The SFRA Review

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President’s Message:

A Nanoepistolary Exercise

Short and sweet this time. A straight out, unvarnished, uncomplicated, industrial-strength presidential message.

The SFRA’s federal tax exemption is now official. One immediate benefit of this is to allow us to send the SFRA Review out to you all at significantly reduced postal rates, enhancing the fiscal viability of the Review enterprise. Immediate Past President Elizabeth Ann Hull was thorough and utterly tenacious in her extended dealings with the IRS and the credit for our successful application to that hideous agency goes entirely to her. Thanks, Betty!

Money again: Treasurer Edra Bogle tells me that dues renewals are running ahead of last year. All who read this will have already renewed — but if you know of those who haven’t and are now off the mailing list, do them a favor and remind them to re-up. And spread the word about the SFRA among those you know are likely candidates for membership. You might win one of the two grand prizes in the BIG MEMBERSHIP DRIVE. (Remember the membership drive?)

The Conference is shaping up to be a great one. When I called Steve Lehman the other day, the mercury was just topping 86 here in LA, while outside Steve’s study it was a brisk minus 27. That 113 degree temperature differential reminded me yet again just how exotic that neck of the woods is likely to prove for a SoCal denizen like me. Steve has a great program in development and he is getting excellent financial support from his College and the Canadian government. He is organizing a day in Montreal for conference and he tells me that those who would like to stay for a day or two or a few past the end of the conference at the extremely inexpensive college rates are welcome to do so. Each suite has its own kitchen and two bedrooms and would make a great base of operations for exploring Quebec. The EC at least plans to arrive Tuesday preceding the conference to get its own work done, allowing us to enjoy the conference sessions. At the John Abbott rates, a few extra days is an affordable option.

Cornel Robu has written us from Romania, thanking the SFRA for supporting his membership through our Scholar’s Support Fund. “I would be much obliged if you could tell everybody how grateful I am...,” he writes, promising “to honor by my devotion to SF the generosity and clear-sightedness” of the SFRA. Rather few of us have actually contributed to the Fund thus far and I hope that you will consider doing so if you haven’t al-
ready. A few bucks is pretty near painless to our North American members, and it can mean the world to members and prospective members in other parts of the world. Mail your contribution to Edra Bogle, Treasurer SFRA, 201 Peach Street, Denton, TX, 76201.

Pete Lowentrout

SFRA XXIII Conference Update

The annual conference is quickly approaching and I'm looking forward to seeing everyone up here in the Great White North, June 18-21. I'm getting excellent support from my College, the SF community in Montreal, and from the SFRA membership. Despite the odd moment of panic, predictable I'm assured especially for a neophyte coordinator, the Conference seems to be shaping up very well. The program is not yet firm, of course, but a number of areas are clarifying even as I write this in the middle of January.

Jean-Marc Gouanvic has organized a panel on Quebecois SF and F consisting of Guy Bouchard, J.P. April, Rita Panchaud, and hopefully himself. David Ketterer is assembling a group which will focus more generally on Canadian SF and F. John Robert Colombo and John Clute are preparing contributions to that discussion. In this connection we are planning a Wine and Cheese to launch Professor Ketterer's book, Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy, due out this spring from Indiana University Press. Veronica Hollinger and Joan Gordon are developing panels on the state of SF in megacorporate America and women's issues in SF. Muriel Becker is helping with teaching SF/F and young adult SF/F. James Gunn and George Slusser have written that they plan to attend and deliver papers. In addition to James Gunn, other writers in English I have spoken with so far and who are interested in attending include Bruce Sterling, Phyllis Gotlieb, and Donald Kingsbury.

For those interested in side trips, a tour of the Spar Aerospace plant in Ste. Anne de Bellevue is being organized for Friday afternoon as well as a Metro (subway) and walking tour of Montreal for the Sunday after the conference. For general information about things to do in the area while you're here, Tourism Quebec can be reached by telephone at 1-800-363-7777. Hope to see you in June.

Steve Lehman
SFRA #23 Coordinator
News and Information:

Weinbaum Revisited

Stanley Weinbaum is probably not well known to younger readers of SF, since he died in 1935 at the young age of 33, with relatively few publications to his credit ("A Martian Odyssey," which appeared the year prior to his death, is his best known story). He is the subject of an interview with his widow in issue 42 of Fantasy Commentator, fall 1991. The interviewer is Eric Leif Davin. Supplementing this are transcriptions and summaries of Weinbaum’s business correspondence from 1932 to 1935 by Sam Moskowitz. R. Alain Everts discusses Weinbaum’s college years. This Weinbaum memorial issue also has part 6 of Moskowitz’s continuing saga of Bernarr Macfadden and part 12 of his on-going history of early SF, “Voyagers Through Eternity.” Book reviews and verse complete the issue, $5 from A. Langley Searles, 48 Highland Avenue, Bronxville, NY 10708-5909; six issue (three year) subscriptions are $25.

—NB

thingan Hol Dajatlh’a’

Any devoted Trekker knows that’s Klingon for “Do you speak Klingon?” Pocket Books, which published The Klingon Dictionary in January ($10, paper), says the compiler, Marc Okrand, is a professional linguist who developed the Klingon language for the ST films and Star Trek: The Next Generation series. Buried on the back of the title page is a dual copyright, which reveals that this is a reprint of a book published in 1985 and now reprinted with a 19 page addendum, the reprint largely a tie-in to the sixth ST film, The Undiscovered Country. The English/Klingon/English dictionary is supplemented by a detailed discussion of the syntax, grammar and pronunciation of Klingon, which might interest a linguist with an interest in artificial languages.

—NB

Femmes Fatales

is the name of a new quarterly due later this year from the publisher of the best magazine devoted to fantastic cinema, Cinefantastique. This quarterly will be edited by Bill George, author of Eroticism in the Cinema, a book I recall as faintly prurient and amateurish. An ad announcing the new maga-
zine talks of "the same kind of high-quality, full-color graphics, classy design and glossy paper" as Cinefantastique. If you send your $18 charter subscription now to Box 270, Oak Park, IL, 60303, You'll receive an autographed 8x10 glossy of scream queen Brinke Stevens, whose gloved hands and arms discreetly cover her breasts and crotch; just the thing for your office wall. And if you're disappointed with the magazine, you'll get a refund but can keep the glossy. But how could you be disappointed with profiles of Kim Cattral (of Star Trek VII), Rachel Ward, Linnea Quigley and other notables?

—NB

RQ 32 Two Bucks, Too

Pretty labored headline, eh? This issue of Riverside Quarterly is printed on light green paper and is still the odd 4 1/4 x 7 1/2 inch size editor Leland Sapiro apparently favors. The usual mix of poetry, fiction, illustrations, articles, letters, and commentary is here. Justin Leiber contributes Part 1 of a series devoted to his father; Karen Michalson of the Univ. of CT, Storrs, discusses "Mapping the Mainstream: Surveying the Boundaries Between Fantasy and Realism"; Marilyn House presents a reading of A Canticle for Leibowitz; and Jim Harmon has more anecdotes on fandom, this time of western movie fandom. The leisured pace and old-fashioned appearance makes this fanzine a survivor from a dead epoch. $6/4 issues, $2/1 issue, to 807 Walters, #107, Lake Charles, LA 70605.

—NB

From Ghetto to Acceptance

One form of recognition as part of the wider world of literature is having an entry in a general literary reference book. The latest evidence of the acceptance of SF writers by compilers of such books is the two volume set issued last year by Facts on File, Bibliography of American Fiction 1919-1988, ed. by Matthew J. Bruccoli and Judith S. Baughman. Four of the 12 eventual volumes in the series are devoted to fiction (the other two volumes, forthcoming, cover the periods 1588-1865 and 1866-1918). The publisher's ad claims the series will do for American literature what The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature did for British writers.

These initial volumes bibliograph 219 writers, a list of which was kindly provided by Cynthia Farar of Facts on File. Genre writers include Anderson, Asimov, Bester, Blish, Bradbury, del Rey, Dick, Heinlein, Herbert, Le Guin,

Each entry provides dates of birth and death, a one-paragraph sketch, followed by bibliographies of the author, a chronological list of authored books, other (mostly edited) books, collections, the location of manuscripts and archives, and a secondary bibliography of books and articles. The specimen entry sent me, for Asimov, was prepared by Stephen Goldman and lists not only the fiction but the voluminous nonfiction as well.

It’s easy to challenge the selection of authors, whether mainstream or genre. Why not Edgar Rice Burroughs, L. Frank Baum, Ellison or Lovecraft, for example? The only genre author included I’d challenge is del Rey, who seems out of place. The bibliographies of genre authors are moderately useful, but most readers will turn to more specialized tools, like Twentieth-Century Science-Fiction Writers (St James, 3d edition, December 1991) or the forthcoming greatly expanded and revised SF encyclopedia edited by Peter Nicholls and John Clute. But as a general reference tool, it will be helpful in academic and larger public libraries, which will have to ignore the $145/volume price (the series is available at a 10% discount).

—NB

Comics Art Resources Grow

SFRA member Randall W. Scott is a cataloger at the MSU Libraries and specializes in the Russel B. Nye Popular Culture Collection, a huge part of which is an enormous comic art collection: over 70,000 comics items, including 500 scrapbooks containing more than 300,000 daily comic strips and more than 2,000 Golden Age comic books on microfilm. Electronic access to the collection is available via OCLO. In October the library presented an exhibit celebrating the 40th anniversary of Wonder Woman, while the other media celebrated the 50th anniversaries of Superman, Batman, Mickey Mouse and Bugs Bunny (does that tell you something?). The collection’s complete set of Planet Comics, which I recall with fondness from a long-vanished youth, will be filmed by microcolor and issued on color microfiche. Although the collections continue to grow, mostly by donations, the staff doesn’t. Randall therefore asks anyone considering a donation—particularly a large one—to write/phone/fax in advance: MSU Libraries, East Lansing, MI 48824-1048, 517-355-3770/336-1445 (fax). Brief queries will be answered, but you’ll have to visit the site for anything more lengthy. This information is taken from the irregular newsletter, Comic Art Collection, December 2, the first issue in a year.
Mervyn Peake

SFRA member G. Peter Winnington edits Peake Studies, several issues of which usually appear each year. He sent me the winter 1991 (v.2, no.3) issue recently, which maintains his high standards in both contents and desktop publishing. This 49 page stapled issue, 4 3/4 X 8 1/4 inches, focuses on both the writings and the drawings, with reproductions of some of the latter (most of Peake’s work was b&w pen and ink and reproduces well). Ann Yeoman examines “Eros and the virgin archetype in the Titus Books,” Willington “Peake’s Thing and Hawthorne’s Pearl,” and Gavin O’Keefe contrasts the art of Beardsley and Peake, a piece I found most interesting, since I’d considered them more dissimilar than similar; I changed my mind. Subscriptions are on a per page basis. Send $25 or £25 to Winnington, Les 3 Chasseurs, 1413 Orzens, Vaud, Switzerland; the cost of each issue will be deducted from your payment.

—NB

Are Nuclear Threats Passe?

Paul Brians has edited Nuclear Texts & Contexts since it began several years ago as the official newsletter of the International Society for the Study of Nuclear Texts & Contexts. Issue 7, Fall 1991, has Brians’ announcement that “For quite obvious reason interest in issues related to nuclear war and weaponry has fallen drastically in recent months ...” and that his own interests have shifted to third world literature written in English. The last issue he will edit will be #8, due fall 1992 and invites anyone interested in taking over to write Dan Zins, President, ISSNTC, 2347 Cortez Way, Atlanta 30319.

A special issue of the Journal of Popular Film and Television will focus on “Nuclear Film and Television,” and articles are sought that cover a wide range of political, intellectual, emotional, and critical perspectives, addressing any aspect of nuclear technology, consciousness, or culture in any genre of fiction and non-fiction film and TV. Papers should follow the MLA’s style sheet, first edition, be 2500-5000 words, and written for an interdisciplinary audience. Send three copies of your MS and/or questions to the guest editor, Jane Caputi, American studies, Univ. of NM, Albuquerque, NM 87131, by January 1993.

—NB

Pilgrim Author’s Story Featured

author and several SFRA members as well as other critics. Articles included LeGuin’s “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” (Variations on a theme by William James); Kenneth M. Roemer’s “The Talking Porcupine Liberates Utopia: Le Guin’s ‘Omelas’ as Pretext to the Dance;” Elizabeth Cummins’ “Praise the Creation Unfinished”: Response to Kenneth M. Roemer; Peter Fitting’s “Readers and Responsibility: A Reply to Ken Roemer;” Carol D. Stevens’ “A Response to Ken Roemer;” Rebecca Adams’ “Narrative Voice and Unimaginability of the Utopia ‘Feminine’ in Le Guin’s The Left Hand of Darkness and ‘The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas;’” Lee Cullen Khanna’s “Beyond Omelas: Utopia and Gender;” and Kenneth M. Roemer’s “Dissensus Achieved, Apologies Offered, and a Hinge Proclaimed.” Other utopian articles in this volume were Heinz Tschachler’s “Forgetting Dostoevsky; or, The Political Unconscious of Ursula K. Le Guin;” Leslie J. Roberts’ “Etienne Cabet and his Voyage en Icarie, 1840;” Peter Fitting’s “Utopia Beyond Our Ideals: The Dilemma of the Right-Wing Utopia;” David M. Esposito’s “‘Abandon New York—Fall Back to Kansas City!’: The Invasion Myth in American Culture;” Kristine Anderson’s “Encyclopedic Dictionary as Utopian Genre: Two Feminist Ventures;” Jan Relf’s “Women in Retreat: The Politics of Separatism in Women’s Literary Utopias;” and W. Russel Gray’s “Taking Nineteen Eighty-Four Back to the Future, or There’s An Awful Lot of Orwell in Brazil (Not to Mention Python).” The usual editorial, book reviews, book notes, contributors’ descriptions, and notices are included. For information on subscriptions, contact Lyman Tower Sargent, Editor, Utopian Studies, Dept. of Political Science, University of Missouri-St. Louis, 9001 Natural Bridge Road, St. Louis, Missouri 63121-4499; or phone: (314) 553-5521.

L.T. Sargent

Pioneer Nominations

Members are reminded that the Pioneer Award committee, while Argus-eyed, is finite in its knowledge of all the possible candidates for the best article of the year. If you spot a likely essay outside of the usual journals (i.e., Extrapolation, Foundation, NYRSF, SF Eye, SFS), please send a citation—or better yet, a photocopy—to one or more of the committee members, which for the 1991 round means Russell Letson (chair), Veronica Hollinger, or Joan Gordon.

Russell Letson
Letters to the Editor:

9 December 1991

The Editor

SFRA Newsletter

Dear Editor:

I fear my patience has finally been exhausted concerning the unrelievedly inept reviews (even when favourable) of works pertaining to H. P. Lovecraft in your journal. It does not appear as if there is anyone in your organisation who has any actual expertise on Lovecraft, hence anyone who can review these works with any intelligence or insight. Most of these reviews have been written by Michael R. Collings or Bill Collins, neither of whom have done any significant work on Lovecraft at all. Let me cite some examples:

Collings, in reviewing my *H. P. Lovecraft: The Decline of the West* (December 1990), takes me to task concerning my “apparent advocacy of certain of Lovecraft’s conclusions”, referring specifically to my agreement with Lovecraft’s atheism. Collings either did not read or did not understand my introduction, wherein I stated that a part of the methodology of my “dialogic” criticism is a debate with Lovecraft, either in agreement or in disagreement, on some of his philosophical views. I stated that it would be critically dishonest of me (or of any critic) to conceal my own views when discussing Lovecraft’s. It is interesting that my “advocacy” of Lovecraft’s atheism irked Collings (who presumably is not an atheist), but my equally ardent condemnation of Lovecraft’s racism did not.

Collins, in reviewing Kenneth W. Faig’s *The Parents of Howard Phillips Lovecraft* (January/February 1991), notes that Faig was unable to consult some documents at the John Hay Library of Brown university and makes the wild and irresponsible conjecture that the library denied him access to the material. In fact, all that Faig meant (as any sane reader could have guessed) is that he was unable to make the journey to the library in Providence, Rhode Island, from his home in Evanston, Illinois. The John Hay Library does not deny anyone access to documents, and Collins has no grounds even to suggest such a thing.

The prize for fatuity is taken by Collins’ recent review of *The H. P. Lovecraft Centennial Conference Proceedings* (November 1991).
First, he asserts that the panel discussion on "Lovecraft and Modern Horror" "rambles about anecdotally without ever saying anything germane to the subject". He must not have read this section at all, for it contains such things as Stefan Dziemianowicz's keen analysis of four modern writers (Ramsey Campbell, Thomas Ligotti, T. E. D. Klein, and Fred Chappell) who have written modern Lovecraftian fiction, Chappell's own careful account of the writing of his fine Lovecraftian novel *Dagon*, Les Daniels' sharp condemnation of the moral inadequacy of much modern weird fiction, and Robert M. Price's study of parallels between Lovecraft and Robert E. Howard. It is obvious to any reader of this book that each panelist only had 10 to 15 minutes to give a presentation, so that it is unreasonable to expect a lengthy critical analysis such as that found in *Lovecraft Studies*.

Then Collins asserts that Donald R. Burleson's *Lovecraft: Disturbing the Universe* (1990) is the "first time a pulp sf or fantasy writer has been the subject of a book length study based on a single critical approach". This is false even when applied to Lovecraft himself, let alone other writers. Even if one does not count Maurice Lévy's *Lovecraft ou du fantastique* (1972), which was predominantly psychoanalytical, the first such volume was surely Barton L. St Armand's *The Roots of Horror in the Fiction of H. P. Lovecraft* (1977), an entire study devoted to a Jungian analysis of a single Lovecraft story, "The Rats in the Walls".

Collins then goes on to claim that I somehow prefer an "era of nostalgic critical innocence". This is exactly the opposite of what I asserted in my concluding address (which Collins must have read, since he quotes it), and also what I stated in *Lovecraft Studies* Nos. 22/23 (Fall 1990): after reviewing Burleson's book, I noted that "it will now no longer be possible for..... critics to assert that they have no critical presuppositions..... and can write 'objectively' (whatever that is) without reliance upon some critical approach. The majority of work on Lovecraft still consists of rather old-fashioned biography or philology; useful as this can sometimes be, it must be amalgamated and absorbed into a broader critical methodology if it is to bear real fruit."

It seems to me that your magazine generally is a prime testimonial to the bad things that can happen when pompous, self-important academics decide that they know all there is to know about some branch of literature. These cocksure reviews by writers who really have no capacity to judge the ma-
terial under review become rapidly tiresome to genuine authorities. If it is all the same to you, I would prefer not to have my work reviewed at all if you cannot find someone intelligent to review it.

Yours,
S. T. Joshi

Dear Editor:

Gratuitous insults aside, Mr. Joshi raises four points concerning my critical competence. Herewith my reply:

1. Regarding the ms. by Lovecraft's mother, Faig writes: "I have not had access to this document for the writing of this paper." (19) I continue to think that a "sane person" who neither knows Mr. Faig nor has dealt with the Hay Library might be left with the impression that there is more contained in that baroque phrase than a mere statement that the writer couldn't go read it. It does occur to me that, as the Hay is bountiful of its stock, someone in the Lovecraft circle residing close to Providence might have taken the trouble to check Faig's monograph against the Phillips daybook prior to publication. It would certainly have strengthened Faig's admirable labor of love.

2. As to the Conference session on "Lovecraft and Modern Horror," both Joshi and I should have noted that that was the title of Les Daniels' talk, not of the panel itself, which was called "The Craft of the Horror Writers." I'm honored that my original error is so powerful that the organizer/editor has adopted it himself. Readers of the Proceedings can judge for themselves whether the contributions "ramble about anecdotally" or are "keen," "careful," and "sharp." If they are all those things, I wonder that Joshi feels the need to apologize for the original format.

3. Mr. Joshi willfully omits "I think" as the qualifier preceding the critical statement he quotes from my review, thus distorting it into an Olympian pronouncement. I should have been aware of Mr. Joshi's translation of the Lévy, published in 1988 by Wayne State UP, I did not feel that the excellent St. Armand monograph qualified by my definition, both in its concentration on one story and its appearance from a non-academic press.

4. I am pleased to hear that Mr. Joshi is not among those who mistrust academic criticism of HPL (his present letter aside). However in his concluding address, published in the Proceedings: he says: "Do we want [HPL] as critically respected (and dissected) as James Joyce? Maybe it's better, in the end, that Lovecraft remain in the hands of the small and faithful circle who will cherish his memory as he wished it to be cherished." (80) Readers of the
volume will have to judge whether that sums up the sense of his entire ad­dress. I feel it does.

Eldritchly,

Bill Collins, Ph.D., P.S.I.A.
(Pompous, Self-Important Academic)

In a handwritten PS, Collins remarks: "I must be doing something right. This is the second time I've had to respond to a huffy letter this year! How many other SFRA reviewers can make that statement?" Answer: none.

Michael Collings says he stands by his review's accuracy and balance. He disputes Joshi’s contention that only those who have published on an author are “genuine authorities,” as Joshi styles himself. —Ed

**Correction**

A revision to the review of Day's Tolkien: The Illustrated Encyclopedia in the January/February issues was received too late for printing. The con­cluding text should read: “...continue to be Tyler's The New Tolkien Com­panion, Foster’s The Complete Guide to Middle Earth, and the authoritative glossaries, notes, and introductions Christopher Tolkien is providing in his carefully edited posthumous editions of his father's unpublished writings. For a single reference volume, I must frequently use Tyler. Foster's entries are less comprehensive, though they have the advantage of giving page refer­ences to Tolkien’s texts. Both include more linguistic information and more helpful cross references than Day, and both are far easier to use.”
Non-Fiction:

Valuable Research Aid


Victor Sage opens his discussion of 19th century Gothic fiction, *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition*, with the observation that "There is something about horror fiction which has always provoked readers to account for it. The extremity of the genre, the recurrence of its symbols, and the *deja vu* effect of its language seem to demand a broader explanation than other, apparently more self-justifying, literary forms." This being the case, *The Closed Space* represents an extreme, almost cosmic, attempt at explanation: in order to understand the basic themes, images, and motifs of horror fiction (as well as its persistence throughout Western literature), Aguirre argues, one must begin with early Christian philosophy and archaic Celtic myth and legend. In the space of just over two hundred pages, Aguirre locates the progenitors of contemporary horror in the gradual historical, cultural, and philosophical distancing of the Numinous from human life.

Beginning with such Celtic tales as those found in the *Mabinogion* and the Arthurian sagas, Aguirre notes the frequent intersection of objective reality and the Numinous—of the Here with the Other, or, borrowing Celtic terms, of Tara with Uisnech. Citing examples from dozens of early tales, he suggests the accessibility of the Other (whether supernatural or religious) in early Western imagination; then, the next chapter, "The Christian World," demonstrates how that accessibility is systematically eroded as God/the Numinous is distanced from everyday humanity. Chapters on the Renaissance and "The Age of Reason" complete his introduction, in which he argues that the history of Western philosophy is the history of that incremental distancing, until horizontal intersections are replaced by the vertical image of the "Great Chain of Being" (humanity being placed increasingly on lower links of the chain). That image subsequently degrades under the onslaught of Reason, which replaces God with abstract principles and severs intimate connections between Here and Other. Aguirre focuses on major texts from *Faustus*, through *Hamlet, Paradise Lost*, and into the works of Pope, Berkeley, and others.

It is no coincidence, he continues, that the early Gothic novels are contemporaneous with the late eighteenth century and the Age of Reason. If humans abstract the Good so completely as to make it inaccessible, then the
Numinous will enter from the bottom, in the form of concrete evil. In chapters on “Gothic Horror: the Haunted House,” “Victorian Horror: The Haunted Man,” “Cosmic Terror: The Haunted Earth.” and “Modern Terror: The Incarnation of the Numinous,” Aguirre completes a millennium-long sketch of the movement of Western thought as it culminates in the closing of the Circle—the Numinous again accessible and at the center of imagination) only this time forced to concentrate on the Evil instead of the Good.

If there is a difficulty with the study (beyond the rather high price), it is simply that Aguirre does not have time to go into the depth required by his vision and his scope. His overall thesis seems convincing, particularly as supported by his citation of multiple texts. But as he draws nearer the twentieth century, possible texts multiply until he often must settle for a passing reference to author and title, or occasionally a sentence indicating how the work in question fits the paradigms his thesis generates. Paradoxically, however, that may also be the overriding strength of the book—it is not definitive; rather, it suggests possibilities that must yet be researched. If, as has been argued, horror, fantasy, and science fiction have become the ‘mainstream’ forms for the latter quarter of this century, Aguirre’s study may suggest in part why. His assertions about the role of modern writers—from Lovecraft through Bloch and Jackson, to King, Straub, Strieber, and others—invite the reader to review those works, and others, in the context of a coherent alteration and re-definition of worldview.

The Closed Space is occasionally demanding in its use of conceptual terms (e.g., Tara and Uisnech, which are repeated as touchstones throughout), but it repays close reading. Aguirre has provided an extensive bibliography, filmography, and index, making the book not only provocative and stimulating, but a valuable research aid.

Michael R. Collings

Journey to the Center of Obscurity


In spite of what its main title suggests, William Butcher’s study of Jules Verne is not a psychoanalytic reading of the Vernian œuvre, but instead a structuralist and phenomenological approach to the functions of space and time in the Voyages Extraordinaires. As such, it covers very different ground than two other recent books which also make claims to the importance of
Jules Verne as a precursor to literary modernism. Arthur B. Evans's *Jules Verne Rediscovered* (1988) and Andrew Martin's *The Mask of the Prophet* (1990), respectively, are concerned with moral and scientific didacticism and an ideological subtext of the perceptual conflict between empire and revolt in the novels. Butcher's study complements, rather than competes with, the other recent contributions to the growing body of Verne scholarship available in English.

Butcher's analysis observes that in each novel the Vernian hero is confronted with the fact of his own minute physical being in the unstructured space of the whole world. Possessing the leisure and the resources to appreciate such a circumstance, the Vernian hero sets about mapping and appropriating unstructured space. Butcher then sets out to systematically analyze the structure of space and time within Verne's narratives showing how the author consistently rebelled against 19th century realistic/naturalistic literary conventions. There is also a suggestion that the novels are in part a subversion of the mandate of Verne's publisher, Hetzel, that the *Voyages extraordinaires* be encyclopaedic, mapping the known and the unknown: "The *Voyages extraordinaires* seem to present themselves as a heroic and exemplary failure: they prove that even the most visionary survey of Nature's outstanding features cannot put the world back together again. This general scepticism is undoubtedly a reaction to—and comment on—the overweening philosophical and social ideas of the time. Verne puts another nail into the remaining encyclopaedic aims of the Age of Reason; and contributes massively to what was to become the new uncertainty."

While Butcher presents yet another interesting and potentially useful argument for Jules Verne's place in the pre-history of literary modernism, the study is written in a very exclusive manner which limits the potential audience. All the quotations from Verne's texts are untranslated, creating readerly difficulties that are only compounded by the incredible level of critical sophistication required by Butcher's discussions. Readers unfamiliar with the languages of current theoretical practices will find some of the arguments almost impenetrable. Indeed, the glib theoreticality of the study is its greatest liability. This paragraph extracted from the end of an important section of the final chapter may serve to illustrate:

The resonance now combines only too perfectly with the chamber; the systems of auto-cannibalism, auto-eroticism, and 'auto-reference' are both the most naturally accessible ones and the most dangerously and artificially isolated ones. Their constituent acts are atemporal ones on a high-wire apparently held up only by the flow of time and surface tension. They are the last positive, self-assertive
acts, and the final negative, self-annihilating ones. They make up systems that are both open and closed, free and constrained, and timeless and centered on time. They are in perpetual motion but also permanently self-destructing.

Such a facile use of words suggests a superficiality and an emphasis on the texture of the critical language that almost belies the study's thesis. But then, in the end, Butcher seems to deny the authority of his own project: "Time and space in the Voyages ultimately remain a loose bundle of conceptions and perceptions, defined above all in terms of each other. Although rarely imperceptible, they stay consistently and implacably unanalysable."

Butcher's study is difficult and frustrating, yet sometimes interesting and very rewarding, but casual readers or the faint at heart would do best to turn to the books by Martin and Evans for an insight into the current state of scholarship on Verne.

Peter C. Hall

[Arthur B. Evans reviewed Butcher and Martin in Science-Fiction Studies, July 1991, and found Martin far more accessible but found both books "worthy and welcome additions to the growing corpus of English-language scholarship on Jules Verne." Mr. Hall asks, "Whatever happened to transparent, plain style?" NB, ed.]

Blockbuster


Presumably the most expensive movie ever made (at $90,000,000), Terminator 2 was one of the few successful films of a disappointing box office year. Shay and Duncan's book on the production of the film includes two interviews with screenwriter-director Cameron and shorter quotes from others who participated in the gargantuan project. Besides providing a great deal of detailed information about the film's complex and ingenious special effects, stunts and other technical work, Making throws light on factors which made the sequel less satisfying than its predecessor, The Terminator (1984). For instance, Cameron discusses his decision that the film's child
hero would not carry a weapon, let alone use one. Clearly his responsibility for an unprecedented budget forced Cameron to avoid controversy and to make the sequel much softer than the harrowing original film. The world (doomed at the end of *The Terminator*) is saved, Arnold Schwarzenegger plays an almost-human Terminator, and the real Terminator (“no fear, no pain, no pity—and he will absolutely never stop until you are dead”) is portrayed by a much less menacing actor. Cameron consistently refers to Schwarzenegger’s Terminator as “he” and to the T-1000 (the unreformed Terminator) as “it.” Before *The Terminator*, movie robots, from Robby to C3PO, were usually comic creatures who looked like machines but acted like humans. The Terminator reversed the convention; he looked human but thought and acted like a machine. This innovation made the original Terminator perhaps the most interesting character in SF films of the 1980s. Compromised by the need to attract a vast audience, *Terminator 2* almost threw away that character.

Cameron’s introduction to his *Screenplay* and Van Ling’s notes explaining differences between the published shooting script and the release version of the film are also revealing. The film’s enormous advertising campaign influenced the screenplay; knowing that the ad campaign would reveal that Schwarzenegger would play a hero, Cameron abandoned plans to keep audiences in suspense about which Terminator was on the human side. Surprisingly, many scenes in early script versions were cut for budgetary reasons. Even $90,000,000 was inadequate to realize Cameron’s original vision. The *Screenplay* includes several scenes written but not filmed, including an elaborate Future War sequence; hundreds of stills, mostly small, black-and-white and repetitious; and artists’ drawings of unfilmed scenes. *Making* has fewer and larger illustrations, mostly shots of the filmmakers at work or relaxing, not stills from the film. The heavily illustrated *Screenplay* is likely to be a popular memento of the film, especially since the videocassette is expected to cost $99.95, a price designed for the rental rather than the sell-through market.

Will *Terminator 2* be considered as worthy of study as the original *Terminator*? Probably not, but anyone who does want to examine the processes behind Hollywood’s biggest production will need to consult both Cameron’s *Screenplay* and Shay’s *Making*. The information in both books could easily have been put into one volume, but that would have meant less money from fans and libraries, and with a mere $240,000,000 in ticket sales I suppose they have to watch every penny. (Bantam has also issued a novelization of *Terminator 2* by Randall Frakes [0-553-29169-6] and reissued the novel of *The Terminator* by Wisher and Frakes [0-553-25317-4], $4.99 each.)

*Michael Klossner*
Delayed Annual Welcome


I assume that most readers are aware that all the reviews published in these pages, plus some in the IAFA’s newsletter, and occasionally some from other sources, are reprinted in this hardcover annual, along with considerable original material. The first two annuals were issued by Meckler, which sold rights to Greenwood, which continues the annual with this volume, covering mostly 1989 books. Greenwood also distributes the remaining stock of the first two annuals.

Reprinted reviews take up two-thirds of the book: 336 pages of adult fiction reviews, 47 of young adult, and 94 of nonfiction, arranged by author with a detailed title index (which covers material other than reviews) and a reviewer/contributor index. The remaining third of the book is original: profiles of Dan Simmons by Ed Bryant, of S.P. Somtow by Tim Sullivan, of Tanith Lee by Lillian Heldreth, of Thomas Ligotti by Michael Morrison and Stefan Dziamianowicz; review articles on religious fundamentalism in recent SF (Michael Levy), fantasy debuts in 1989 (William Senior), the influence of film on contemporary horror and fantasy fiction (Brian Stableford); and evaluative surveys of SF, fantasy, horror, YA fiction, and nonfiction by various hands. Principal award winners in 1989 and 1990 are listed.

The audience—critics, teachers, researchers, librarians, students and fans, as stated in the first annual—is broad and is generally well served by the collective efforts of many knowledgeable contributors. The only other similar annuals, from *Locus*, are primarily bibliographic in nature, although they have a useful critical dimension and are also very valuable research tools. A new annual guide to category fiction (fantastic fiction plus mystery/detective, romance, and westerns), whose first volume was issued in fall 1990, is *What Do I Read Next?* (Gale Research). The roughly 200 books in each category are described and multiply indexed, but only the brief year in review surveys provide any critical dimension. The Gale annual is mostly for relatively undiscriminating users of public libraries.

From the standpoint of libraries, which will account for 95% of the sales of this fairly expensive annual, this can be used as a retrospective selection and evaluation tool, assuming the library wishes to acquire the best the fields have produced. The reviews are as uneven in quality as their subjects, but at least they have a reasonably permanent home here and will hopefully be indexed by Gale Research’s *Book Review Index* to give them wider circula-
tion and accessibility. And Collins has argued that, meretricious as most of the fiction inevitably is, these reviews are among the few readily available and provide a permanent historical record of authors, some of whom may transcend their early work to achieve later distinction. Larger public and academic libraries desiring strength in this area should consider carefully.

Neil Barron

Interesting Additions to Lovecraftiana


Written in December, 1940, first published in 1977 and now reissued in a retypeset edition, Cook’s *In Memoriam* is both the oldest and the most useful of these three small pamphlets touching upon the life and output of H.P. Lovecraft. As the subtitle indicates, Cook’s approach to Lovecraft is through reminiscence: “...these are *my* recollections of a twenty-year contact with Lovecraft, and nothing about them should be taken as definitive. They are not in order. No attempt is made at chronology. They are very, very random, discursive, and disconnected.”

In an oddly non-negative way, that final phrase might be made to cover all three volumes. In each, bits and pieces about Lovecraft surface, sometimes in unusual contexts, other times as clear and precise statements. The letters from Ambrose Bierce, for example, represent an exchange covering five years; they deal with the poetry and poetics, with the blindness of editors, and with the rising reputation of Samuel Loveman...ending with a terse but prophetic note: “This is only to say good-bye. I am going away to South America in a few weeks, and have not the faintest notion when I shall return.” Interesting they may be for their insight into Bierce, but more relevant for horror and dark fantasy readers will be Robert Bloch’s introductory essay, which constructs a chain of literary linkages between Lovecraft and Bierce.

J. Vernon Shea’s book was being prepared for publication at the time of his death in 1981. A decade later, it finally appeared in the form of six essays (including an intriguing comparison between Lovecraft and Samuel
Johnson), two short stories (one co-written with Lovecraft) and thirteen poems by Shea, some on subjects Lovecraftian. Again, it is a mixed bag. Shea’s focused essays explore Lovecraft’s Mythos, the Image in “The Outsider,” and film adaptations (through 1972); a long essay on the Fifth World Fantasy Convention barely mentions Lovecraft, but gives an enjoyable overview of people and places associated with the convention.

Cook serves up more meat than the other two—but, as he states, it is intermingled and undisciplined. Written shortly after Lovecraft’s death, it is the most immediate of the three, but one must wade through much reminiscence in order to discover islets of interpretation, explanation, or understanding that ultimately do add to our image of Lovecraft.

All three are attractively printed. The type font in Shea’s book is rather small for easy reading, but otherwise the publication values are high. None of the three have an index, which limits their usefulness as research aids, although Bierce’s letters are occasionally amplified by footnotes. The three are interesting—if at times slight—additions to Lovecraftiana.

Michael R. Collings

Otherworldly Journeys


Subtitled “Otherworldly Journeys from Gilgamesh to Albert Einstein,” this book is a survey of fictional, mythical and religious journeys to realms outside the known Earth. The subtitle is slightly misleading: although the epic of Gilgamesh is rather neatly summarized in about four pages, the references to Einstein are largely peripheral and, in total, consume less than a page.

However, the total content represents a quick and concise, but still widespread, review of many of the world’s myths and religions, including some that are mostly unknown except to scholars. There are no direct connections to modern science fiction; in fact, the most recent literary reference is to Dante’s Divine Comedy.

One might then wonder what relevance this book has to science fiction, and what interest to its readers. In truth, its audience in the science fiction field is very limited. The casual reader will not be interested; the scholar might pass it by. In the latter case, that could be a mistake. Rooted in these myths and religious fables are sources for many of the science fiction plots that have been written. Adapted, revised, transformed, altered and even
completely inverted, these themes have appeared many times. The serious scholar of science fiction could do much worse than include this book in his or her library.

W. D. Stevens

(Lois Couliano was shot to death in the men's room of the University of Chicago's Divinity School on 21 May 1991. No weapon and no suspect have been found, but those connected to the case believe Couliano was assassinated on orders from Romania for his political activities. NB, ed.)

A Holiday Fruitcake


Les Daniels is the author of Comix: A History of Comic Books in America (Outerbridge & Dienstfrey, 1971), so far the only general history of the subject and still a useful supplement to Ron Goulart's Encyclopedia of American Comics, (1990; reviewed in Newsletter #189). Daniels' new book is a more narrowly focused study of a single comics house, Marvel, from its origins in the late 1930s to the present. Considered simply as a work of bookmaking, the volume is gorgeous, stuffed to bursting with well-chosen and lovingly reproduced cover and panel illustrations, photographs of comics writers and artists, profiles of Marvel's famous superheroes, and (culminating the book) four representative stories spanning four decades. It's like a holiday fruitcake crammed with goodies, each page a yummy bite—and, of course, it is obviously largely intended as a holiday gift for young relatives avid for comics fare. As a work of comics history, on the other hand, it leaves a lot to be desired.

One problem is the tone, which is an uneven mix of sober exposition and insipid fannish chatter. This could probably be ignored if the historical and cultural analyses Daniels assays—e.g., the relationship of superhero figures to the sociopolitical trends of their time—weren't so trite and superficial. This "external" history of Marvel, however, is superior to the "internal" history which, though it gets all the names and dates right, is basically the "authorized" or "official" version of the imprint itself and its loquacious editor-in-chief, Stan Lee (who contributes a typically inane introduction). Daniels' discussion of the famous "Marvel method," for example—wherein Lee allegedly functions as general editor-writer, providing his artists with story synopses and then penciling in description and dialogue on the finished panels—represents Lee's viewpoint of the matter, one which has been widely attacked as self-serving hype.
The most significant criticism has come from Jack Kirby, Marvel's most successful artist and arguably the most prolific and protean talent ever to work in comics. In a long interview in the February 1990 issue of The Comics Journal, Kirby disputes Lee's claim to writing credits on his titles (which, during the halcyon days of the 60s, included The Fantastic Four, The Hulk, Thor, The X-Men, The Avengers, and—my personal favorite—The Silver Surfer): "Stan Lee and I never collaborated on anything! I've never seen Stan Lee write anything. I used to write the stories.... Stan Lee is essentially an office worker." The proprietary conflicts between Kirby and Lee—which led Kirby to abandon Marvel for D.C. in 1970—are muffled in Daniels' text, and the longstanding situation of the creative and financial exploitation of comics artists is ignored. (Kirby, in Comics Journal, has described the situation thus: "An artist has to be humble, an editor has to be officious, and a publisher must be somewhere out in the galaxy enjoying godhood. It was a caste system, pure and simple"). There is little room in Daniels' happy history for such tales of strife and woe.

Buy this book for the pretty pictures. For a more realistic portrait of the comics industry, check out Joe and Jim Simon's The Comic Book Makers (Crestwood/Two, 1990).

Rob Latham

10 Essays, Weakly Edited


Readers in search of a structured, coherent study of the American tradition in horror fiction are forewarned. Although Brian Docherty has chosen an original but not unrepresentative roster of horror writers from the last two centuries of American letters, arranged essays on their work chronologically as numbered chapters, and slapped the title American Horror Fiction on the final product, this book fails to elucidate a set of attributes or characteristics that distinguishes the authors and works under scrutiny as quintessentially "American." At their best these 10 essays of widely varying quality show how, as Anne Cranny-Francis writes in her analysis of Suzy McKee Charnas's The Vampire Tapestry, writers use "generic fiction ... to raise fundamental debate about social and political ideologies within a popular and accessible fictional format." At their worst, they reveal the willingness of some critics to advance a theory at the expense of the text.
The book divides evenly into two sections, the first concerned with the transformation of the Gothic by classic and early-modern writers, the second a hodgepodge of psychoanalytic and feminist interpretations of contemporary horror's more familiar tropes. In "A Darkness Visible: The Case of Charles Brockden Brown," A. Robert Lee argues persuasively that Brown was the first writer to internalize the conflicts of Gothic horror to give his characters psychological weight. The essay falters only when Lee extrapolates from critical praise by Brown's contemporaries to suggest that the persistence of Gothic conventions in the work of Robert Bloch, Stephen King and other modern American writers signals Brown's enduring influence.

In contrast to Lee's brief but informative overview, Robert Giddings focuses on selected works in "Poe: Rituals of Life and Death" to show how Poe's seemingly morbid obsession with death, burial and decay mirror nineteenth-century America's fascination with things funereal and spiritual. Though Giddings makes Poe sound more like a social historian than a fiction writer, this is a minor offense compared to Clive Bloom's portrait of H.P. Lovecraft as a racist propagandist in "This Revolting Graveyard of the Universe: the Horror Fiction of H.P. Lovecraft." Bloom's simplistic portrayal of Lovecraft as a petit bourgeois intellectual who sublimated his anxiety over the immigrant mongrelization of America in fictions concerned with extraterrestrial invasion shows a singularly inept grasp of Lovecraft's social and political beliefs. Furthermore, his convenient neglect of major Lovecraft texts that might have contradicted his interpretations indicates an apparent unfamiliarity with the entire Lovecraft canon: he writes that Lovecraft's "output was small, consisting of two novellas (one published after his death) and some short stories, many of which were completed by others after his death"—a statement that will come as a surprise to readers of the standard works of Lovecraft, three volumes of which have been available for more than a quarter-century.

David Seed's perceptive "The Evidence of Things Seen and Unseen: William Faulkner's Sanctuary," which details Faulkner's turning of the conventions of the Gothic potboiler back upon themselves to address hypocritical social attitudes toward sexuality, serves as the nexus between the book's early and modern studies. Of the five remaining essays, those that offer a close reading of a particular work are superior to those that attempt to encompass a writer's ouevre. David Punter's presentation of Robert Bloch's Psycho as "less a story of the disintegration of a personality than one of a massive attempt by the psyche to reseal itself" and Judie Newman's application of Chodorow's theories of psychosexual differentiation to Shirley Jackson's The Haunting of Hill House are more convincing for their exhaustive analyses of their texts than the facile generalizations yielded by Odette
L’Henry Evans’s maladroit attempt to depict Patricia Highsmith as a feminist writer and Clare Hanson’s misguided presentation of horror fiction in general, and the work of Stephen King in particular, as a literature of misogyny. Indeed, Hanson’s essay is refuted by Cranny-Francis’s excellent essay cited earlier, which explores its subject chapter by chapter to show how horror fiction makes as effective a tool for exploding stereotypes as for reinforcing them.

Though one appreciates the chorus of opinions Docherty has assembled here, no matter how dissonant, blame for the book’s unevenness must be laid at his feet. In his introductory essay, he fails to synthesize a vision that unites the individual contributions or offer a rationale that would make this book read like more than a collection of individual author studies. More lamentable are the glaring errors he has allowed into the text. For example, Lee’s essay mistakes the novel Psycho as a novelization of Hitchcock’s film when Punter’s essay correctly—and at great length—contradicts this. The misinformation in Bloom’s essay can perhaps be blamed on his use of Lin Carter’s flawed Lovecraft: A Look Behind the Cthulhu Mythos (1973) as a major reference, a blunder that is unforgiveable when one discovers that Docherty has included Peter Cannon’s vastly superior 1989 Twayne critical study of Lovecraft in the book’s secondary bibliography. These are the sort of problems a diligent editor should have corrected before publication. They lead one to ask why Docherty should assume others will want to read a book he himself appears not to have read.

Stefan Dziemianowicz

Gloomy But Realistic Scenario


To be rigorous and realistic today, a work of social history, theory, or speculation has to be pessimistic and emotionally depressing. Frank Elwell’s essay into historical and sociological theory qualifies on all counts. It ought to be read, not only by professionals in those disciplines, but by aspiring futurists, political leaders with pretensions to seriousness about real issues, and ordinary citizens, in addition to the science fiction writers and critics who will see this review. In all likelihood, it won’t be, and that is too bad.

Elwell, chair of the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work at Murray State University in Kentucky, has managed the difficult feat of compressing into a very short, dense, but readable book his explanation of a theory of history and social development and his explications of how the
world may expect to see future history work itself out along the lines anticipated in that theory. Readers, particularly those predisposed to criticize modern industrial society and the directions in which it appears to be going, may find little new in what Elwell says, but they will find much of what they have already known explained, ordered, and organized by Elwell’s theory. Admirers of the accomplishments of industrialism, and enthusiasts for any kind of “post-industrial” “new world order” will find Elwell’s work annoying, but difficult to refute.

Elwell argues that most futurists simply extrapolate prominent but transient or superficial trends to arrive at their portraits of tomorrow, without any consistent or coherent theories of history or society providing for structure or context. He provides such a coherent foundation, a theory he calls “cultural materialism,” based upon the work of anthropologist Marvin Harris as integrated with the ideas of classical sociologist Max Weber. These are flavored with useful insights drawn from Herbert Spencer, Thomas Malthus, and Karl Marx and poignantly illustrated with quotations from Wendell Berry’s *The Unsettling of America*.

The central role of the physical environment and its ecology distinguishes “cultural materialism” from its antecedents. As with Marx, economics come first; however, the economics of cultural materialism are always tied to the need to extract the necessary resources, including energy, from the environment. Social structures and the specific modes of production developed to accomplish this are the consequences of the need to extract resources more efficiently as they are depleted and as the population grows.

Within this framework, Elwell carefully demolishes the argument that ours is a “post-industrial” age; he well establishes the degree to which even the most recent of technological developments (including the supposed “information revolution” of computers) are simply intensifications of industrial modes of extracting and redistributing resources. As such, he argues, they are still susceptible to the analysis of industrial societies and their bureaucratic structures originally made by Weber and sharpened to a critical point by writers like Berry and Jeremy Rifkin.

In the process, Elwell is able to consider arguments about the limits on industrial and technological growth advanced by the Club of Rome (and challenged by its critics) beginning in the late sixties, and come to the conclusion that the Club and its researchers get the better of the controversy. The new technologies cannot cure the problems of population growth and environmental degradation unless they themselves are more efficient, less expensive, and more quickly and easily developed than they can realistically be expected to be. Elwell goes on to point out that they will carry with them all the social, economic, and political inequities and costs that industrial
technologies have demonstrated from the beginning of the industrial revolu-
tion. Some of these new technologies—computerized surveillance sys-
tems, for example—permit the intensification of some of industrial society's
least pleasant, most totalitarian attributes. (Writing in the wake of the East-
ern European revolutions of 1989, he does, however, believe that the pros-
pects for future totalitarianism run more along the lines of Huxley's Brave
New World than along the lines of Orwell's 1984 or Hitlerism/Stalinism.)

Consistent with his opening premises, Elwell concludes with the assert-
ion that the future can be expected to evolve in a fashion relatively continu-
ous with past experience rather than departing from the patterns established
throughout pre-industrial and industrial society. As with most of the essay,
this concluding point is hard to argue with. On the other hand, it does high-
light the limits of Elwell's attention to dynamics of social and political
change.

He may very well know that beyond an understanding of the world there
is some point to changing it, particularly when the future is as glum as he
describes it to be. But this is "cultural," not "dialectical" materialism and
Elwell is content to describe the degradation of liberal democracy in an
environment of televised politics, large, bureaucratic government, corporate
special interests, and rule by members of a variety of elite groups. He does
consider the role of protest or reform groups within such a political environ-
ment, and their ability, under some circumstances, to effect some change.
But he sees nothing to indicate the possibility of writing a less gloomy alter-
native overall scenario.

This may be realistic, but it would be nice if he were wrong.

Albert I. Berger

Of Dubious Value

Haggard's Victorian Romance with Introduction and Notes. Series editor
Harry M. Geduld. Bloomington and Indianapolis, Ind: Indiana University

The perfect annotator of She should be able to wear many hats. He/She
should be able to collate texts, offer biographical insights, and possess some
expertise in the different areas into which She fits: Victorian popular fiction,
fantastic fiction, Victorian supernaturalism and occultism, African travel
accounts, and African geography and ethnography. He/She should also have
a good general factual background. Etherington, unfortunately, stops at the
first two hats.
The Annotated She is divided into three major parts: a long introduction, the text of She, and a profusion of end notes.

To consider the introduction first: Etherington gives a brief biographical statement, which is partly in terms of popular depth psychology. This is followed by a discussion of She in terms of possible literary prototypes, models, influences, etc., bringing in levels of author-story distancing. Etherington favors Grail quests as parallels, particularly in Victorian poetry. He also makes a few comments about Bulwer-Lytton's The Coming Race and modern science-fiction. In all this, the biography is adequate, especially since the psychological interpretations are fairly standard now, but the editor does not show any great familiarity with Victorian fiction, and seems almost totally ignorant of early science-fiction, though he mentions a few names. A fair number of errors are embodied in the exposition, to say nothing of questionable interpretations. To cite only two: Etherington states as background for Benoit's L'Atlantide that some Atlanteans had escaped the deluge; actually, the reverse was the case: Atlantis was in the Sahara Sea and was isolated when the sea drained out because of diastrophic elevation. Etherington sites Haggard's Ayesha in Tibet, whereas it really takes place in eastern Turkestan.

Surprisingly, though Etherington mentions Andrew Lang’s friendship with Haggard several times, he makes no mention of Lang’s He, a parody of She written in collaboration with W. H. Pollock, nor of Lang’s fine sonnet on She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed. Nor does he appreciate Andrew Lang’s enormous significance in folkloristic studies.

One of the end notes to the introduction leaves me incredulous. Etherington states that the motion picture Vengeance of She (1968) is based on John De Morgan’s He. A Companion to She (which Etherington wrongly cites as “John Morgan’s Companion to She”) and Sidney Marshall’s The King of Kor. I have not seen the picture, which is rated as a dog, but since He has nothing to do with She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed, I would like firmer documentation.

The basic text, which follows, is that of the 1888 edition, which the editor prefers as a cleaned-up version close to the original 1887 edition. Numbered end notes then offer different textual readings among the original manuscript (preserved in Norwich Library), the periodical text that appeared in The Graphic from 20 October 1886 to 7 January 1887, and the 1887 British first edition published by Longmans Green. To obtain these readings, the editor states, he put the Graphic text on computer, then fitted in variants.

Most of the variations cited are not very important, but there are three major exceptions. First, as has been long known, Haggard later toned down
a sadistic episode that appeared in *The Graphic*. In the periodical version, the sailor Mahomed dies in agony when the Amahagger clap a red hot pot over his head. In the book versions Mahomed escapes the pot, but is accidently killed during the melee.

The second group of changes includes political passages in the manuscript that Haggard dropped on publication. In one instance Haggard, who was apparently ultraconservative politically, describes a dream of Holly’s in which Gladstone is fitted with a hot pot by the Tories.

A third group of deletions from the manuscript is pseudophilosophic. One such passage is extremely important, for in it Haggard refers to “devachan”. Etherington, unfortunately, misses the significance of this: Devachan is a term from Theosophy, and calls to mind H. P. Blavatsky’s *Isis Unveiled* (1877)— a title in itself suggestive of She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed. This opens up the question of Haggard’s background in contemporary occultism, which, to my knowledge, has never been adequately examined, despite his great interest in it.

In all this textual examination, however, Etherington does not take into account the American Harper’s Franklin Square 1886 edition of *She*, which appeared about two weeks before the British first edition. The text of the Harper edition (whose provenience is not known) seems to be a combination of the *Graphic* and Longmans 1887 texts, but with isolated readings that fit the ms. (as cited by Etherington) and sometimes even different readings. For example, in the British texts, when She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed sentences to death the Amahagger who tried to hotpot Mahomet, she says, ..[that ye be slain] even as ye would have slain the servant of this my guest.” The American edition reads “... [that ye be slain] by the hot pot, even as ye would have slain the servant of this my guest.” There are other differences scattered through the text.

In addition to recording textual variations Etherington provides an exhaustive series of end notes covering many matters within *She*, literary, ethnographic, biographical, psychological, etc. I wish I could say that these notes are uniformly valuable, but I cannot. There are too many careless errors, and all too often Etherington seems out of his depth. For example: When Holly refers to the dead Job as a Norfolk hind, Etherington identifies a hind as a deer. This is a shocking blooper. Etherington considers the Mark of Cain to have been a mark of shame; Genesis is quite clear that Jehovah applied it to protect Cain and his descendants from vendetta. Etherington obviously does not know the meaning of manure, which he confuses with filth. A yard is not at the base of a sail, but at the top. Macpherson did not write fake medieval poetry; he claimed to be making translations from Gaelic originals. Fitzgerald’s *Rubaiyat* (misspelled as *Rubiyat*) was not translated from Classical Arabic, but from Persian. Ayesha’s induced visions in water
are not suggestive of crystal ball gazing, but are ordinary water scrying, as familiar in Europe. A penny whip, which Etherington finds mystifying, is simply a top whip. And so on. One could say that these points are trivia and apart from the main purpose of the book, but they do not create confidence.

In one note Etherington scolds Haggard for speaking of wolves and iguanas in Africa, since neither animal is present according to modern taxonomy. A little thought might have suggested that Haggard, who took great pains with geographical matters, would have had a reason for writing as he did. Checking reveals that the British colonists in Haggard's time called wolves certain animals that are now classified as hyenas and referred to certain large river lizards as iguanas. (Cf. Thomas J. Lucas, Captain of the Late Cape Mounted Rifles, The Zulus and the British Frontiers. New York: Harper, 1879. Chapter I.) Etherington, in several of his ethnographic notes, which tend toward revisionism and show no great knowledge of Africa, also upbraids Haggard for referring to the black sailor Mahomed as an Arab and for having the Amahagger speak Arabic. Apart from thematic necessity and authorial license, there is nothing wrong with postulating a black man who was a native speaker of Arabic and considered himself an Arab (Antar was such a black man), nor with a lost-race people who speak Arabic.

There would be little value in citing other notes that miss the point, are irrelevant, or inadequate.

To sum up the book: The manuscript readings are interesting and valuable, but the remainder of the book is so uneven that it is of much less value. However, is there any need for an annotated She? There are some books that cry for annotation and have been expertly done; examples that come to mind are W. S. and C. Baring Gould's Annotated Mother Goose and Martin Gardner's Annotated Alice. But She? I don't think that an annotated She is justified, certainly not on the level of the present book. I hate to damn a work into which an author has put a lot of work, but in my opinion Professor Etherington would have made a more valuable contribution by submitting to a learned journal a paper on the textual variations alone.

Everett F. Bleiler

She-Who-Must-Be-Annotated

"A strange book, but full of hidden meaning," Freud called Haggard's She (1887). For the reader today, the novel is a voyage extraordinaire into that strangest of lost worlds, the mind of the late Victorian middle-class male. In what was the untroubled vista of the Pax Britannica, now Darwin's Monkey lies in ambush on one side and the New Woman looms menacingly on the other, and each is disturbingly liable to disguise itself as the other.
To call the title character Ayesha “mythical” almost seems an understatement. Haggard’s She, as the naked pronoun in the title suggests, embodies the irresistible power of female sexuality which, unveiled, blasts modesty (Ustane) into extinction and “common sense ... propriety and the domestic virtues” (Queen Victoria) into oblivion, and turns even father and son into rivals. Even if her male victims do refer to themselves as degraded brutes or birds entranced by a serpent, as She is Woman, so they are in the end only men. “She exists as a sort of Holy Grail on the highest tower of desire,” as a French critic eloquently puts it.

Whether Haggard knew it or not, the landscape of the novel is a homage to the female body as Africa the Unknown Continent, with the male protagonists mere spermatozoa blindly penetrating “the very womb of the earth.” The novel suggests all sorts of hidden linkages between the sexual and imperial politics of its age, and ought to be on recommended reading lists of every university literature course with any pretensions to deal with nineteenth-century intellectual history. An annotated critical edition is badly needed.

This latest volume in the Indiana Visions series falls far short of filling the gap. It is not a disaster, certainly. The thirty-five page critical introduction deals with biographical, textual and thematic issues, for the most part competently, and there are extensive notes at the end, some of which are interesting and informative. But producing a critical edition of She suitable for a contemporary audience requires more than competence and the usual apologia for the conventional racism and misogyny that make Haggard so much a “man of his time.” What is needed is an editor with the polymathic learning and manic energy of Harold Beaver loosed on Poe or Melville, but an editor who is also able to excavate a text in which most of the signification is at the unconscious level. For She is a much more complex entity than its author ever was: as Kipling put it to Haggard, “You did not write She, you know. Something wrote it through you.”

Etherington’s edition falls between several stools. The title announces that it is an annotated edition, but the subtitle also offers a critical edition and the notes even try to offer something of a variorum edition; the result is none of these. The annotations for the “Editor”’s introduction include the gloss “Tibet” for the text’s “Thibet,” but no translation for the Latin tag vir doctissimus et amicus meus. Etherington’s introduction claims Wendy Katz’s Rider Haggard and the Fiction of Empire as “the only academic study of Haggard written by a woman,” unaware it seems of the essays by both Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in the 1983 collection edited by George Slusser, Coordinates: Placing Science Fiction and Fantasy, both of which deal directly with She, and Margaret Atwood’s “Superwoman drawn and quartered: the early forms of She,” Alphabet, 10 (July 1965), 65-82.
Etherington offers in the notes several significant changes between his own preferred text (the New Edition of 1888), Haggard's manuscript, and the first edition of 1887, changes which suggest that a variorum edition may indeed be of considerable utility to scholars. But his annotations clearly do not tell half the story. In his "Introduction," the "Editor" notes that Holly's nickname in Cambridge was "Charon," which Etherington annotates correctly as the boatman of the Styx. But neither he nor his text offer any reason for the nickname. I suspected a slip for "Chiron," the centaur-mentor of Achilles, which seems to fit the Holly-Vincey relationship better, so I consulted my Dover reprint (1951), the textual source for which is unclear, but it is certainly neither the first nor the New edition. Here the allusion is clarified: "They call him 'Charon,' either because of his forbidding appearance or because he has ferried his ward across the deep waters of examination—I don't know which." The lack of a full annotation here suggests an unfamiliarity with later editions of the novel, which undermines one's faith in the textual authority of this edition.

She is a remarkable book, expressing everywhere at a barely repressed level a deep ambivalence about the then conventional idea that manhood consisted of being able to resist the allurements of female sexuality. The text fully deserves, even demands, the accessibility of a contemporary critical edition, and it is unfortunate that this edition only partly fills the need.

Nicholas Ruddick

Informative, Interesting, Good Reading


This reminiscence—obviously edited from the transcript of an interview tape—is an absorbing narrative of an interesting life and, at the same time, an excellent critical statement about the work of one of our earliest—and best, but comparatively unknown—twentieth-century writers of science fiction. Gallun was much traveled, largely self-educated, imaginative, thoughtful, forward-looking, in some ways a jack-of-all trades, but, above all, a talented writer. Beginning with two stories, written for a high school English class in 1926-27 and published by Gernsback in 1929, he has published well over a hundred stories in magazines and half a dozen novels—with two novel manuscripts now circulating to publishers. Some of his stories, "Old Faithful," "Davy Jones' Ambassador," "The Restless Tide" ("perhaps my best short story") are well known; many others should be.
In many ways Gallun’s life appears to have been one long odyssey through numerous jobs, countries, and experiences, but wherever he traveled, in whatever circumstances he lived, he never ceased to create new concepts and write stories to illustrate them. Because of his often self-deprecating manner it sometimes appears that writing was secondary to almost everything else, but beneath it all were pride and a determination to produce only the best.

Much of the book is taken up with Gallun’s explanation of how he came to write his stories, what they were about, and what he now thinks of them. Although the resulting exposition of plots may disappoint newcomers to Gallun’s work, for those of us who read it as originally published, this explanation is a fascinating look at the creative life. He is especially proud of the many new, now common, scientific ideas he described e.g., neutron stars, atomic energy, Dyson spheres, all before 1937. “To me,” he writes, “science fiction has been an interim substitute for realities yet to come.”

The final section of this “spiel” (Gallun’s term) is a brief, no-punches-pulled discussion of a variety of subjects: humanity, nature, free will, technology, re-incarnation, science fiction writers, and a host of other matters. His parting shot, “Good luck! Aim high!...” reaffirms his belief in the unlimited potential of humanity and restates the theme of his own life and work.

A brief listing of Gallun’s publications and an index are useful additions to the text. Highly recommended.

Arthur O. Lewis

Peake Analysis


This book presents a close reading of and commentary on the Titus Groan/Gormenghast trilogy, paying particular attention to *Titus Alone*, which—according to Ms. Gardiner-Scott—has not previously received the scrupulous attention and profound respect which it deserves. It is very much a book for the specialist Peake scholar; it provides nothing by way of context for the general reader, concentrating its attention so narrowly on its chosen texts that it reduces even “Boy in Darkness”—a story which is clearly about Titus Groan, although the hero is not actually named—to a mere passing mention. Something between a quarter and a third of the text is taken up by quotations from the trilogy; the introduction is three-and-a-half pages long, including two quotes from secondary sources, the conclusion two
pages, including three quotes. The argument of the text seeks to establish that Peake can be put “firmly on the fringes of post-modernist sensibility.” (Well, it would, wouldn’t it? Such, apparently, is the aim of all critical books written within the last ten or fifteen years about all writers active since the days of Hesiod and Homer.)

Members of the target audience of this book—who presumably number somewhere between five and fifty—will find it indispensable, if only because all future papers on the Gormenghast books will have to include it in their bibliographies. It is a volume which offers eloquent evidence in support of the argument that many academic books would be more sensibly and more economically “published” by running off copies on request from a master computer-disc.

Brian Stableford

Guinevere: Neither Interesting Nor New


The good news is that someone has at last devoted a monograph to the figure of Queen Guinevere, a key character in both medieval and modern versions of the Arthurian legend, who well deserves a study devoted to her alone. Furthermore, Guinevere is to be looked at from a perspective which is not only feminist but Jungian. After an introduction summarizing the appearances of Arthur’s queen in literature from the early Welsh Triads to modern fantasy, Gordon-Wise discusses Jung’s main feminine archetypes, the mother and the Kore, and the extension of these archetypes in the work of Jung’s disciple Toni Wolff. Although she admits the “androcentric” nature of the Jungian approach, she believes it can be modified and applied to woman’s consciousness as well as man’s. The body of the monograph is devoted to the primary guises under which Guinevere appears, the Terrible Mother, the Seducctress, and the Witch, as well as a number of minor aspects. Despite the title, much of this consists of summaries of medieval material. In the final chapters the author discusses the modern Arthurian novels of Parke Godwin, Sharan Newman, Persia Woolley, Gillian Bradshaw, and Marion Zimmer Bradley. The book shows evidence of thorough research, with extensive footnotes and bibliography, although the author appears to be limited linguistically to works in translation and is heavily indebted to secondary sources.
The bad news is that the author has nothing very interesting or new to say about Guinevere or the role of women in Arthurian literature. That medieval romance was androcentric, and that Victorian literature was (except possibly for William Morris) no better is hardly a surprise to anyone who has read much recent feminist criticism. One had hoped for some new insights, but this book is mostly devoted to summaries of familiar material. Although there is nothing to indicate that the author was involved in a Ph.D. program, it reads very much like a dissertation—well-researched, earnest, derivative, and badly written. It appears to have been printed directly from a computer manuscript in near letter quality typeface; the length of the lines and the gaps produced by the justification made it a chore to read.

Lynn F. Williams

More Kafka Studies


Kafka studies abound; interpretations of Kafka’s writings—the few finished works he published himself, the uncompleted novels edited and published posthumously, his diaries, his letters, fragments—are numerous and varied. Some focus on the stories as literature; these generally examine content, theme, symbol and allegory, style, and narrative structure. Both of these books on Kafka’s work provide an overview of sorts.

In her admirable introduction to the volume of essays she has edited, Ruth V. Gross summarizes the history and extent of Kafka criticism and introduces the essays she has chosen in order to exemplify “a compendium of critical approaches to Kafka.” Articles in the first section focus on Kafka as a writer in and from Prague and include an excerpt from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) as well as a selection by Milan Kundera. The two succeeding sections offer close textual readings and analyses of Kafka’s use of metaphor. Psychological approaches to the works and discussions of the relationships between the text and the reader take up the last two sections.

Many of these essays will prove difficult for anyone not already thoroughly familiar with Kafka’s life and work. Some concentrate on fragments or lesser known short pieces. However, others, such as “Woman as the obstacle and the Way,” a comparison of some of Kafka’s female characters by Larysa Mykyta; “Kafka’s Writing Machine: Metamorphosis in the Penal
Colony” by Arnold Weinstein; and J. Brooks Bouson’s “The Narcissistic Drama and Reader/Text Transaction in Kafka’s Metamorphosis” are informative and illuminating readings of some of Kafka’s most well-known works. But only James Rolleston’s “Kafka’s Time Machines” directly and thoroughly approaches Kafka primarily as a writer of the fantastic.

A more general introduction to Kafka’s short fiction is provided in Allen Thiher’s book, a companion to an earlier volume on Kafka (Mano Spann, Franz Kafka, 1976) issued by Twayne as part of its popular world authors series. In his Preface Thiher acknowledges that he generally reads Kafka’s short works as allegory. His study of the short fiction itself begins with Kafka’s posthumous publications and his first published efforts. More detailed attention is given to “The Judgment,” “The Metamorphosis,” and “In the Penal Colony,” as well as the stories collected in A Country Doctor and A Hunger Artist.

The second section of the book contains excerpts from Kafka’s diaries, letters, and notebooks in which he mentions particular stories or reveals his feelings about and struggles with the act of writing. Finally, Thiher collects excerpts from essays that illustrate the range of critical approaches—rhetorical, feminist, theological, psychological, sociological—to Kafka’s work.

Both of these titles contain ample references; both are also indexed. All libraries will want Thiher’s book which, like the others in Twayne’s various series of author studies, is meant as a general introduction to an author and his work. Gross’s collection is a more erudite volume, best suited for scholars and research libraries.

Agatha Taormina

Guide for Novice Wargamers


The problem with books about hobbies is that the experts who know the most about the practical aspects of the hobby are not necessarily articulate enough, or sufficiently well-organized, to explain it to other people. Many players of fantasy role-playing games have the advantage of being voracious readers, but even they often have difficulty in communicating the essential appeal of their addiction; wargamers do not seem to be great readers, and it is perhaps unsurprising that Martin Hackett—who cannot be faulted on the grounds of his enthusiasm for his subject or the breadth of his knowledge—quickly exposes his limitations as a communicator.

This is a nicely produced book, with lots of pictures, diagrams and tables, and I dare say that it will find its way into a lot of Christmas stock-
ings—which is, I suppose, the reason for its existence. It probably contains some information which will be useful to novice wargamers anxious to get more deeply into the hobby, and it may even contain one or two ideas which said novices will consider quite spiffing. Given these virtues, it would probably be churlish and irrelevant to observe that it has all the literary grace and organizational flair of the average desktop computer manual. It doesn't pretend to be anything other than it is, and anyone who still thinks they need it after skimming through its pages probably won't be disappointed.

Brian Stableford

**Unusually Solid Reference Book**


The first edition of this valuable reference book was issued in 1984. The present edition has been thoroughly revised, and many errors corrected. The updating has been handled by the indefatigable and extremely reliable Kim Newman, so it is unlikely that many new errors have crept in; I could not detect any while reading the new annotations of films with which I am familiar.

This is an unusually solid reference book by any standards. The chronological organization means that the index has to be frequently consulted, but this awkwardness is compensated for by the fact that the general introductions to each decade are useful in providing a developing historical context. The critical articles on the 1,400+ films are mostly 200-800 words long, depending on the importance of the film in question. They are highly opinionated, frequently offering negative judgments and slightly flippant plot summaries with unashamed relish, but all the relevant information is given and the annotations are usually well written and highly readable. One might wish for more data about books on which some of the films are supposedly based, and for a more detailed index which would serve the function of cross-referencing directors, script writers and actors, but these are minor cavils. The book is, as one might expect, lavishly illustrated; most pages feature one large still or several smaller ones.

Most books on sf films are really coffee table books rather than true works of reference; this one is by far the most notable exception. Having it by my desk for reference purposes alleviates the need to have any of the others to hand, although it is the kind of book in which one can easily browse away valuable working time once one has taken it up. Given the general price of books nowadays it seems to me to be a bargain, and no one with a serious academic or hobbyist interest in sf cinema can afford to be without it.

Brian Stableford
Deficient Index to Minor SF

Hassón, Moisés. *Index to Mexican Science-Fiction Magazines.* Author, Casilla 3657, Santiago, Chile, September 1991. 52 p. U.S.$8 (sent air mail to U.S.); $10 (sent air mail elsewhere).

The compiler sent me this oddity, which supplements the short works reviewed in *Newsletter* 191. A chart shows Spanish language magazines from Spain and Latin America, but most of this booklet indexes the seven published in Mexico, all extremely short-lived except for *Los Cuentos Fantásticos*, 45 issues, 1948-1954. There are indexes by issue and author and a checklist of issues and cover illustrators. The compiler lacked so many of the issues (18 of the 45 of *Los Cuentos Fantásticos* alone) that I don't know why he bothered.

This booklet confirmed the suspicion I had when I prepared the 1987 third edition of *Anatomy of Wonder*; for reasons I'll let literary critics investigate, no original Spanish language SF worth reading has apparently ever been published, either in Spanish or in translation. Most of the stories Hassón indexes are translations from the dreary American pulps of the period. Maxim Jakubowski, who wrote the entry on Spain, Portugal and South America for the Nicholls encyclopedia, cites some works, but notes that “modern Spanish sf is still heavily inspired by the ‘epic’ coordinates of the space opera genre ...” Whether things are any better a dozen years after he wrote I don’t know, but this index, which should have been checked by a native speaker of English to correct its many errors, is not likely to inspire anyone to find out.

*Neil Barron*

Historical Analysis of Fantasy


The ancient Egyptian story of the two brothers Anubis and Bata survives in a papyrus manuscript that was written about 1250 BC. The brief (ten pages in Hollis’s English translation) but captivating tale begins with the attempt by the wife of Anubis to seduce her young brother-in-law. When he rejects her advances, she falsely accuses him of assaulting her, prompting Anubis to try to murder his brother. But Bata is saved by the sun god, who causes a crocodile-infested river to rise up between the two men. From the far bank, Bata first castrates himself and then tells his brother the truth about
his wife, whom Anubis then kills. After a series of marvelous adventures (including marriage to an evil wife of his own from whom he is rescued by Anubis) Bata eventually becomes Pharaoh of Egypt, inviting Anubis to share his throne.

The story of the Two Brothers has fascinated scholars since it was first published in 1852. Part of this fascination emerges from the appearance in the Egyptian tale of motifs that figure prominently in later western literature—for example the wife who lusts after the chaste youth (cf. Potiphar’s wife in the Bible and Hippolytus in Greek mythology). Hollis provides a thorough overview of such narrative motifs as well as a discussion of the various modern attempts to explain the underlying meaning of the tale. Some have seen in it an allegory of Egyptian history; others have attempted psychological and even psychoanalytic readings.

Hollis offers a new, thoughtful, and, to me, convincing, explication based on a careful examination of the tale in its historical and cultural contexts. Most previous interpreters have emphasized the folk-tale elements of the story. She emphasizes its historical nature. At times this historical approach to the text does become distractingly mundane, to the detriment of the tale as a fantasy of considerable power. She glosses the account of Bata’s self-castration, for example, with the comment that the story’s reference to his resulting weakness is “not surprising, for he severed an organ which has many blood vessels.” But this is a minor complaint. Hollis’s scholarship reveals the symbolic level and the intellectual depth of a work that she justly describes as “the creation of a gifted and imaginative tale teller.” In her view, Bata represents a specific (though unknown) Egyptian monarch, and the tale symbolically portrays his accession to the throne, giving this unidentified pharaoh all the attributes necessary to legitimize his authority. She theorizes that the tale was written in response to a contemporary crisis concerning either the reigning pharaoh or the line of succession. Sound scholarship about an important topic: recommended to anyone interested in Egypt or in ancient fiction.

Dennis M. Kratz

Spotty, Idiosyncratic and Insulting


The Thrill of Fear should have been a valuable resource for scholars of horror literature. It establishes the genre’s beginning in the late eighteenth century, with the “graveyard poets” who focused on extended treatments of horrific subjects to elicit specific emotional responses in readers. Kendrick
proceeds chronologically through the pre-Romantic fad for "horrid novels"; the "horrid theater" of the mid-nineteenth century; the rise of horror in film, culminating in the '30s and '40s; and finally contemporary manifestations of "scary films."

Unfortunately, Kendrick treats his subject with a breezy contempt that virtually insults the aesthetics—if not the intelligence—of audiences finding the least degree of excellence in such works. From the beginning, he asserts, horror writers have merely recycled time-worn conventions, manipulated audiences with visual or literary trickery, and jumped on populist bandwagons with the recurring fads for 'horrid' stories in various forms. All of this activity, he suggests, occurs primarily because writers, publishers, and producers are greedy and manipulative.

Rarely does he refer to "horror" as a genre; it is usually either the "horrid" novel, the "scary" film, or some other permutation. His subtitle promises a history of horror over two-and-a-half centuries, but (as with a number of other theoretical studies of the horror tradition) he rarely mentions contemporary writers other than peripherally. Stephen King appears, of course; there are nine references but only one extended discussion—of Creepshow, in conjunction with a longer assessment of Romero's Dead films. Kendrick's usual attitude toward King is that "the entire nineteenth century failed to produce a single first-rate novelist who specializes in chills; the best the twentieth century can do in that line is Stephen King." Throughout, Kendrick treats King at his worst—King as social phenomenon, as consumer-driven hack writer grinding out novel after novel. Clive Barker is mentioned once, but where are Koontz, McCammon, Campbell, Simmons, Lansdale, Garton, even—given Kendrick's attention to the lowest levels of gut response—Skipp and Specter? Lovecraft is passed over; Bloch is linked primarily with Hitchcock's Psycho. Christopher Lee's performances for Hammer horror films receive more text than the past decade of novels, stories, and films.

Kendrick includes a digression into male-bashing, mentioning feminist inroads into the white-male caste system of the Norton Anthology of English Literature, ostensibly to discuss canon formation—but then notes that questions of literary canon have rarely impacted horror literature; the paragraph seems more a mandatory nod to cultural diversity than integral to Kendrick's thesis. This kind of approach combines with Kendrick's disparagement of horror as a valid area for scholarship: "Understandably, seeing profundity there rather than drudging imitativeness, modern critics have foraged through the artistic past to assemble a tradition of 'Gothic' fiction that looks brash, brave, and adventurous. That tradition, however, is also somewhat patchy, since it is confined to those rare works that succeed in both raising chills and pleasing critics." Even more damaging, he asserts—without support—that
after the 1930s, “Horrid short stories ... spawn a score of subtypes, including science fiction and fantasy tales”—certainly the first time I have seen an assertion making science fiction and fantasy not only post-'30s genres but defining them as subsets of horror.

Kendrick, a member of Fordham’s English department, is to be thanked for re-creating the effects of earlier novels and theatricals on their audiences; however, as a scholarly overview of an entire genre, The Thrill of Fear is spotty, idiosyncratic, and ultimately lacking in either empathy or sympathy for its subject.

Michael R. Collings

The Mother of All Award Listings


Since fantastic fiction published as such is not generally recognized by standard literary awards, it’s not surprising that fans have come forward to recognize their own, beginning with the International Fantasy Awards, first given in 1951. The first edition of this listing was published in 1981, when Borgo Press was six years old, and included 23 awards. This new edition is four times the length of the first and lists 126 awards: 64 English-language, 30 foreign-language, and 32 non-genre awards for literature and film. Are most of these awards obscure beyond belief? Don’t ask.

The awards are arranged in the three categories noted above, alphabetically by name of award. Indexes to award names, to winners, plus appendices listing SFRA and SFWA officers and locations and dates of World Fantasy and Hugo conventions, complete the book, which includes some statistical tabulations. For this edition, the rationale and physical nature of the award are explained.

Was anything of consequence overlooked? Or is the question properly, was anything of consequence included? Having scanned the pages of Locus for years, I didn’t spot check to see if the Ceausescu Award for Rumanian Socialist SF was noted (it wasn’t, but imaginary awards aren’t listed). Since many non-genre awards are listed, I suggest that future editions—promised every 2-3 years—include the O. Henry and Best American Short Stories awards, which occasionally—very occasionally—have included some fantastic short fiction by authors like Bradbury and Le Guin.
Although there have been lists of awards published earlier, none of them are remotely as complete as this. However, awards freaks may still wish to acquire *A History of the Hugo, Nebula and International Fantasy Awards*, compiled by Donald Franson and Howard DeVore. This listed not only winners but the many nominees. Given the small numbers voting for most awards, or the mechanics of selection by panels of judges, the also-rans may be of as much interest as the winners. The last edition I have, covering awards through 1984, runs 183 pages and was, like earlier editions, sold directly by DeVore but is now OP. But Howard tells me that a completely updated edition, which will add the World Fantasy Awards, is in preparation for publication in 1993 by Advent as a hardcover, while DeVore will sell a paperback version produced from the same sheets, as well as provide annual updates. The Mallett/Reginald listing isn’t likely to be bettered any time soon, but only devoted fans and the largest libraries need consider it.

_Neil Barron_

**Dreams of Death and Night and Blood**


Reviled by some, praised by a few, ignored by most, Dario Argento remains a challenge to scholars of the cinema of horror, mystery, and psychological terror. His career is a mass of contradictions. He works in the most commercial of genres, the low-budget horror movie; but he makes art films. His films seem to belong to identifiable sub-genres (the detective thriller, the supernatural horror film); but they consistently confound the conventions of their presumed form. But perhaps the greatest contradiction is that this poet of the horror film, whose films, as critic Douglas E. Winter has noted, “read like a veritable source book for the commercial American thriller cinema of the late Seventies and Eighties,” is all but unknown in the US.

Maybe the relative obscurity of such films as *Profondo Rosso* (1976) and *Inferno* (1980) is to be expected, for they seem designed to alienate mainstream film goers. At first resembling conventional plots, their stories quickly plunge into near incoherence, their cinematic texts over taken by virtuosic stylized set-pieces comprised of exaggerated color palettes, unreal use of music and sound, agitated camera movements detached from any particular point of view, bizarre landscapes that bear little resemblance to their ostensible locales, and gorgeously photographed scenes of operatic violence whose excesses far exceed anything in the American splatter film. Further, Argento’s manipulative, mannered films in effect accuse viewers of voyeuristic complicity in the murder and madness they so artfully depict.
All this is the subject of Maitland McDonagh's guided tour through the 11 films Argento has directed since 1970. Her avowedly auteur study delineates a clear line of development beginning with the convoluted but linear narratives of Argento's early gialli, a sub-genre of the Italian detective thriller. In his fourth film, the transitional work Profondo Rosso, and his subsequent oneiric masterpieces Suspiria (1977) and Inferno, Argento increasingly subordinates plot to irrationality, supernaturalism, and elaborately stylized set-pieces. These tendencies fuse with the gialli form in such recent works as Tenebrae (1982) and Opera (1987), tightly controlled, self-referential films in which Argento overtly critiques his own murderous aesthetic. Most usefully, McDonagh's analysis clarifies that Argento's replacement of conventional narrative with "the murderous tableaux that are the centerpieces of [his] works" is neither caprice nor self-indulgence; rather this development is consonant with his themes—the essential irrationality of the universe, the unreliability of surface appearances and civilized behavior, and the mutuality between his passive watcher-heroes and lunatic killers.

As a critic, McDonagh combines a fan's enthusiasm with a scholar's erudition. Although conversant with a range of theoretical methods, she refuses to force Argento's works into a single critical system, preferring to allow each film to guide her approach. For example, her chapter on Suspiria emphasizes the interplay between Argento's technique and the film's mythic content, while her discussion of Tenebrae focuses on that film's hyper-realistic mise en scène. But whether appropriating Vladimir Propp's analysis of Russian folktales to a structuralist reading of Suspiria, adapting Roland Barthes' notion of obtuse meaning to Argento's fetishistic set-pieces, or unpacking the Jungian archetypal iconography in the imagery of Inferno, McDonagh remains clear, accessible, and entertaining. Further, she extends her text with stills, behind-the-scenes photos, garish poster art for the films' American releases, a filmography, an index, an exhaustive bibliography from fan and mainstream sources, a new interview with Argento, and two pages from the Italian comic Profondo Rosso, which features Argento himself in EC-style horror tales(!).

The final contradiction surrounding this filmmaker whose influence on the modern American horror film is greater than anyone since Hitchcock is that McDonagh's fine study is available only in England. U.S. readers can find an excerpt from her chapter on Argento's Opera in issue #8 (Nov/Dec 1991) of Tim Lucas's invaluable Video Watchdog [reviewed in Newsletter 191] and a succinct, insightful overview of his oeuvre in Douglas E. Winter's "Opera of Violence: The Films of Dario Argento" [to appear in Cut! Horror Writers on Horror Films, ed. Christopher Golden. (Berkley, 1992)]. Even these brief pieces illuminate the power of Argento's films. They situate
viewer and critic alike in a space analogous to that of the ingenue heroine of *Opera*, whose psychopathic villain has used a fiendishly simple device made of tape and straight pins to force her to watch his grisly murders: helpless, we gaze at each new delirious set-piece, forever poised on the razor's edge between enchantment and revulsion.

*Michael A. Morris*

**Dark Dreams Elucidated**

This study of the films of the Italian director Dario Argento is based on a 1986 master's thesis, but the author has taken advantage of her considerable journalistic experience to convert the thesis into a book which is easily accessible to ordinary readers, combining intelligent insight with a crisp style and a healthy measure of entertainment. The subject matter may seem slightly esoteric, but several of the eleven Argento films discussed here—including the notable thriller *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* and the surreal, supernatural horror film *Suspira*—are available on video. *Broken Mirrors/Broken Minds* deals with these admittedly-commercial works in a fashion which is both painstakingly analytical and sensibly enthusiastic; its effect on most readers will be to make the reader eager to buy or borrow them, and its commentary will certainly enrich the subsequent viewing experience.

McDonagh's criticism of Argento's films, which mostly takes them two by two in order to better explore their connections and the continuity of their development, is well-balanced, offering a comprehensive account of their strengths and admitted weaknesses. The discussions extend comfortably to take in such intriguing topics as the relationship between *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*, the novel on which it is based—Frederic Brown's *The Screaming Mimi*—and the earlier American film of the same book. Such contextualizing is further broadened in order to make some interesting general points about the relationship between the Italian and American film industries, and in particular the relationship between the Italian film genre of *gialli* (yellows) and the American *film noir* genre. McDonagh's eventual conclusion is that Argento's work "represents an especially unrefined look at the goings-on of a fairly lurid subconscious mind" but that a good case can nevertheless be made for subjecting the work to careful and sensitive analysis, in order to display its fascinating qualities. The text concludes with an interview with Argento and a comprehensive filmography. It is illustrated throughout with stills, posters and various other relevant materials.

*Broken Mirrors/Broken Minds* could be a useful book in a film course because of the way in which it combines academic insight with readability, and any movie enthusiasts with an interest in Italian cinema or in offbeat thrillers and horror films will find it well worth reading.

*Brian Stableford*
Pitts is a prolific author of reference books on many popular film genres, more noted for industry than insight. More than half of Horror Film Stars is devoted to chapter-length reviews of the careers of seventeen performers whom Pitts calls "the stars"; fifty lesser lights, termed "the players," receive one to four pages each. The "stars" include six figures of undisputed importance—Lon Chaney, Sr., Bela Lugosi, Boris Karloff, Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee and Vincent Price; three who had distinguished careers both outside and within the horror genre—Peter Lorre, Claude Rains and Basil Rathbone; two who enjoyed extremely prolific careers—John Carradine and Donald Pleasance; three who are little remembered except by fans of old B-movies—Lon Chaney, Jr. and the two mad doctors of Poverty Row, Lionel Atwill and George Zucco; and three who found fame outside Hollywood—Spaniard Paul Naschy, Englishman Tod Slaughter and Barbara Steele, the only woman "star", who worked mainly in Italian films.

The fifty "players" include a few well-known stars who indulged in horror films in the twilights of their careers (such as Ray Milland and Jack Pleasance), as well as some true horror stalwarts (e.g., Dwight Frye, Rondo Hatton and Fay Wray), but most are quite obscure (e.g., Anthony Dexter, Anne Gwynne). Ten of the "players" are women. Pitts states that he prefers old-fashioned horror, which explains why most of the performers he covers did their principal work from the 1930s to the 1960s. Only two "stars," Naschy and Pleasance, and six of the "players" were prominent after 1970. The two most conspicuous actors omitted by Pitts are Ingrid Pitt, the queen of the late Hammer sex vampire movies of the 1970s, and Robert Englund, Freddy in the Nightmare on Elm Street films in the 1980s. Of particular value is information on three stars of the thriving Mexican horror film industry, including Santo, the masked wrestler who fought dozens of monsters in the Mexican wrestling movies, perhaps the oddest of all subgenres.

Pitts provides several black-and-white pictures of each "star" and one or two of each "player." The filmography for each "star" includes all his films regardless of genre; filmographies of "players" are limited to horror, SF and fantasy titles. Selected television credits are included. Each of Pitts's essays includes brief biographical information, passing quickly over such unpleasantries as Chaney Sr.'s masochism, Chaney Jr.'s alcoholism, Lugosi's drug addiction and Cushing's depression; an appraisal, usually as generous as possible, of the performer's contribution to the genre; and a terse, only sometimes critical, description of each of the subject's genre films and any
noteworthy work outside the genre. Pitts's writing is often annoyingly informal. He refers to actors by their first names, uses such terms as “the good guys,” “the bad guys” and even “the gals” and invents a new noun—“evilness.” He erroneously transfers the setting of White Zombie from Haiti to Tahiti.

Since his 1981 first edition, Pitts has added only two “stars,” Pleasance and Slaughter. Twenty-two of the “players” are new to the second edition. Six of the fifteen “stars” in the first edition and eight of the twenty-eight “players” continued to work in the 1980s and therefore have additional credits in the second edition. Horror actors are a well-covered subject. Harris Lentz’s expensive Science Fiction, Horror and Fantasy Film and Television Credits (1983, supplement 1989) has by far the most filmographic information but no description or criticism. John Brosnan’s Horror People (1976) is the most insightful study but covers only seven actors, as well as seven directors, four producers and two writers, in depth; an appendix has a paragraph each on forty-nine lesser figures. Tom Weaver’s Interviews with B Science Fiction and Horror Movie Makers (1988) and Science Fiction Stars and Horror Heroes (1990) collect interviews with actors, directors, producers and writers of low-budget movies. Calvin Beck’s Scream Queens (1978) features actresses. Although Brosnan is the first choice, Pitts has won a place in this crowded field by cramming a great deal of information into a relatively cheap package. There is enough new material in the second edition to justify replacing the first.

Michael Klossner

Thin, Anemic and Over-Priced


Most of the volumes in the Casebook series—there are about ninety in all—present a series of critical pieces of a particular text, ranging from reviews written at the time of publication to recent essays. The present volume is the fifteenth to attempt to give the same treatment to an entire genre. The introduction assumes that readers will already be familiar with the genre in question, offering a cursory definition of “Gothick” more or less en passant, and including no substantial list of important texts which might be so-called.

Part One of the book collects critical comments and opinions from 1750 to 1842. The 1750 item is a brief and oblique piece by Samuel Johnson whose relevance is marginal, and the two items which follow it were also
written before there was a Gothic fiction to criticize—although the excerpt from Burke’s famous essay on the ideas of “the Sublime” and “the Beautiful” is certainly pertinent, since the essay did serve to inspire Gothic writers, or at least helped them prepare their excuses. Others quoted (mostly very briefly) in this section include Coleridge, Scott, and those inevitable strange bedfellows, Jane Austen and the Marquis de Sade.

Part Two offers a series of brief quotes and some more substantial essays whose dates range from 1916 to 1980. It includes Freud's classic essay on the “uncanny” and brief slices of Mario Praz, André Breton and Leslie Fiedler. The three most recent pieces are all feminist critiques, two of them of Frankenstein. The editor is undoubtedly entitled to his opinion that feminist criticism is the most interesting aspect of modern Gothic studies, but his exclusion of all other aspects of what is in fact quite a thriving and varied field is difficult to understand.

Any pick-and-mix anthology of this kind is bound to be wide open to criticism, and the format of the series imposes awkward limitations on an editor who is commissioned to assemble a volume on an entire genre rather than a single work. Even so, this seems to me to be an extraordinarily thin and anemic volume considering its high price, which hardly does justice to its subject. There are many books which scholars of the Gothic at any and every level would find far more useful.

Brian Stableford

A Most Useful Collection


At first glance this collection of eight useful critical essays seems a far cry from earlier English Association volumes that dealt chiefly with the English literary world, masters, second and third raters, and esoteric related subjects, but a closer examination, supported by the excellent bibliography, reveals much of the same reliance on contemporary literary discourse as in these earlier volumes. For the most part, however, the close attention to text in these essays obviates the necessity for knowing such discourse in detail and rewards the reader with well-supported interpretations.

Tom Shippey's "Preface: Learning to Read Science Fiction" gets the collection off to a good start. Using the "instant and universal" dislike of many ordinary readers attempting to read science fiction, and without plung-
ing into the "critical quagmire" of definition, he begins his essay with a comparison of language in the opening passages of Orwell's *Coming Up for Air* and Pohl and Kornbluth's *The Space Merchants*. The difference is in the introduction of numerous novums (Suvin's term) and the unpredictability of the information dispensed in the latter which must be evaluated, both characteristics expected and enjoyed by readers of science fiction but jarring and inconsistent notes to others. Discussion of neologisms in other works of science fiction, with major emphasis on Pohl's *The Years of the City*, adds support to this thesis.

William Gibson's *Neuromancer* is the subject of two essays. In John R. Christie's "Science Fiction and the Postmodern: The Recent Fiction of William Gibson and John Crowley," after a brief discussion of postmodernism, compares *Neuromancer* and *Engine Summer* and concludes that these at-first-glance "deeply antithetical works," nevertheless display equal concern about the machine human relationship. John Huntington's "Newness, *Neuromancer*, and the End of Narrative" reminds us that new technology is a necessary and accepted part of science fiction but that, unlike the earlier use of technology to dominate their environment, Gibson's characters are subordinate to the machines with which they deal. Huntington questions whether this is simply the newest exploitation of such themes or as far as such narratives can go.

Robert Crossley's brief look at "Artifacts in Science Fiction Museums" considers such artifacts and their evocation of philosophical comment on what is happening in the plot. Tom Shippey's "The Fall of America in Science Fiction" discusses the use of American icons in setting the tone of future America—and sometimes of its demise. Alasdair Spark's "The Art of Future War: *Starship Troopers, The Forever War* and Viet Nam" finds the links between the two novels remarkable enough—though history continues to change their relationship—that they might be described as "two versions of the same tale." In an especially interesting examination of disparate areas, Alan C. Elms considers "Origins of the Underpeople, Cats, the Kuomintang and Cordwainer Smith." He finds these origins in Linebarger's reading of science fiction, especially Wells, early contacts with Sun Yat-sen, knowledge of the common people of China, and his own often less-than-fulfilling personal relationships.

Walter E. Meyers' "The Language and Languages of Science Fiction" is a fitting final essay, rounding out these discussions of the use and impact of language in science fiction. Pointing out that where science fiction writers most highly praised by mainstream critics—Vonnegut, Burroughs, Lessing, Lem, Barth—appear, like many mainstream writers, to despair about the power of language, science fiction is "generally optimistic about language
and frequently explores [its] uses, restrictions, potential . . . . " Put another way, science fiction has chosen talking over war as the chief attribute of humanity.

A most useful collection, very overpriced in its hardcover versions, but a good value in paperback.

Arthur O. Lewis

Massive Encyclopedia


Word has been spreading about Spignesi’s encyclopedia for several years now, with increasing anticipation ... and frustration, as the quantity of ‘Things-King’ increases even more rapidly than King’s own word-count. After some rough spots in production (including the deletion of “Before the Play,” King’s excised opening chapters to The Shining), Spignesi has come through with a massive volume (8 1/2" X 11" format) that makes good the promise—and premise—of the title: the complete encyclopedia.

Spignesi’s researches include not only biographical data but extensive segments on King fandom; King newsletters (with an issue-by-issue annotated index to Castle Rock) indexes to all people, places, and things in all published and a number of unpublished King works, including novels, short fiction, and poetry; analyses and backgrounds to all film adaptations, including difficult-to-locate student films; interviews with those closely related to horror fiction and to King in particular (the first interview with King’s brother, for example, and extended discussions with Douglas Winter, George Beahm, J. N. Williamson, Joseph Payne Brennan, Robert McCammon, Shirley Sonderegger, Chris Chesley, and many more. One segment lists, in close detail, the multiple modes of death met by characters in King’s fictions. On the whole, The Complete Stephen King Encyclopedia, in conjunction with George Beahm’s The Stephen King Companion, (reviewed in newsletter 181) and forthcoming biography, Stephen King Story, should provide background information for even the most avid reader.

Spignesi provides endpaper alphabetical indexes to primary works, keyed to page numbers, for ease in locating a particular novel or story among the concordances. Unfortunately, there is not enough cross-referencing within the text, Every character in every novel is listed, but there is no pagination for locating even the first occurrences within a specific text. It may not be enough to know that Randall Flagg shows up in a particular book, for
instance; it would be helpful if the concordances indicated where. Similarly, an overall index might be useful, if not to the fictions themselves, then to the secondary pieces. Both of these objections are in the realm of wishful thinking, however, since either of them would require a book on the order of twice the size of the present tome.

Given the constraints of time, space, and sheer volume of material to be included, Spignesi has done a fine job collecting and collating information that would otherwise take hours (days? months?) of repetitive research. He has selected well and included the voices of most major participants in the King phenomenon. The volume is expensive, and thus out of the reach of many readers; libraries and large collections of King materials, however, will find it useful.

Michael R. Collings

[Spignesi, who compiled the 1990 Signet paperback original, The Stephen King Quiz Book, claims this massive volume and the quiz book “will be revised and updated periodically.” That may be true for the paperback, but it’s rather unlikely for Shape, whose high price was dictated partly by it’s 3,000 copy print run and non-trade book status (i.e., You’ll have to order direct, or hope that a specialty bookstore will stock it).

Although I’ve read and reviewed some King fiction and generally enjoy his work—his non-supernatural pieces in Different Seasons are among his best work, I think—Spignesi provides answers to questions I suspect few will ask. But there are certainly 3,000 fans out there who may make a second printing necessary. For anyone other than the King enthusiast I think the Beahm companion is quite enough. But if you happen to need a modest headstone—for a pet, say—consider Spignesi. —NB]
Fiction:

Moralistic Fantasy


The *Isle of View* is a lovely fantasy of men and animals, and how they share some of the problems of the world, told in the manner of the ancient story tellers.

The main story line is about the foal-napping of Che Centaur. Che is the product of the mating of Chex and Cheiron, the only winged centaurs in Xanth. The marriage had been attended by Simurgh, “the largest and oldest of birds, who had seen the destruction and regeneration of the universe three times”. At the marriage, Simurgh had required that all the winged creatures of Xanth take an oath to protect the future foal of this union. “From this union . . . will come one whose life will change the course of the history of Xanth”.

Most of the creatures of Xanth, humans, animals, and plants, become involved in searching for Che. Species that had been enemies for generations join together for the common cause. As they work together to find Che, they discover that although they come from different backgrounds and have different needs, there is a possibility of acceptance and understanding between them.

One of the most interesting characters of the story is the Demoness Metria. Her language is filled with the most wonderful malaprops except rather then choosing words with the incorrect meaning, she chooses words that have somewhat the same meaning but not the word needed, a painless way to introduce some words and their definitions to the intended and potential audience: young teens, perhaps junior high level.

This story also points several morals. It considers the problems of being different; being alienated, being physically handicapped; and what can happen when actions and alliances are politically motivated.

In our agressive Boomer-Yuppie world it is nice to have a story that suggests solving problems with compromise and conciliation rather than the use of guns.

Ann Hitt

Classic Reborn as Novel


Just about 50 years after its first appearance in *Astounding Stories* in September 1941, Isaac Asimov’s classic “Nightfall” is reborn in this expanded form as a novel written in collaboration with Robert Silverberg. The effort was worthwhile.
Asimov and Silverberg retell the destruction of Kalgash, a planet whose six suns grant perpetual daylight except for a short period of total darkness during an eclipse every 2000 years. The novel is told in three sections, two of which are substantially new material. Part one, “Twilight,” provides added background and circumstantial and motivational detail for two of the older story’s narrative lines, those of the astronomers in their encounter with the journalist and of the psychologist in his search for explanations of mass hysteria. It substantially changes the character of the religious cult, turning the leadership into Foundation-like cognoscenti. This section also introduces a new sub-narrative, a story about an archaeological team which is busy uncovering the planet’s history of cultural rise and fall as the eclipses come and go. The new material allows for updating the story’s social outlook. A woman is the chief archaeologist, a trifle emotional and impulsive, perhaps, but a capable, professorial sort nonetheless.

The novel’s second section, “Nightfall,” retells the old short story, updating it in light of what has been developed in “Twilight.” What’s new in it are the light romance interests—additions probably made possible by the addition of 50 years to Asimov’s biography.

In part three, “Daybreak,” the survivors work their way back to a semblance of social order. True to history, the “Apostles of Flame” cult goes about gathering relics and building a body of religious faithful. Its domination of culture is finally accepted by rational people as a necessary evil to be abandoned when the race has recovered enough to be able to accept Science once again. Without giving away too much plot, it’s hard to evaluate this segment of the novel. If you accept the outspoken premise—which is questionable, not merely debatable—that religion is superstition organized as a tool for manipulating the human herd, then you’ll probably have no quarrel with the story’s resolution: in a way Theremon and Siferra can live happily ever after.

When he anthologized this story in a 1969 collection called Nightfall and Other Stories (Doubleday hb, Fawcett pb), Asimov refused in a prefatory note to discuss whether he’d grown as a “Writer” in the years since 1941. The novel Nightfall manages to preserve in even the added materials the flavor of his earliest style, both in the narrative and descriptive prose and in dialogue. Asimov and Silverberg retain the innocent, almost childlike, characterization of academic life and relationships that colored the relations between, for instance, Beenay and Aton and Aton and Theremon 50 years ago. They’ve added girls without damaging the story.

Taken all in all, this novel is important. It tells an inherently interesting tale; its development provides insight into the cultural changes a half-century brought or didn’t bring; and it documents the artistic and psychosocial maturation of a writer. It belongs in every library collection, school, college or public.

Alexander Butrym
Retrospective Collection


This is mainly a retrospective collection of Asimov's classic robot stories and essays which he has augmented with one new story, "Robot Vision," and an introduction subtitled "The Robot Chronicles" in which he comments on his robotic fiction and non-fiction. The 17 stories, reprinted here, are more than half the robot tales Asimov has written; they range from his 1940 first story about the beloved playmate, "Robbie," to 1989's "Too Bad!" about a miniaturizing cancer surgeon robot a la *Fantastic Voyage*. Most feature mobile humanoid robots but a few deal with huge stable computers. His 16 essays elaborate on his three laws of robotics and on the theme of artificial intelligence.

Asimov explores many nooks and crannies of the three laws. In "Evidence," "Feminine Intuition," and "Bicentennial Man," the robots are heroes; in "Someday," "Liar!" and "Little Lost Robot," they are pseudo-villains. My favorite story is "Reason," in which a robot on a small space station steadfastly insists on misinterpreting his own observations and rejecting the arguments of the two human operators concerning his subservient state. Another story of peculiar behavior which the human characters must interpret correctly is "Runaround." Others involve Dr. Susan Calvin, who ages from a young scientist to the elder statesman of robopsychologists, but, like her creator, Isaac Asimov, always solves the case. The 1990 story, "Robot Visions," sends a robot 200 years into the future to test the newly developed time machine. He reports back that the Earth has become an Eden after a vague "sad time" and that further time travel would be unwise. Only one physicist questions the robot further to discover that there are no babies in the future world. This is a disquieting view of humanity's future if, indeed, it is his view rather than a fiction, for in many instances Asimov has predicted the technology of today.

In a 1976 essay, "The New Teachers," he foresaw the proliferation of personal computers and the networking of their resources. In "Future Fantastic," he points out that a computer or robot may serve to isolate some people but is much more likely to provide the leisure time for a flowering of "intense creative ferment," hobbies, and far-flung friendships. Hundreds of such computer bulletin boards have sprung up in the past few years. The essays on the three laws point out that almost any tool or machine can be used to bad ends by unscrupulous people and also that tools can be dangerous and unsafe for an unwary user. For this reason we build safety fac-
tors into our machines, e.g. carts have seat belts, knives have handles, and robots have three laws of robotics that provide safety, usefulness, and endurance.

In several stories and essays, Asimov considers the issue of true artificial intelligence as well as the theme of robotic slavery. He asks what characteristic defines a human being? If the answer is a brain, self-awareness, curiosity, humanoid shape, mortality, then if robots achieve these, should they be given political rights? These issues may become real questions in the next century and may not be solved as easily as in such films as Short Circuit or Terminator. Asimov's robopsychologist, Susan Calvin, was “born” in 1982. With the steady progress in AI, there may indeed be a child among us who will be able to follow in her fictional footsteps.

*Robot Visions* is recommended as a good one-volume source of Asimov's robot stories.

*Flawed Travel Fantasy*


As a travel book, this is an extravagantly imagined piece of work. The story begins in the far corner of an island when Leighor, the self-taught healer, is accused of murder and forced to flee for his life. After wandering the marshes he is captured, but fortunately his captors believe in his innocence. He joins Telsyan (a merchant), Uhleandof (a monk), and Yeon (a young lordling) in a quest to recover the private papers of the man Leighor is accused of murdering, in the hope of preventing the wrong man being elected as High King. They have further to go than they first anticipate, passing through forests, heathland, plains and mountains, picking up several more companions on the way. Though they encounter various perils and are assisted by unexpected turns of good fortune, the landscape is the prime character. This is a problem in any book where the principal characters are required to travel vast distances, and although the scenery is well described the continual suffering (from fatigue and the weather) does become a little prolonged. The unusual feature of this fantasy novel, magefire, a metal which can be made to discharge energy, seems to corrupt the minds of all who possess it, but is not developed sufficiently in this volume.

*Pauline Morgan*
Role-reversal Fantasy


War is Hell. Military discipline dehumanises people. Here endeth the lesson.

That's *Keepers of the Peace* in a nutshell.

The problem with novels which can be put into that particular nutshell is that no potential readers will find anything unfamiliar in the message, and those few who don't agree with it are highly likely to be utterly deaf to any possible persuasion. Then again, people who might be amenable to persuasion are presumably more likely to be persuaded of this particular item of belief by honest accounts of the hellishness of real-life wars than by sciencefictional descriptions of hypothetical campaigns fought by cyborgized soldiers. On the other hand, there is such a booming market nowadays in bombastic future war novels which glorify the high-tech armour and armaments of hypothetical superhuman mercenaries that one can readily sympathise with Keith Brooke's aspiration to supply their addicts with a disguised injection of cold scepticism.

*Keepers of the Peace* is essentially a role-reversal fantasy. A century hence, the USA has suffered the fate currently overhanging most of the post-communist Eastern European nations, and has fallen into a chaotic mess of internal quasi-tribal conflicts. The peacekeeping force which descends from above to "restore order" here comes from outside the earth, but it has the attitudes and employs the methods which the USA has pioneered in the recent past. The plotline tells the story of an undercover operation which goes disastrously wrong, and its chapters alternate with a patchwork of infodumps which fill the reader in on the hero's past history and the process by which he was (in the author's view unfortunately) re-created as a good and loyal soldier.

Despite some attempts to be subtle, Brooke does labour his point unmercifully. This is presumably an error of inexperience, for this is a first novel by a writer who has previously published less than a handful of short stories. The relentlessly downbeat plot-development is presumably not an error of inexperience, but it may be a bad move marketwise, given that publishers are so adamant in their belief that readers like a bit of uplift even in war-is-hell-and-military discipline-dehumanises stories. There is, however, abundant evidence here that Brooke has potential as a writer. His prose is lean and craftsmanlike, and he can shift narrative voice with reasonable facility. He requires a little more imaginative daring—despite all the fancy talk of
cybOrgization, all that actually happens in the meaty part of the plot is that a few wounded soldiers walk across a desert, and I often felt they might just as well have been foreign legionaries in a P. C. Wren novel—but he will find that as his confidence grows. This is a thoroughly competent debut, and may well be the foundation stone of a worthwhile career.

Brian Stableford

Move to the Next Square

Brooks, Terry. The Scions of Shannara. NY: Del Rey, 1990. 419 p. $5.95. 0-345-37074-0.

Here we go again. Yet another book in the seemingly endless Shannara series. When I first read The Sword of Shannara, I thought Brooks lifted the plot lines of The Lord of the Rings and some Celtic legends. Even the maps in the front of Sword looked like Middle Earth. Then Brooks wrote the Magic Kingdom trilogy, and I thought he developed a fine imagination and a unique writing style. Now, just when you thought it was safe to read Brooks, the Shannara family is back. I hoped Allanon and company were dead and gone, but even Allanon returns, this time as a dark spirit. Won’t these stories go away?

In this book, it’s three hundred years later. The Elves have vanished. The dwarves, and most of the Four Lands, are enslaved by the Federation Empire, which has outlawed magic. Then begin the rumors of the Shadowmen (Ring any bells, readers?). Only the Ohmsford descendants have a chance to free the Four lands and fight the evil flowing across the land, etc. Par Ohmsford uses the Wishsong to paint pictures in the air. Wren, Ohm’s cousin, appears to have only the Ohmsford ears, and no one has a clue what Walker Boh, Par’s uncle, has. Allanon assigns the three Ohmsfords quests: Par must recover the Sword of Shannara, Wren must find the elves, and Boh must find Paranor (the Druid’s home).

Recite the plot outlines: 1) The land is dark with despair, the magic gone or going, 2) Evil walks among men, 3) Only a quest for mythical objects or people can save the world. Stock? You bet. It doesn’t get much more mundane. The best feature here is the Walker Boh character. He’s rude, irritating and stubborn. He only wants to be left alone to commune with the wolves and other wild things. Boh gives balance to the other sugary characters.

I hope Brooks finishes off the Shannaras completely this time, and gets back to the Magic Kingdom books.

Ben Herrin
A Dark Book


The second volume of “The Heritage of Shannara,” *The Druid of Shannara* is a dark book. The Druids, who had protected the Four Lands, were gone. The Shadowmen and Uhl Belk, the Stone King, were destroying the land and soon all would be gone.

In order to try to save the Four Lands, the King of the Silver River creates an “elemental ... an earth child created of his magic” (5). Her name is Quickening because of the manner in which the King had created her.

Quickening is sent forth to find the Black Elfstone, the magic of which may return the earth to its former glory. Three men will accompany Quickening on her journey. Walker Boh, the *Dark Uncle*, has been seriously injured and has also been given a charge to help in the restoration of the Druids to their former place of power. He, too, needs the Black Elfstone.

The second man of the group is Morgan Leah. He has been charged with finding the lost Sword of Shannara. He needs the Black Elfstone. The third man, Pe Ell, is a paid killer who works with Rimmer Dall. Rimmer Dall is a Shadowen and a leader in the Federation, both of whom are destroying the Four Lands. Pe Ell is to kill Quickening. He becomes fascinated with the girl and does not kill her immediately; thus he allows himself to be caught up in her magic.

The Black Elfstone is held by the evil Stone King. With the power of the Elfstone, the Stone King has changed much of the northern lands to stone. Our four questers spend many weeks going to Eldwist, the home of the Stone King. They go through storms, meet strange people, encounter monsters, and in general have a terrible time. There are pages of description of the storms, the cold, the heat, and the suffering, until finally they get to Eldwist.

The Black Elfstone is recovered and the first part of the quest completed. Much remains to be done, however, and in Book Three of “The Heritage of Shannara,” *The Elf Queen of Shannara*, more of the mystery will be solved.

Ann Hitt

An Essential Collection


Here now is an intelligent choice for the permanent shelf of SF classics, a handsomely appointed collection of Arthur C. Clarke’s on-planet stories,
introduced by friendly rival Isaac Asimov, himself the author of such a collection, *Earth Is Room Enough* (1957). The selections chosen include many anthologized only once after magazine publication. These stories, like “Publicity Campaign,” “The Other Tiger,” and “The Cruel Sky,” have not been readily available for some time. Nearly all come within the time frame 1949 to 1968, and hence the whole collection predates the landmark Stanley Kubrick film, *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Each tale is preceded by a brief paragraph in which Clarke comments on its background, and all stories are accompanied by eerie black-and-white illustrations by Michael Whelen. The collection, then, should prove a delight for all readers and a treasure trove for scholars.

While Clarke’s stories have about them a wistful, elegiac quality, his introductory comments distinctly do not. So it is that the opening novella, “The Road to the Sea,” finds Clarke amused (his word) to see that he predicted in this tale the invention of ultraportable music players and “the fact that they would quickly become a public menace ....” At the same time Clarke notes by way of understatement that this tale introduces themes developed later in *The City and the Stars* and *The Songs of Distant Earth*. Some stories anticipate contemporary thematic concerns: “Hate,” for example, steps well beyond the *Boy’s Life* school of SF by featuring an heroic female protagonist, yet it falls far short of contemporary feminist concerns.

Other tales include “The Deep Range” and “‘If I Forget Thee, Oh Earth ...’”, often anthologized stories like “The Next Tenant” and “The Man Who Plowed the Sea” (both published in 1957 and both found in *Tales From the White Hart*), the very popular “The Wall of Darkness” (1947) found in *The Nine Billion Names of God*, and a single contemporary story (an exception to the general time frame) “On Golden Seas.” Clarke gives this “one-fact article” (which appeared in *Omni* in 1987) a three-page introduction showing the vicissitudes of publication for a single story.

An essential acquisition for all comprehensive collections of SF.

*Thom Dunn*

**Unexciting Sequel**


Readers who were fascinated by Jo Clayton's earlier novels should prepare for disappointment. *Wild Magic*, set in the same world/universe as *Drinker of Souls* and *Blue Magic*, is unexpectedly ponderous and contrived. *Wild Magic* begins by displaying its link with “The Drinker of Souls” series. Faan, toddler daughter of sorceress Kori Piyolss, is magically kid-
napped from the island her mother shares with the sorceror Settsimaksimin. Thereafter, Kori and Settsimaksimin are referred to only briefly; they play no part except to clarify Faan’s unknown connections. Nor is it ever made clear why Faan has been chosen to act as a receptacle for essence of the goddess who kidnapped her. Clayton may believe the explanation of Faan’s parent-age sufficient, but the lack of character development makes the “explanation” spurious. The most a reader learns about Faan as she matures is that she is an ill-mannered child with poorly controlled powers. Further, the supporting characters—Reyna, Faan’s hermaphroditic adoptive parent; the Sibyl, a seeress; and Juvalgrim, a humane ruler—though all initially quite interesting, like Faan, remain two-dimensional.

When the battle between Faan’s goddess and her opponent finally takes place, I found it difficult to care why the lines of good and evil may have been purposely obscured or even to care which side would win. And when I learned that the young woman Faan has become is now free to seek her roots, I was unable to muster up much excitement about a sequel.

_Gail Becker_

**From Diadem to Shadith’s Quest**


Shadith (Shadow to her friends) was a mere pulse of personality in the mystical and powerful Diadem series by Jo Clayton. Resurrected in a 16 year old body, the 20,000 year old singer from a vanished planet continues her adventures in a new series entitled Shadith’s Quest.

In the first book, _Shadowplay_, Shadith is unexpectedly diverted from her intended trip to the University world by the diabolical Gimbiryo Seyirshi, a maker of high-priced, select “mega-snuff” films. An experienced world-wrecker, Seyirshi uses other beings as actor/puppets through whom he can focus his intended brutalities, enhancing any dispositions toward violence. Meanwhile his “eyes on-planet” record the various stages leading to the planet’s total destruction. Fortunately, the evil Seyirshi is unaware of the formidable force of will inherent in the three he has kidnapped: Shadith, Kikun, and Rohant. Dyslaeror Rohant, a strongly leonine being, has strength and family connections with the Dyslaera; the reptilian Kikun is possibly a god incarnate who has the power to be “not there” and forgotten; and Shadith can see through the eyes of beasts and control them to a degree. The
trio, aware of Seyirshi’s plans, exert every effort to delay the death of the planet so they have time to contact off-world help and avert the disaster entirely.

*Shadowplay* developed the characters, established the conflict, and didn’t require that readers be familiar with the Diadem series. However, *Shadowplay* should definitely be read before attempting *Shadowspeer*, for the sequel emphasizes action and does not reestablish the characters’ motivations. It also ends with a cliffhanger, so that reading only the second book in the Shadith’s Quest series would give the reader a vertiginous sensation. On the other hand, the cliffhanger ending of the introductory novel assures that readers who enjoyed the convoluted plot, the strong male and female characters, and the exciting action scenes will read the second avidly and then anxiously await the third in the series.

Obviously successful in escaping Seyishiri, in *Shadowspeer*, which also concludes with unresolved events, Shadith, Kikun, and Rohant join forces to stop him completely from further world-wrecking. In search of the evil filmmaker’s secret base where high bidders will vie for his “mega-snuff” film, they travel to the colorful and violent world of Chissoku Bogmark. There, along with paid operatives and teams of Rohant’s relatives, the Dyslaera, they assault Seyishiri’s base. All goes well until an unknown third party enters the battle and captures Shadith, Rohant, many of the Dyslaera, and even Seyirshi himself.

In *Shadowkill*, the third in the series, it’s revealed that the new enemy is a powerful criminal network interested in gaining Seyirshi’s technical expertise. They coerce Seyirshi to work for them. They decide to keep the Dyslaera, Rohant included, for scientific experimentation and to mind-wipe any of their unwanted captives before sending them to the slave markets. However, Shadith’s powers enable her to counter the mind-wipe, and Seyirshi’s abilities enable him to take over his captors’ ship. Their individual actions, in combination with Kikun’s activities, contribute to the release of Rohant and a partial destruction of the criminal network.

*Shadowkill* ends with the hint that Shadith will continue to team with others as she adventures. I certainly hope Jo Clayton will highlight Kikun in the next sequel. He is one of the most interesting characters in Clayton’s works. He “saves the day” with his uncanny abilities more times than can be numbered, and his personality is complex and exciting. Should Kikun continue to be developed, there will be more excitement and involved relationships in the appealing Shadith’s Quest series than in the nine novels in the Diadem.

Gail Becker

Castle Murders is the fifth volume in DeChancie's Castle Perilous series following Castle Perilous, Castle for Rent, Castle Kidnapped, and Castle War!. It is easily the best of the sequels.

Castle Perilous is at the center of reality, and it contains portals to 144,000 different universes, including Earth's. The Castle is constantly under siege, usually when its lord and defender, Incarnadine, is absent. Accordingly, each novel carries three storylines: (1) the Castle's defense, (2) Lord Incarnadine's adventures in another universe, and (3) another character's adventures in still another universe.

In Castle Murders, however, something new has been added—a mystery. A nobleman, the Viscount Oren, is slain during a garden party, evidently by another member of nobility using magical means. It is up to Thaxton, a Castle resident originally from Earth, to determine the guilty party. Lord Incarnadine? It seems he is away from the Castle, protecting his interests in a gangster universe where mobsters and demons vie for control of organized crime. In this universe—sort of a Stephen King version of Guys and Dolls—Incarnadine is known as Johnnie Carney... the Boss. Oh yeah, at the same time, some other characters are also looking for another character in another universe.

John DeChancie has mastered this particular sub-genre, light fantasy, and his considerable skills make the Castle Perilous series enjoyable even if predictable. It is hard not to like these books, these characters, these adventures. In short, not only does Castle Murders continue this tradition, in many ways it improves upon it. And there are still about 143,984 universes left.

Rick Osborn


Dickson explores at length the theme of survival in a post-nuclear holocaust world. In an adventure novel par excellence, his hero, Jeebee (Jeeris Belamy Walthar) strikes out from the small Eastern town, Stocketon, where his research institute was located before the end of civilization as we know it. He begins the journey to his brother's ranch across the Midwest, almost succumbing to a town of bandits in South Dakota. His first valued compan-
ion is a gray wolf that he feeds and befriends. Then he meets a trader-group whose Conestoga-like wagon has been traveling back roads for long enough to have established a reputation. Well aware of his weakness in survival skills, he joins up with them as a hand and travels further West until he is injured while hunting. The novel ends as it begins; the most hopeful note in this brutal world is that it can be survived. The basic needs for survival, food, hearth and family, are pulled together from the now untamed and uncivilized land.

Readers who like tests of ingenuity and strength will enjoy this book as will those who like to read about nature at its most difficult and beautiful. The relationship that Jeebee develops with his wolf is as important, if not more so, than any he develops with people. The wolf ultimately means his own survival after his encounter with a bear leaves him disabled in the mountains. In order to receive food, he calls upon wolf-lore. "A sudden wild thought came to him. It was impossible, and under ordinary standards, un­thinkable. But he had felt the fear of weakness from the lack of food... He pulled himself up on one elbow. Putting his face right up to Wolf’s, he de­liberately licked at the moist fur around Wolf’s mouth.” This signals the wolf to regurgitate undigested meat, as he would for a wolf cub or an injured pack member, and guarantees Jeebee’s survival.

Dickson’s exposition of horse lore is also enjoyable, and his detailing of survival strategies, as Jeebee learns them from people he meets along the way, provided entertaining bases for daydreaming. Apparently he himself has enjoyed a longstanding interest in some of the natural aspects of existence that are described in this novel, studying wilderness life, wolf and horse lore and nature narratives. The more than 450 pages of closely-printed narrative are virtually a day-by-day, season-by-season account of how it is done with no pretense of psychological overtones or profound philosophical questioning. It is perfect reading for those long winter days when one can imagine the howl of the wolves and the comfort of a warm fire.

Jan Kaveny

**Generic Fantasies**


Still another generic Del Rey fantasy series, this one centers around Inos, a snooty teenage aristocrat, and Rap, a grubby teenage shepherd who turns
out to be a budding sorcerer. They meet, they fall in love, are separated, and suffer incredible perils in the first volume, but reunite in the closing pages until Inos happens to fall through the magic casement and they become separated again.

In *Faery Lands Forlorn*, Inos becomes more of a queen, Rap becomes more of a sorcerer, and both suffer perils and fight battles in a pseudo-Arabic world. Duncan’s only innovation is to have several standard characters possessing a single body; thus the wizard with a long shaggy beard can, on cue, become a foppish aristocrat or a hairy ogre.

Mildly competent, uninspired volumes.

*Martin Morse Wooster*

**Tour for Paititi Leaves Tomorrow**


“The Fur Flies in a Purrfectly Out-Of-This-World Adventure” is the blurb on the cover of *Cat-a-lyst*. A cat [Well, it looks like a cat] rests atop an egg. I don’t remember too much fur flying; however, had I bet, as H. Rider Haggard’s brother did that Haggard couldn’t best Robert Louis Stevenson, that Alan Dean Foster couldn’t match *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, I would have lost. Until *Indiana Jones* or the horror films of tombs and mummies, archaeological adventure novels, mostly set in Africa, were serious stuff. *King Solomon’s Mines* is funny now only in its antiqueness, but *Cat-a-lyst* is a side-splitter.

Foster spoofs every archaeological grade B film I’ve ever seen. Like Haggard, he offers lost races and civilizations, remnants of Those-Who-Came-Before, and, instead of She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed, an Amazon Warrior Queen type named, believe it or not, Francesca Da Rimini. You’ll also meet an amoral scientist, two money-hungry buffoons who want to market Inca-cola, assorted Peruvians and others in search of The Lost Treasure of Paititi. Von Daniken is discredited; Ernest Dodgson is credited; and scandal sheets, film, and TV are satirized. And with all that, there’s a plot—with a human sacrifice—creaky as it is—the plot, not the sacrifice.

Jason (of the Argonauts?) Carter is too handsome to get an acting part in anything other than *The Toxic Waste Monster* and the like. When he finds a compact disc on the lot, he and the costume maker, Marjorie, once a gun moll but now a whiz on the computer laser cutter, return the disc to a strange scientist named Fewick, but not before Marjorie had made a copy. Marjorie and Jason, using the instructions on the disc, go to Peru to search for the trea-
sure of Paititi. Shortly after they reach Paititi, Fewick, who has the original disc, arrives with his guides; only moments before the arrival of Francesca da Rimini and her terrorist companions, Amos and Andy [Sorry, I meant Manco and Blanco Fernandez]; only moments before Trang Ho attached to her trusty microcassette recorder, the Ace girl snoop-reporter in search of a story, arrives alone from out of the uncharted jungle of Peru.

This is comedy at its finest, enhanced by being seen from the viewpoint of that low-key, clean-cut one-dimensional film actor, Jason Carter. To add to the hilarity, the ovoid is not really an egg; it's a matter transmitter so Paititi, at times, is as busy as the New York Port Authority. There are arrivals—and departures to all kinds of places on earth and elsewhere. There isn't ever a lull. The situations are ridiculous; the dialog is exquisite; and the names are fantastic. And I have the sensation I missed some science fictional and comic allusions while I was chanting “Pucahuaman” and “Apu Tupa” and having visions of Red Skelton, Eddie Cantor, and Jimmie Durante, so, though younger folk may enjoy the fooling around, they will probably miss a lot. And I haven't even mentioned a second plot of aliens who are watching and guarding us, nor the role of the cats, Moe, Macha, and Grinsaw. What kind of a cat is named Grinsaw? I hope there's a tour to Paititi, Peru. I'll take it.

Muriel Rogow Becker

Techno-horror/British Mystery Blend


I must say that I had the devil of a time getting this book in order to review it. Since it seemed to disappear from both bookstores and libraries across the country, I was prepared to expect an exceptional second novel from Fowler. I know this is unfair but Fowler seems to be able to take unfair challenges and turn them around. The book's opening has us meet one of the victims as he's in the grips of some terror. Willie Buckingham, senior partner in a video transfer store, is running for his life. He manages to reach the carport where he has his car, only to be crushed to death by a van.

Willie's death introduces us to his son, Harry, the main protagonist, as he tries to make some sense of his father's death. Although they were not close, Harry feels obligated to look into his father's death. What follows is a mystery as Harry starts to see that his father's death is only one of a series of deaths that appear to be freak accidents. He discovers that the director of the company that wants to buy out his father's business is behind all this.
The company has discovered how to use the ancient power of Runes in order to control, and even kill, anyone they want (an updating of M. R. James's "Casting the Runes"). Although the book concentrates on the killings, we get a glimpse of the enormity of the project when one subsidiary opens a food chain where the barcodes hold the hidden runic messages to buy.

Despite the 340 pages, the book is too short to fully develop the characters and hold the story together. Fowler introduces us to each victim as well as the police detectives and their love interests, to Harry, his girlfriend, and to the van driver, a wacky punk artist who becomes his new love interest, along with the usual experts in language and computers. Just keeping track of everyone becomes a chore. If Fowler did not have such a good command of pacing and clear crisp writing, the book would not move along as well as it does. But this book is the beginning of a series which will allow us to see more of the characters and their attempts to finish what they started.

Fowler has managed to combine techno-horror and the British mystery. His writing owes more to the mystery than to horror because he relies on the subtle manipulation of the readers' sensibilities rather than finding unique ways to slice and dice people. This does not mean that fans of gore will not find any here. There is enough squishing and blinding to satisfy all tastes. But the true horror in this book is the capability of the company to use the runes to kill or control people. And although the idea of the unethical company is almost a cliche, Fowler has managed to show us how one individual can manipulate and control those in charge so that they think they are doing good. I hope that Fowler can sustain this level of sophisticated writing in the series.

W.R. Larrier

Written-to-Demand Sequel


The sequel to *Dark Horse* (1990) opens one day after Gabria has defeated the sorcerer Medb. The use of magic being forbidden by clan law, she is tried for her "crime" and sentenced to six months' banishment. In this time she improves her newly acquired skills in using magic.

Up to the point when she returns to the clan, the story satisfactorily continues the *Dark Horse* plot and people. Disappointment begins with the introduction of new characters (some, potential magic-wielders, and others the extraordinary Hunnuli horses) and with the main action of the book, the trip to and from Pra Desh, the city beyond the plains.
It isn't as if there is no action. There's plenty but it does not excite. Even the animate stone lion, the Korg, fails to arouse interest. The characters (familiar ones from *Dark Horse* as well as the new) act and speak but the reader finds it difficult to determine which character acts or talks if the one trait Herbert has given them as identification is not mentioned (Sayyed's enchanting smile, Tam's muteness).

It's as if, after having worked hard on the first sixty pages of her novel, Herbert decided to finish up in a hurry, and wrote as fast as the ideas came to her, without giving characters and plot a chance to mature and develop first. In other words, *Lightning's Daughter* seems to be a written-to-demand sequel.

Mary Herbert can do better. She probably will in a third book.

*Paula M. Strain*

**Fine First Novel**


I've admired Alexander Jablokov's stories in *Asimov's* for the past several years and am pleased to have a chance to review his first novel. Much of Jablokov's fiction is set in a future Boston and involves the art world, two things he seems to know rather well; *Carve the Sky* is no exception. The time is the twenty-fourth century. In the past the Earth was decimated by war, but it is now largely recovered. Its citizens, however, carefully limit their population and put controls on their technology as well. Swords, for example, have replaced guns as the personal weapon of choice and most travel is accomplished by train or dirigible. Our planet, the Moon and Mars form the Union of Nations, which appears to be ruled by a generally benign noble class. These men and women work hard for the greatest good of the greatest number, but nonetheless amass large fortunes and spend a considerable portion of their time acting as patrons of the arts.

There are a number of other power players in the solar system, however. The secretive Academia Sapientiae, whose mission it is to preserve Earth's ancient cultural artifacts, is perfectly capable of acting in opposition to the Union. The asteroid belt-based Technic Alliance is openly hostile and may be plotting an interplanetary war, while the crews of the solar system's limited number of Great Ships, gigantic vehicles capable of travelling throughout human space, give allegiance to no one. Finally there's the religious cult, the Dispossessed Brethren of Christ, who may or may not have died out some decades earlier and whose obscure connection with the mysterious Elder
Race that visited our solar system millions of years ago is yet to be fully understood. Though smaller in scale and less technologically advanced, Jablokov’s complex society reminded me very much of that described in such detail in Dan Simmons’ Hyperion (1989). Fans of that award-winning novel are likely to enjoy Carve the Sky as well.

The novel opens with an attempt by several parties to gain control of a hitherto unknown masterpiece by Karl Ozaki, the greatest sculptor of his day, who supposedly died in an explosion some twenty years ago. The sculpture, a statue of the dead Christ in his winding sheet, is made in part from ngomite, a mysterious material left behind by the Elder Race. Ngomite, besides being incredibly beautiful and rare, is a necessary component in spacedrives and is thus of enormous value. If Ozaki is still alive, it is believed, he may have control over the largest known piece of Ngomite in the solar system.

Jablokov does an excellent job of developing his complicated and somewhat decadent culture. Although a number of the characters, particularly the villains, are little more than cartoons, the novel’s protagonist, Anton Lindgren, Seneschal to the powerful Lord Monboddo, Interrogator of Boston, is both complex and interesting. Lindgren, an introspective man, is, first and foremost, an art lover and scholar who can spend hours poring over the masterpieces in his employer’s superb collection, but he’s also, when necessary, a man of action. His search for the ngomite takes him across Asia to the forbidding Hypostasium of the Academia Sapientiae, then to caves carved by the Elder Race beneath the crater Clavius on the Moon, and finally to a hollowed-out asteroid, alternately known as the Dead End and Jerusalem the Lost, which was once, and may still be, the secret headquarters of the Dispossessed Brethren of Christ.

Like many first novels, Carve the Sky has occasional weaknesses of character development, plot and pacing. Jablokov, however, has a fertile imagination and is an excellent stylist. Also, when he writes about art, he obviously knows what he’s talking about, a fairly rare event in our genre. I enjoyed this book and look forward to the author’s next. Carve the Sky is likely to be one of the two or three best first novels of 1991.

Michael M. Levy

Supernatural Horror


On close examination, this supernatural horror novel is full of familiar ingredients. There’s a haunted house, Elmwood Mill, an old, dilapidated property in rural Sussex, and, as usual, it’s clear to the reader from the start that it is haunted, except that none of the characters seem to realise it or
believe what they see and hear. The previous owner was a mad female re­
cluse who died there. The young people who move in, lawyer Tom and his 
wife Charley, have a fragile marriage and are trying to start a baby. Charley, 
with psychological problems before the haunting starts, is undergoing regres­
sion therapy and getting strange, frightening results. She has a best friend 
called Laura (they've been close since schooldays) whose main function in 
the novel is to lure Tom away for a brief affair, explicable only by the 
author's need to have Charley on her own in the haunted house. The mi­
nor characters are mostly neighbours—some indescribably awful yuppies 
and others, with long memories, who won't speak to Charley because she 
resembles somebody. The exception, living conveniently close up the lane, 
is Hugh, a handsome, dependable and single man with some interest in the 
supernatural who is at hand to comfort Charley in her hour of need. 

Described in these terms, the novel sounds awful. In fact, it's a very 
pacey piece of writing which never gives the reader a chance to get bored 
and start analyzing any shortcomings. While Peter James doesn't go in for 
very much description (in fact, many of his chapters are only five or six pages 
long, a brevity which spoils the flow and retards the build-up of atmosphere 
in the first half of the book) his characters and backgrounds are full of con­
vincing small details that bring a general feeling of credibility to the novel. 
Eventually the number of supernatural occurrences becomes too great and 
too varied either to be believable or for the protagonists to ignore, but by that 
time the outcome is clear and the plot is moving very fast. A good read from 
a capable writer.

Chris Morgan

**Fast-paced Thriller**

£2.99. 0-450-50937-0

*Midas* was originally published in Germany in 1987. No translator is 
named on this version, which may signify that the author produced his own 
English version—if he did, it is remarkably free of grammatical errors and 
1982), *Midas* is a fast-paced thriller in which the chief characters are Ameri­
can, and which seems in many respects to be an exercise in pastiche, al­
though it has none of that curious parochiality so often exhibited by Ameri­
can sf, which hesitates to use any settings which are not either familiar or 
straightforwardly otherworldly. Its locations are, in fact, unusually various 
and conscientiously detailed; they range from Sri Lanka to Syria via New
York and orbital space, and the narrative takes great care to insist that the events which it describes are taking place on a world stage, with consequences for all nations.

The plot of the novel concerns an imperfect technique of matter duplication which is being secretly and illegally employed to produce short-lived "bootleg" copies of people with special scientific knowledge or technical skills for use in Third World technological projects. The hero, by virtue of being a close friend of one of the least fortunate victims of the racket, is gradually drawn into the fight to shut the operation down. There is some speculative spinoff regarding more macabre applications of the technology, and some attempt to comment on the psychological problems of the imperfect copies, but the furious pace of the plot does not allow overmuch digression of these kinds. Both the story-line and the fast-changing scenery seem tailor-made for a big budget movie, but Wolfgang Jeschke probably lives too far away from Hollywood to attract that kind of attention—and there is, ironically enough, no role in Midas for a mighty muscle-man with a thick German accent.

How Midas fits into the spectrum of contemporary German sf it is impossible for readers of English to judge, because so very little sf gets imported into English. On the other hand, so much American sf gets exported into other languages that a book like this can hardly help but owe far more to the American pulp tradition than to anything native to Germany; there are probably no clearer testaments to the corrosive power of coca-colonization than genre products. The distinctness of Midas lies mainly in the fact that the USA is seen therein as a location just as remote and alien as Sri Lanka or orbital space, where the hero—being a naturalised citizen of sf's mythical landscape rather than any actual place, despite his Anglo-American name—is no more at home than he is in the arid wilderness of the Syrian desert. More than any authentic American sf novel, Midas has the power to remind its readers that the future will be a foreign country, where they will do things differently. This is a useful sensation for an sf novel to be able to convey.

Brian Stableford

Modern High Fantasy


One of the major works of fantasy published in 1990 and destined to take a major place in the genre of modern High Fantasy, Tigana may become a benchmark for evaluating fantastic fiction that uses human protagonists. While Kay is more than familiar with invented and mythical creatures, he prefers to write fantasy which is firmly tied to human failings, passions and heroism.
**Tigana** is an ironic name for the novel as it also denotes a country which is being systematically erased from mental as well as physical existence. The drama of this novel is played between a small number of city-states on a peninsula, known as The Palm because of its shape, and an island off their coast. The several geographical areas are divided up between two mage-Kings, Alberico and Brandin, the latter of whom lives in exile on the island in order to enforce a horrible retribution for the slaying in battle of his son, Steven. All peoples of the peninsula, the countries of Asoli, Corte, Lower Corte, Ferraut, Astibar, Certando, Quileia, Tregea, Ygrath and the island, Chiara, know that the two mages balance each other in power, keeping them in subjugation. The conflict between these many city states becomes a theme in the efforts to unseat the two mages and reestablish freedom for their inhabitants. In this way, the novel allegorizes Italian history in order to flesh out the background conflicts. Only the inhabitants of Lower Corte, and those who have fled its lands, know the mystery of Tigana, for in addition to making life there impossibly difficult, the mage Brandin has made it impossible for non-Tiganans to hear or remember the name of their country and its capital city, Avale. Tigana is now called Lower Corte, and its capital, Stevenan, has been virtually razed to the ground. Brandin’s overweening grief for his son sets in motion the many characters who battle this magical erasure.

No bit of light reading, **Tigana** has many subplots through its five parts and almost 700 pages. In addition to many names of states, allusions to their histories and geography (supported by maps), one must also remember many major and minor characters. All major characters are either mages or are opposing the mage-kings. Some are both. Brandin and Alberico, nevertheless, are not portrayed in any depth. That is saved for the dispossessed children of Tigana and the deposed nobles of the other city-states. There is not one viewpoint character throughout, although the young Tiganan, Devin, receives more attention than any other. His adventures become those of a rebel group that, twelve years after the fall of Tigana, is finally ready to neutralize its two major enemies. A young woman, Dianora, becomes the focus for revelations at the court of Brandin on the island of Chiara. Dianora is a concubine in the ‘saishin’ of Brandin’s court in exile, and a favorite of the king. She is also hiding her origins in Tigana and does so until the end, out of an ambivalence which includes love for Brandin and intense hate for his policies towards her homeland. Other characters take over the narrative briefly, when neither of these two are on-stage.

The plots and sub-plots of this novel are also plots of the various kings, princes and rebels. Each has his own agenda, noble or venal as it may be. By far the least acceptable of these is Alberico who wants only to be emperor
of the whole region and awaits the death of his emperor for a chance at the post. Nothing, including the extreme torture and death of men, women and children, will stand in his way. Brandin’s sins rebound upon him also, for his deeds are no less barbaric than those of Alberico, though they are done out of grief rather than ambition. The rebels do not come out of the plotting unstained, either. The deposed kings and dukes, Alessan and Sandre, stand by as members of their own families are tortured to death and must bear the additional pain of enslaving others to their cause. This tale will allow no doer of great deeds to escape the consequences in human life.

To sustain interest over so long and complex a narrative, Kay has had to imbue the action with massive proportions. His heroes, male and female, are presented with strength and weakness, flaw and talent. He does not shy away from ambiguous motives, questionable victories or characters who doubt the validity of their actions. And he explores the individual life swept up, and sometimes away, by historically significant events. This insistence on the individual, human dimension in all broader historical movements is what elevates his novel from fantasy to epic.

Janice M. Bogstad

Valdemar’s Magic Dissipates


This tenth entry, first of a second trilogy set in the reign of Queen-Herald Selenay, is the first in the “Heralds of Valdemar” series to be published as a hardcover. Sure of its popularity, DAW has even arranged for Larry Dixon’s illustrations to be available as 11” X 14” prints: the warrior maiden Elspeth with her Companion Gwenna and sword Need; Darkwind with his bondbird Vree; the gryphons, Treyvan & Hydona; Skif, Elspeth’s Herald friend and protector; Dawnfire, who will meld too well with her bondbird; the mutant Nyara; Starblade, mage elder of the K’Sheyna; and the evil sorceror Mornelithe Falconsbane, who has enthralled both his daughter Nyara and Darkwind’s father Starblade. Less romanticized than the color jacket by Jody Lee, these interior black and whites suggest a depth to the characters that Mercedes Lackey may have intended but did not quite achieve.

Essentially, what happens is that Elspeth, who had been notorious as the “Royal Brat” in *Arrows of the Queen*, now a young woman, is nearly assassinated. She realizes that the heralds of Valdemar are incapable of even talking about any magic other than their own special Gifts. She convinces the
Council and her mother, Selenay, that an adept must be found, one able to reteach the old magic of Vanyel. Only then, she believes, will Valdemar be able to repel its enemies. Somewhat surprising, they agree and mysteriously, allow Elspeth to be that seeker. Thus, Elspeth sets forth on her quest for a mage-adept, accompanied only by a former thief, her friend, the Herald Skif, each riding a telepathic Companion. As she is leaving, Kerowyn, protagonist of the earlier By the Sword, offers her the somnolent, magical sword, Need, which/who will come to life once outside the borders of Valdemar and be an effective force.

In alternate chapters, the mage-adept, Darkwind of the Tayledras clan of the K'Sheyna, believing himself responsible for the damage to the legendary Heartstone which had protected his people, the Shin'a'in, refrains from any use of his strong mage powers. As the leader of the scouts, he patrols the borders of the Plains under which lie destructive magical weapons. He worries about the change in his father and the slow dying of the entire vale in which the K'Sheyna dwell. His only release from his inner turmoil is in his relations with his bondbird, the many strange beasts in the land, and the family of gryphons; in his sexual encounters with the young woman, Dawnfire; and by his rescue of and attraction to the highly sexed Nyare.

Lackey replays many of the narrative devices of the earlier novels, expands the geography of the realm and effectively integrates characters from the earlier novels. In the opening of Winds of Fate, she reintroduces characters from “The Heralds of Valdemar Trilogy” and By the Sword: Queen Selenay; the Monarch’s Own, Herald Talia; the mercenary Captain, Herald Kerowyn; and, of course, the young Elspeth.

She has added many new fantastic creatures: gryphons, changelings, and Tayledras bondbirds who, like the Companions, communicate telepathically. Yet, it is only when Elspeth’s and Darkwind’s alternating individual tales do inevitably converge is there any real action. And this doesn’t happen until the twenty-first of the twenty-five chapters in the novel. The narrative had see-sawed along without either logical transitions or parallel concerns; nor did the pretense in the Prologue that a Herald-Chronicler would be relating “the events [that] occurred” help.

Adding to the problem of structure is one of character. Lackey hasn’t quite made up her mind, for example, whether she wishes to portray Elsbeth as a childlike warrior maiden or as a sex obsessed young woman. She turns Skif, who had been Chosen by a Companion from the slums of Haven, into a lamenting, chauvinistic, rejected Lothario instead of allowing his former thieving experiences to be of value. Indeed, rather than action, the chapters that follow the journey of Elsbeth and Skif from northernmost Valdemar to the Dhorisha Plains are filled with petty male/female conflict. Then, when
this patchwork of two narratives do come together, Skif falls madly in love with Nyara, a changeling programmed for sex by her father, the evil, bestial sorcerer Mornelithe. Whereas Lackey's treatment of homosexuality in The Last Herald-Mage Trilogy of *Magic's Pawn*, *Magic's Promise*, and *Magic's Price* enriched an understanding of women warriors, the somewhat explicit sexual encounters of Skif and Nyare and, earlier, of Darkwind and Dawnfire does little to enhance the high fantasy theme of good versus evil. It will surely limit any recommendations to young adult readers.

All signs indicate a Hollywood ending. Elspeth finds her mage-adept and both Elspeth and Darkwind, who are attracted to each other, plan to strengthen their powers. Hopefully, as the trilogy continues in the forthcoming *Winds of Change* and *Winds of Fury*, readers will find stronger character development and more sustained sword and sorcery action.

*Muriel Rogow Becker*

**Jack's Back**


Rex Miller's Jack Eichord is at it again—busting his butt to bring another serial killer to justice. This is the fifth book in the Eichord series but there are some new and rather interesting aspects which make it a cut above the average killer thriller.

Readers of *Slice*, the fourth in the series, will recall that Eichord once again has to track down, confront, and eliminate Chaingang, the Slob in the earlier book. At the end, Jack and his wife Donna (see *Stone Shadow*) are left with a baby—not theirs, but that is *that* story. What is part of *this* story is that Jack and Donna have adopted that child; he is now Jonathan and he is in the midst of the "terrible twos." Or is it something else that is the matter? Could it be his parentage? It is a matter of some concern for Jack (less so for Donna) primarily because of what he is and what he does. Whatever, we see Jack more and more as a human being—husband, father, worrier—even when he has a heart of stone.

At any rate, *Iceman* moves along at the usual Miller-Eichord pace. Someone is brutally assaulting then murdering young women (sometimes murdering first and then assaulting), and it is up to Jack to find him and to bring him to justice. As is usual with Miller, the reader is transported here and there in space and back and forth in time. Thus we see Jack, we see the killer as young, we see the killer as killer, we see Jack, etc., etc. This mode of writing can sometimes be confusing, especially in this case when Miller
brings in a red herring—a second killer (this one a child killer), whose deeds have only tangential relation to the main theme.

The general point of view expressed by Miller through Eichord is clearly there in *Iceman*; there is evil in the world, it infects some of us while we are young and thus drives us to the most horrifying deeds. But there is also good in the world which, though sometimes tainted a bit by evil, must be prepared to wage the never-ending battle. As Jack remarks when he learns of the resolution of the child killer case, “Some things never go away.” There will always be evil and it will touch us all. Yet we must and we will carry on.

Over the course of the Eichord books we have seen Jack drunk and sober, full of hate and full of love; we have heard of his first wife and now we have grown to know his second; we have met his friends and we have seen some of them die. It is not always that easy to keep track of just where Jack is and when it is that he is fighting a specific evil. Indeed, I have become just a bit confused as to just where and when some of the plots take place. But that is really not important. What is important is that what apparently began as merely a trilogy has now advanced to a series of at least five novels. By the time this review is read there may well be a sixth, even a seventh in the series. If so, bring them on! Jack’s back and I’m glad to see him and I’ll be glad to see him again and again.

J.T. Moore

**Volumes Two & Three**


**A New Nation Born From Prejudice**

After a brief Prologue, the second novel of The Elven Nations Trilogy begins exactly where the first, *Firstborn* by Paul B. Thompson and Tonya R. Carter, had ended. [See #191]. During the Kinslayer War between the elven empire of Silvanesti and the human empire of Ergoth, Kith-Kanan, younger twin of elven Speaker Sithas and leader of the Wildrunners, finds the elven army all but destroyed after the first attack by the Boy General of the Ergothian army. The Silvanesti forces had been caught off guard and forced to retreat to Sithelbec, their forest stronghold. Now Kith finds himself and his followers captives within their own walls.
Meanwhile in Silvanost, prejudice against the war refugees erupts into violent outbursts. Sithas ponders the problem of finding aid for Kith and the army. Finally, in an act of desperation, Sithas sends Arcuballis, Kith's griffin, to Sithelbec to bring Kith to Silvanost. When Kith does arrive, the two realize that they have but one chance of destroying the Ergothian army. They decide to make the dangerous journey to the Khalkist mountains in order to find and tame a brigade of griffins to fight for them.

*The Kinslayer Wars* has the ability to stand on its own. Niles has deftly employed Thompson and Carter's setting and magical animals, incorporated their seemingly immortal characters and domestic and high fantasy themes, and continued the plot logically. Two particular elements do, however, differentiate the first and second novels in the trilogy. On the somewhat negative side, Niles's gift for detail leads him to become so engrossed in the different battles he forgets to return to the interesting theme—the evolving relationship between the twins, who do mature in this volume. Indeed, Niles develops all the characters well. They operate on emotional, personal, and physical levels, interacting with Kith and Sithas to provide necessary conflicts. Even more interestingly, in this high fantasy, Niles discusses the difficulty in forming a nation of "pure" blood and examines treachery, prejudice, and adultery as well.

Whether a Dragon Lance fan or not, *The Kinslayer Wars* is worth reading alone or with *Firstborn* and, before year's end with *The Qualinesti*.

**Green Hands Nurtures the New Nation**

In the concluding volume of "The Elven Nations Trilogy," Kith-Kanan's plans have come to fruition. Kith, married to the human Suzine, has generated a non-sectarian nation, the first in all of Kyrst. Yet, the speaker of the Sun is not without problems: Qualinesti remains sharply divided from its sister land Silvanesti. Even more disturbing is the question in his mind of the succession to the throne. His son, Ulvian, chooses to lead a life of corruption; in contrast, his daughter, Verhanna, whose admiration for her father is unaltering, is willing to devote her life to Kith-Kanan. It is these two striking siblings who are the main focus of *The Qualinesti* while Kith is torn by his past and the uncertainty for his future.

Then all of Kyrst is attacked by strange forces that rival those of the First Chaos. Later, after an encounter with a servant of Hiddukel, one of the ancient evil gods, the city of Qualinost is attacked by strange natural phenomena. Little does Kith realize the connection between Hiddukel's servant and the strange occurrences. Meanwhile, his daughter Verhanna fights as a captain of the military guard to rid Qualinost of slavery.

In this high fantasy of good and evil there's the expected sorcery, magical creature, and fantastic warriors, but more importantly, as the writing duo
had done in the first book of the trilogy [the second was written by Douglas Niles], Thompson and Carter emphasize family strife and moral conflict. They have also used some of the characters from Firstborn and The Kinslayer Wars as well as unique new ones. All are well detailed. Both major and minor characters have individual qualities that can be used to contend with the issues at hand or rouse reader’s empathy for they are crucial to the storyline. It was a terrific ending to an exciting trilogy.

Jennifer Wells

Cat Owners Take Note


This collection delivers yet another volume of fantastic “cat tales,” with many authors from the first assemblage making a reappearance in its pages.

As is often the case with collections of short fiction, some pieces work better than others. The most successfully crafted here are Elizabeth Ann Scarborough’s “The Queen’s Cat’s Tale,” in which Guinevere’s feline companion, Gray Jane, finally reveals the truth of those fateful events preceding the fall of Camelot, Ardath Mayhar’s “Hermione at Moon House,” a testimony to the mischief a familiar’s kits can cause when they learn to read and write, Susan Shwartz’s “Critical Cats,” which traces the events surrounding the death of Merlin, a noble feline Soulsinger, and co-editor Norton’s “Hob’s Pot,” which tells of a cat from the Far East who teams up with a house spirit to arrest a potent demon’s magic.

Also of note are Marylois Dunn’s “Shado,” the story of a tomcat who rescues two orphaned kits from certain death, A. R. Major’s “The Execution,” a tale of justice served in the court of common city house cats, Mary H. Schaub’s “The Keep-Shape Spell,” about the misadventures of a cat who is accidentally turned into a ten-year-old boy, and Roger C. Schlobin’s “Of Age and Wisdom,” a tale of the mystical relationships between cats and dragons.

Recommended for cat owners.

Joseph M. Dudley

Slight but Cheerful Tale


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

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

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

Martha A. Bartter

Who Cares What Happens Next?


If Lilyaka Hae Ransome, young central character of this book, seems uncertain and ineffective, it's not the fault of her own inadequacies. Following the trail of her supposedly-kidnapped martial arts mentor, she finds herself in a complex struggle for interstellar power between disguised forces and individuals who can't or won't explain what's going on. "It's best that you not know," they tell her, or "I can't tell you yet," or "Alas, it's too dreadful to reveal."

Just as at one time the short story seemed to be the most commercially viable form for sf, then the novel, today many writers work in larger forms, such as this "trilogy" that actually is one story in three installments. The model that comes to mind is the mammoth, multi-volume Victorian novel, and Rasmussen occasionally does veer close to melodrama as in the scene during which a corrupt senator rejects his illegitimate son. Mostly, though, this lacks the color, energy, and sense of direction that kept Victorian readers going from one installment to the next. Rasmussen is okay at depicting a shifting, confusing situation, and it's likely that this will all make sense and that the story will go somewhere. What she's shown thus far, though, isn't engaging enough to make me care what happens next.

Joe Sanders
Slapstick Fun


Tom Robbins, that kinder, gentler version of Thomas Pynchon, has flirted with fantasy themes since his first novel, *Another Roadside Attraction,* had as its McGuffin the mummified body of Christ guarded in the wilds of Washington State by elite troops of Jesuit seminarians. In this, his fifth novel, Robbins goes all the way, with five of the major characters being discarded inanimate objects brought to life in a desert cave by the invocation of the Phoenician love goddess Jezebel during an epic act of lovemaking.

Trying to explain the plot of a Robbins novel defeats its purpose; most of the fun is getting there and running across the loopy cast the author peoples it with. The major plot line involves the Reverend Buddy Winkler, a Swaggart-like media preacher in league with right-wing elements in the U.S. and Israel to rebuild the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. But the Reverend Buddy’s secret agenda relies on scripture that intimates that this will bring on Armageddon, the destruction of the world, and the Second Coming, when those of Buddy’s ilk will be able to enjoy the fruits of paradise without being bothered by all those liberals, who will have been condemned to Hell.

The participants in the life-giving cave hump are the Rev’s niece, Ellen Cherry Charles, a southern gal dissatisfied with her traditional role, and her soon-to-be-estranged lover, Boomer Petway, a good ol’ boy who has to travel a long road, literally and figuratively, before he will deserve his lady. The recipients are Painted Stick and Conch Shell, millennia-old refugees from Jezebel/Astarte’s temple of love in the Middle East, and Dirty Sock (left by Buddy), Can o’Beans, and Spoon, recently discarded debris, who agree to accompany Conch and Stick on an epic journey east toward their roots. Their arrival in New York coincides with the igniting of the Reverend Buddy’s catastrophic plans, Ellen Cherry’s cosmic revelation, and the Dance of the Seven Veils performed in full for the first time by a mysterious woman known only as Salome, at Isaac and Ishmael’s, a much-bombed Arab-Jewish restaurant opposite the United Nations building, on Super Bowl Sunday.

You see the problem. How did they get there? And I haven’t even mentioned Turn Around Norman, who makes his living revolving 180 degrees in front of St. Patrick’s Cathedral over a twelve-hour period, Raoul Ritz, the horny doorman turned pop star, and a talking dildo (Ellen Cherry’s) that regales Spoon with raunchy conversation during Spoon’s captivity in Ellen Cherry’s apartment. And I could go on.
Readers either respond to Robbins’ playful way with narrative, character, and words, or they don’t. In the past, even some who love his books have complained about his casual ideas about closure, a fault (if it is one) not found in *Skinny Legs*. I’m not sure this book is the best introduction to Robbins for those who’ve never tried him. Perhaps his second novel, *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, which has the least “fantasy” element of the bunch, would serve best as an initiation. I recommend *Skinny Legs* highly, but Robbins is a minority taste, and one demanding immediate response, not cultivation.

*Bill Collins*

**Stretched Beyond Breaking Point**


Possession by an evil force or forces is a standard theme in the tradition of horror literature. Such possession of children is not too common however, and possession of children by a stone really offers some possibilities to stretch one’s imagination. Unfortunately, in the case of *Blood of the Children* one’s imagination may be stretched too far, even to the breaking point. This book is too long, too violent, too confused, and ultimately too unbelievable. It certainly does not live up to the possibility its premise offered. I wish I could recommend it but I cannot.

*J.T. Moore*

**Thinking About the Unthinkable**


In the very near future, a religious fanatic President plans to inaugurate Armageddon personally. Meanwhile, one Moreau-like scientist has fashioned a living replica of the Beast from Revelations, while an innocent colleague has developed a virus that can replicate tissue from traces of DNA—even fossilized—endlessly and unkillably. The novel takes off from there, herding a large cast of characters toward the ultimate struggle of Good against Evil. Rodgers is unusually thorough at working out the implications of his ideas, such as the power of that virus. If he sometimes goes almost over the top, it’s worth it. I burst out laughing, halfway through the book, when a character looks down at the meat he’s been eating and discovers that it’s started pumping blood, but it was delighted laughter at Rodgers’ nerve in letting the idea go on to its logical conclusion.
It's also good to see someone who can deal with a religious theme without either withering scorn or simple-minded parroting. Not that you should look for *Fire* in your local Christian book store. Rodgers has a lot of scorn for people who use faith as a substitute for intelligence. He suggests, in fact, that they are unknowing servants of the actual, disguised Beast.

It's unfortunate that the cover blurb compares *Fire* to *The Stand* and *Swan Song*. In particular, Rodgers doesn't have King's knack for understated but energetic writing. A better comparison might be to Bear's *Blood Music* or Farmer's *Riverworld* series. These days, horror concentrates on graphically mentioning the unmentionable. Rodgers doesn't scant on spraying bodily fluids around, but his real specialty is thinking about the unthinkable. Recommended.

*Joe Sanders*

**Best Vampire Novel**


There have lately been many great stories of romantic, soul-searching, lovelorn vampires. They fascinate, but they didn't make my blood race as it did when I felt the total evil in *Vampire$, the base, ugly nature of the undead. Complete with high tech hunting equipment, secret funding and support from high places, and an exposure of social values, greed, and religious irreverence, Steakley posits the possible elimination of the undead from our present world. He has done this so well that, while reading *Vampire$, it is quite possible to suspend one's disbelief in vampires: to believe that the unearthly children of the night are truly among us; to believe that some ordinary individuals have been enthralled by the magnetic yet corrupt power the vampires exude; to believe that, if the undead exist, then there must live those who will fight them. It is on the latter group that Steakley focuses.

The novel opens as Team Crow, a diverse group of utterly courageous, sometimes foolish and very human risktakers, led by Jack Crow, are in the middle of a hunting assignment for which they will be well paid (the reason, I assume, for the dollar sign in the title). Vampires have been located, and the team is exterminating them. Though Jack senses an imbalance in the number of undead found, the team and town celebrate, not realizing they have a very angry, unwelcome guest—a master vampire who now has identified the team and knows Jack's name.

Not one team member, living or deceased, likes to kill. They may invent new methods of destruction, rehash past gruesome episodes, or antici-
pate future horrific jobs, but overall, this smart, strong, loyal group is motivated by the desire to protect one another and the world. Their backgrounds are diverse: a pro-football player, a young priest, an inventor, a reporter, a sheriff, and even a one-time drug runner. Most are actually new to the team, for only a few ever live long enough to become experts. Jack Crow himself has only three years' experience. Most also have something to hide—if only from themselves—their fear or age or unwanted wealth or having once been a slave to a master vampire. So none have any illusions about their own mortality. They simply wish to eliminate as many vampires as they can before they themselves are killed, and they voice no regrets. Thus, these believable, strong-willed, charismatic people grow larger than life as the plot evolves.

To describe only a few of the committed people of Team Crow would be a disservice to the others. To attempt to describe them all fully would take a book in itself, for all team members have great personal internal strength, courage in spite of their fears, loyalty to each other and to the great quest, the quest that continues even now that the vampires know Jack's name and where he lives. But Jack Crow, the profane, brash, volatile, hulking 6'2" veteran vampire hunter, never falters. He uses vulgar language, and he can't understand why God would allow such evil as the existence of vampires or the degrading sexual habits of their despicable goons and subjugated victims; yet, never does he doubt that there is a God and that he and his friends can counteract Evil with Good.

For readers of horror who like fast-paced action and palpable evil and who do not object to explicit sex and vulgar language, Vampires could be the best vampire novel they read this year.

Joanellen Blakeley

Loosely Organized Plot


This is a direct continuation of volume one (Chung Kuo: The Middle Kingdom, reviewed in #186), picking up the characters three years on. The world is covered by vast continent-spanning cities, three hundred levels high, within which most of the population live. They are ruled by the Chinese, in particular the Council of Seven, whose main desire is to prevent change. After all, change is what has reduced Earth to the over-populated wreck it now is, where the actions of mankind have destroyed habitats and caused the extinction of most animal species. But change is inevitable. The Seven, believing they have won the war against the Dispersionists (those who want to use technology to take them to other worlds) find that change is in their
midst. When the T'ang of Africa is murdered and his heir apparently commits suicide, his youngest son, Wang Sau-leyan, succeeds to the Council of Seven. He is ambitious and not prepared to blindly follow the older members. Also, the Dispersionists are not totally defeated as Howard DeVore continues the campaign by fomenting unrest with the aid of Ping Tiao, whose aim is to level out society, removing class distinctions. Other characters from volume one also return.

The book, for all its size, is easy reading. The main problem is that Wingrove has chosen a vast panorama, and although he develops characters well it is a little difficult to keep track of them all. The other problem is that as this is a small part of an enormous concept, (six volumes are proposed) there is perhaps less obvious direction to the plot than might be evident in something less vast. Nevertheless, Wingrove has tackled his theme with enthusiasm and with a lot more skill than some long-established writers could accomplish.

Pauline Morgan

Swashbuckling Adventures


Alternate world stories are usually squarely in the camp of science fiction, so here's an oddity: an alternate world fantasy.

Three alternate worlds, actually, one each for Edgar Allen Poe and his Doppelgänger Edgar Allen Perry and the one they are drawn to from childhood by a girl named Annie. The adult Annie's tremendous psychic powers attract attention from the wrong people and in the resulting fracas the two Edgars switch worlds. Poe, a denizen of a planet on which mesmerism is a powerful force and men get drunk on thimblesful of wine, is trapped on our Earth, explaining much. Perry, a more typically Zelaznian soldier and swordsman, pursues the kidnapped Annie in the company of a bizarre crew that includes an animatable corpse and an orangutan. In fact, all the ensuing adventures bear a suspicious resemblance to the narratives of a certain E.A.P.

Though the book works perfectly well on its own, there is no question that the more familiar you are with Poe, the more you will enjoy the allusions and in-jokes. Except for an extremely murky first chapter, The Black Throne is a fine, fast-reading light fantasy. Obviously Zelazny and Saberhagen had great fun putting it together and most readers will derive equal pleasure from swashbuckling their way through the outré adventures within.

Steve Carper
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Please mail this completed form with your check for dues, payable to SFRA in U.S. dollars only. Mail to: Edra Bogle, Dept. of English, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas 76203-3827.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dues Schedule:</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>Overseas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>$60</td>
<td>$65</td>
<td>$70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint*</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student**</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emeritus***</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dues ________
Other ________
Total ________

If you wish to receive the British journal *Foundation* (3 issues yearly), add $14 to your dues.

* Joint membership is for two members in the same household, who will have separate Directory listings, receive two copies of the *Review*, but will receive one set of the two journals.

** Student membership rate may be used for maximum of five years.

*** Emeritus receives only the *Review*.

**** For overseas air mailing of *Directory* and *Review* only, add $15.

This membership is for calendar year 1992.

(This next information will appear in the SFRÅ Directory:)

Name: __________________________________________

Mailing Address: __________________________________

________________________________________________

Telephone: [Home] (___)____-______ BitNetNo. _______
[Office] (___)____-______ GEnie Address: _______
[Fax No.] (___)____-______

My principal interests in fantastic literature are (limit to 30 words):
_____ Repeat last year’s entry.

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

(This subscription form may be copied.)

2/92 (This is NOT a renewal notice)
(The information below will NOT appear in the Directory, and is for SFRA's records only.)

Occupation:

Institutional Affiliation: ________________________________

(Discipline:) ______________________________________

Projects SFRA should undertake:

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

Current work in progress: (Okay to mention in Review? Yes___ No___)

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

Please send membership forms to the following persons: (complete addresses, please). You may use my name as a referral.

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________