle mirroring that between the Powers. Then there is the battle of Elof with himself. All are inextricably linked.

Rohan is a competent writer and has used mythological and paleontological sources as foundation for his intricate tale. It is unfortunate that, once again, he has built a flaw into this foundation. Given the situation described, it is impossible to see how the fertile basin that is Kerys (about the size of the Mediterranean) would not be inundated within a century by the inflow from the western ocean, much less how it could survive for thousands of years. But despite this flaw, *The Winter of the World* is a fantasy trilogy worth looking for.

—Pauline Morgan

Dead Loss


Is *Deadlines*, the fourth collaboration between John Skipp and
Craig Spector, a short story collection or a novel? Actually, it’s both — which means it’s really neither.

Deadlines begins as the story of Meryl Daly and Katie Connor, two unlikely roommates brought together through their problems with men. Meryl is an aloof, rebellious brat who takes her father’s money, but not his advice on how to spend it. Katie is a street-smart fool for love who has been abused physically and emotionally by her lovers. Fleeing their individual situations, the women take an apartment together in Manhattan’s East Village. Meryl soon becomes obsessed with a cache of unpublished stories left behind by the previous tenant. At the same time, Katie begins having nightmares about a former boyfriend. It’s not long before the two realize that each is experiencing the symptoms of a new, mutual “man problem” involving the absent author.

That author is (was) Jack Rowan, whose messy suicide serves as the book’s prologue, and it’s with the discovery of his manuscript fifty pages into the story that Deadlines ceases to be a novel and turns into a “fix-up,” a collection of short stories held together by a narrative frame. “Rowan”’s stories have all appeared in Twilight Zone, Night Cry and other horror venues under Skipp and Spector’s individual and shared bylines. Here, the authors have arranged them in a less-than-convincing sequence to read like the secret diary of a writer whose emotions are gradually eroded by his uncaring environment and traumatic personal relationships. We’re meant to feel the same “bittersweet melancholy” Meryl feels as the attitudes expressed in the stories grow progressively more cynical and desperate, but we don’t. The stories weren’t written to serve as parts of a single vehicle, and their ordering here doesn’t make them fit together any better.

Normally, this wouldn’t be a problem. In most fix-ups, the frame narrative is negligible, just an excuse for pulling the stories together for publication. However, Skipp and Spector want Deadlines to work as a novel. They rely on the persona which rises from Jack Rowan’s stories to play the lead role in the frame narrative — an underdeveloped drama about emotional deception and obsession from beyond the grave that never reads as coherently as any of the individual episodes. Deadlines is thus a book whose form is at cross-purposes with its content. It’s best read as the collection of sometimes stylish, and occasionally excellent, short stories (especially “Gentlemen” [also gathered in Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling’s anthology of The Year’s Best Fantasy, published in ’88 by St. Martin’s — Ed.]) it ought to have been, rather than as the hobbling fix-up it has become.

— Stefan Dziemianowicz
The Recuperation of Negativity


After earlier novels (for example, 1985's *Schismatrix*) showing humans driven to mental and physical extremes on alien worlds, Bruce Sterling now gives us a story of a nice young family in what looks like a sane, benign, near-future earth.

Things may not, however, be what they seem. Laura Webster is a committed employee of Rizome, one of the multinational corporations that have saved the world from nuclear war while taking over many of the functions of government, not to mention building the communications network that binds corporate civilization together. At first, Laura appears to be just an attractive, dedicated slice of white bread. However, along with her husband and child, she soon becomes involved in her corporation's efforts to negotiate with the scattered independent nations that still exist as "islands" in the flow of communication. When that conflict erupts in murder, Laura loyally tries to keep the negotiations going by traveling first to independent Granada, then Hong Kong, then on a dizzy tour of the world as she tries to locate the base of the terrorists who are attempting to tear society apart.

Watching this struggle gives us more appreciation — and uneasiness — about Laura and her world. At each stop along the way, especially in Granada, Laura (and the reader) absorbs convincing details of what looks like a reasonable, even desireable, "marginal" position that ultimately proves to be untenable. This validates the importance of the net, since it shows how partial truth must be viewed in context. But the net grows by recuperating or exploiting any entity that would prefer to remain independent. Successful as it is, that's a somewhat disturbing prospect. Again, when Laura is captured by the terrorists, she shows more toughness and perception than we would have suspected in her; but she is perceptive within her constraining social context, and she develops understanding within the limits of her background. So the novel's conclusion, in which the disruptors are vanquished and Laura's brave new world continues refining its interconnectedness, is more convincing than appealing.

Still, the important thing is that *Islands in the Net* is thoroughly convincing. Sterling's extrapolation of future technological and social trends — particularly of the political and economic power implicit in the control of information — is brilliant. His presentation of characters
is sympathetic but unsparing. Plainly and simply, this is the best SF
novel I've read in years. It is most urgently recommended.
—Joe Sanders

A Complex Weave

Tepper, Sheri S. *Marianne, the Madame, and the Momentary Gods.*

If you could make your own reality, what would it be? Perhaps better
yet, if you could create a world for your enemies and place them there,
what would it include: demons, endless monotony, horrible creatures?
In her book *Marianne, the Madame, and the Momentary Gods*, the
sequel to *Mariar·ne, the Magus, and the Manticore* (1986), Sheri S.
Tepper creates several such worlds, as well as a complex weave of
characters, fluid time, and depraved evil.

Marianne is the center of a struggle between the forces of Light and
Dark. Mark Avel, Prime Minister of tiny Alphenlict, and a Magus of the
Cave of Light (a sort of Delphic oracle), is the force for good and order.
He loves Marianne, and is both her rescuer and teacher. Madame
Delubovska of Lubovsk, Alphenlict's border country, follows the cult
of the black shamans, a vague but certainly evil religion. Madame tries
to use Marianne as bait to trap Mark Avel, but is surprised by the girl's
tenacity and growing power. Marianne, strengthened by the love of
Mark Avel as well as by Madame’s abuse and cruelty, is eventually able
to decide her own destiny and to influence the final conflict between
Light and Dark.

Clichéd? Say, rather, that Tepper uses some of the oldest themes
of the fantasy genre. Her strength, however, is her ability to turn
ordinary and commonplace events into extraordinary, even bizarre
adventure. In a rather eccentric manner reminiscent of Lewis Carroll,
Marianne finds herself trapped in nightmare worlds that make little or
no sense, and are all the more terrible because of their familiarity.
Marianne is only able to escape and defeat Madame because of her
inner resources of courage and tenacity. Tepper's two novels, and
particularly this one, are a validation of Marianne's character and
common sense, rather like Alice's in Wonderland.

Unfortunately, while Tepper's writing is superb, some of her plot
twists and between-worlds locomotion are confusing. Also, it is difficult
to understand this book without reading its precursor. Still, the prolific
Sheri S. Tepper, who is also the author of well-praised novels of horror
(*The Bones* [1987]) and science fiction (*After Long Silence* [1987]), is
rapidly establishing herself as one of the best fantasy authors around.
Marianne, the Madame, and the Momentary Gods can only add to that reputation.

—Ben Herrin

Never Cross a Wease!


Ian Watson has the ability to turn ideas inside out. Here he has used the idea of the carnivorous world — be it animal, human or spiritual — taking revenge on those who spurn meat. Diane and Saul Cobbett are vegetarians living in a small country cottage, who make the mistake of rescuing a rabbit from a hungry weasel. The weasel, or so it seems to Saul, is intent on getting its dinner back, as it appears to follow the couple home and wait around for an opportunity to steal the rabbit. The incident drives a wedge between Diane and Saul, a split which deepens when she insists she wants to join the Animal Liberation Front. It does not help that some of the members of the local group are pupils at the school where Saul teaches.

This is a good horror novel which builds from a simple incident and escalates, not just into the nasty events expected in this sort of fiction, but also into a personal, living nightmare for Saul that ordinary people can relate to. Watson uses topical themes, such as vegetarianism, the ALF and child abuse, to enhance the effects he creates. Meat is far better written than most books of its ilk.

—Pauline Morgan

The Sins of the Mothers

Weaver, Michael D. My Father Immortal. St. Martin's, NY, February 1989, 228p. $16.95 hc. 0-312-02617-X.

Michael Weaver's Mercedes Nights received generally positive reviews and made the Science Fiction and Fantasy Book Review Annual's list of the best first novels of the year for 1987. Reviewers praised the book for its rapid pacing, excitement and interesting ideas. It was criticized, however, for relatively shallow characterization, a lack of appropriate irony, and the author's numerous out of place references to cultural icons from the 1960's and 70's. Essentially the same strengths and weaknesses are found in Weaver's new novel, My Father Immortal.

The story begins aborad a spaceship on the edge of the solar system and outward bound. Three women, having hoodwinked the ship's computer, steal their six children from custody and place them in separate escape pods which are programmed to return the three
boys and three girls to earth, a dangerous journey which will take more than a decade. The children are completely isolated from each other at first because radio contact is not permitted, though they later discover an alternate form of communication. Over the years they are educated by their pods' AI computers. Eventually, one of the boys, Daniel, discovers in the computer his mother Tiffany's account of her past. The bulk of My Father Immortal is taken up by Daniel's rewrite of this story, which he sends piece by piece to the other children.

The crew of the spaceship, it seems, are in flight from a devastated earth. The children and relatives of a powerful and evil businesswoman, Mother Grant, they escaped a nuclear war in the twenty-first century by going into suspended animation. Thousands of years later, they awoke to find the world still in chaos, the only living beings in evidence a band of hideous, not very intelligent, but super-strong mutants. This world, too, they have fled. The tension in the story comes from our worry over whether or not the children will make it back to earth alive (some don't) and out interest in discovering how they are connected with the gradually revealed history of their three mothers and the generally unsavory and power-hungry Grant clan.

My Father Immortal moves at a brisk pace and the author's society of mutants is intriguing, though the human characters are, for the most part, pretty thin. I find frankly unbelievable the frequency with which everyone involved makes casual allusions to books, films and events from the long-dead 1980's; after all, what are the chances that a boy born sometime in the sixty-first century would choose an obscure mid-80's film starring David Bowie (Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence) and another film based, evidently, on David Palmer's mid-80's SF novel Emergence, as his favorite works? Weaver remains a writer to keep an eye on, but I'm not sure this new novel is a step forward from Mercedes Nights.

—Michael M. Levy

Young Adult

Lively and Grotesque


De Haven is already known as the author of Funny Papers, Freaks Amour and Jersey Luck. His titles rather accurately suggest the quality and character of his books. This fourth book is number seven in the Millenium science fiction series edited by Byron Preiss. Each Millenium
volume explores a major theme of science fiction, including time travel, parallel worlds, alien life, and first contact. It is presently unclear whether the series is designed to parody or pay tribute to science fiction. The present volume, which dramatizes the "superman" concept, attempts to do both. Joe Gosh sustains the campy narrative quality of the comic books we loved in the 40's. It is just as lively and grotesque, if derivative. As with those beloved comics, the hero's adventures are a modernization and vulgarization of the epics of antiquity, with Joe Gosh as both Achilles and Superboy.

Before being sent through the Jiffy, which gives him his super powers, Gosh is "a husky blond who resembles the perfect municipal lifeguard." His love for the fair Vicki Zomba is unrequited; he is without parents, without a job, without direction, and his credit is running out in this society where debtors are sentenced to labor in the mines of Mars. Gosh's only talent lies in drawing dinosaurs.

Zomba's evil mother, who is the Crime Duchess of a futuristic Metropolis called Wonder City, sends Gosh on a mission to recover her lost love, the Honky Tonk Man, a swivel-hipped pop singer who disappeared twenty years before into the Amazon jungle. Although willing to embark on this quest to achieve the hand of the woman he loves, Gosh loses interest in Vicky before his task is completed. His attention is diverted by the mousy, yet more agreeable sister of the boy Frankenstein who developed the Jiffy.

This melange of images and motifs from our recent past (those villains and heroes who inhabited the Metropolis of our childhood), the present (with Publisher's Clearinghouse catalogs and superstar fan clubs), and our SF future (Martian expeditions, matter transmitters) provides an hour or so of reading amusement, but leaves nothing to ponder. For those of us who learned to read through comic books, Joe Gosh is a slight trip with some nostalgia. Teenagers may also find the narrative entertaining. However, it is better to borrow this title from the library than to spend sixteen bucks on it.

—Allene S. Phy-Olsen

Where the Deer and the Cyberpunks Play


Billing itself as a new subgenre, the "cyberwestern," William Wu's Hong on the Range brings the traditional western story into the cyberpunk universe. It's a difficult stretch at times, but Wu pulls it off with panache.

Louis Wong is a traveller in the rebuilt American West, the original
destroyed through man-made biological disasters. It is being recreated with the help of technology, and most cowboys, settlers, and even cattle have mechanical parts. Bounty hunter Sniffin' Griffin, for instance, has a mechanical nose that helps him track down his prey. Sniffin' works with Prism Chisholm, named for his complex mechanical eyes that "see" everything from temperature differences to distant objects. Such devices (and nicknames, apparently) are considered normal in this rebuilt Old West; only those without mechanical parts, so-called control-naturals, are considered unusual and treated with contempt.

Wong is a control-natural and takes great pains to hide the fact whenever possible. He is also an Easterner, truly a stranger in a strange land. By being in the wrong place at the wrong time, Wong inadvertently aids a gang of outlaws and is accused of helping rob a bank. Sniffin' and Prism jump on his trail, hoping that Wong will eventually lead them to the rest of the gang and the stolen loot. Much of the story chronicles Wong's attempts to elude his trackers and establish his innocence. Sometimes he travels alone, sometimes he rides with wagon trains, and sometimes he camps with outlaws. Often at his side is Chuck, a talking (and, unfortunately, singing) steerite, technology's answer to cattle and Wong's answer to Tonto. Of course, even a cyberwestern needs gunfights, double-crosses, ambushes, cowgirls with hearts of gold, and the required final showdown.

Wu treads a fine line between parody and affection but succeeds with his high wire act. Hong on the Range puts the horse back in space opera, where it belongs. And like the movie Westworld, Wu creates a West that never existed except on film, yet it is exactly the West we would create if we could. As an added bonus, Wu opens the door for future cyberpunk genre explorations. (The mind boggles at the idea of cyberporn, for instance.) This novel may not appeal to all tastes, but it's fun and worth reading.

—Rick Osborn

Art

Not-So-Fantastic Illustration


Dragon's World has for some years been the foremost publisher of books devoted to fantastic illustration, mostly by British illustrators,
and almost all issued in 8 1/2 by 11-inch hard/soft covers. The six
subjects here produce illustrations for books, advertising, comics and
other products. The text is based on interviews by Dean.

Charles Vess, who lives in upstate New York, is best known for his
comic book illustration, much of it influenced by Howard Pyle. He has
little affinity for SF's high-tech world or that of heroic barbarians. He
says, "I like organic things and a medieval look," yet he seldom draws
direct from nature. Julek Heller is a British illustrator who has designed
textiles, worked on a British children's TV program, and has a fantasy
orientation. Many reproductions are from an unpublished book on
giants. Several imaginary animals reflect his sense of humor.

Another Briton, Melvyn Grant, works in traditional oils, with humans
usually center stage, although he's done some nasty aliens; his avoca-
tion as a musician isn't reflected in the reproductions. Michael Kaluta
is well known for his comic books (The Shadow, Carson of Venus) and
graphic novels (Starstruck). A regular at SF and comics conventions,
he likes to mingle with fellow professionals and fans. I found the photos
of his New York City studio more interesting than most of his illustra-
tion.

Chris Moore's subject and style derive heavily from fellow Briton
Chris Foss, one of the deans of hard-edge, high-tech SF illustration,
although three reproductions from U.S. Vintage Books covers have a
more surrealistic quality. Berni Wrightson specializes in pen-and-ink
drawings for comics, especially horror comics. His best work
reproduced here is from a 1983 Marvel Comics version of
Frankenstein; it's no challenge to Barry Moser's work for the University
of California Press edition of Mary Shelley's classic, but it shows what
Wrightson can do.

This book, like most devoted to commercial fantastic illustration,
doesn't show the size of the original, and the captions don't indicate
the publisher and year of the book, LP, etc. It would have been
instructive to see how the overprinted text worked with or against the
illustration alone. The pedestrian text by Evans misspells Tolkien twice,
buffalo three times (perhaps a bufflo is a British mutant). Fans of these
illustrators might enjoy this book but few others need bother.

—Charles Beaulieu