The SFRA Review

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Editorial correspondence: Betsy Harfst, Editor, SFRA Review, 2326 E. Lakecrest Dr., Gilbert AZ 85234. Send changes of address and/or inquiries concerning subscriptions to the Treasurer, listed below.

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

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President's Message:

Clark Kent He Ain't: No X-Ray Vision

I had a reporter from our largest metropolitan daily call me the other day. Seems he was patching together an article around the assumption that technology is inherently dehumanizing and has "turned us into numbers." It had occurred to him that "this is what science fiction is all about," and thus he called me, having somehow gotten hold of my number. I told him that I thought his thesis would play in the SF community these days as rather bad science fiction. Indeed, I said, recent SF seems more compensatory than cautionary. SF gives us a vivid experience of community in times in which our primary forms of communal interaction are generally unsatisfying, an experience of the numinous in times in which the faith claims of the world's twenty thousand-plus religions don't persuade, and a touch of wonder in times in which wonder is drained out of the workaday world and we find no way to sail beyond the sunset. I asked him to consider the success of the Star Trek films. Pretty thin tales, to be sure. But that is beside the point. It is the camaraderie of the crew, the hint of the numinous in Vulcan mysticism, and the marvels encountered in the course of the Enterprise's journey of discovery that enthral. In all this, technology is an adjunct, used and occasionally abused, but not an adversary. SF is not "all about" technology turning us into numbers, I told our journalist, nor is being turned into numbers the whole story of our lives in technical culture. Do you listen to CDs? I asked him: "Well, yes." Use a computer and a modem? VCRs and microwave popcorn? "Yes." Would you want defibrillation and clot busting drugs if your heart stopped? "Of course!"

I know: I belabor the obvious. But that (finally) is my point. This reporter is a well-educated, astute and professionally accomplished person — the Times doesn't hire dummies. But every sixteen-year-old Trekkie of my acquaintance, knowing of Borgs and biobeds and a dozen projected cultures in which such technology could exist, would have told him essentially what I did, laying out in a few moments a more adequate assumptional grounding for the man's article, a new ground that would then bear the weight of some truly interesting speculation on the role of technology in our lives. Considering those young Trekkers, I guess it is true that in the SF community we build 'em better.
I have just received my copy of the January/February issue of the SFRA Review. Thanks Betsy and Ernie for the great job you’re doing!

Treasurer Edra Bogle tells me that the IRS has recently required her to fill out a whole passel of forms concerning the SFRA’s employees. It seems to make no difference to them that we have no employees — the forms must be submitted or everything grinds to a halt. Perhaps it is bureaucracy that must turn us into numbers (even though, in this case, the number be zero).

If you are sending SF books to our East Bloc members, stick in a few large Hershey bars. Chocolate is a pretty hot item just now in the barter economy of the former Soviet Union, and if it piggy-backs on a small packet of books, it will most likely make it through in short order. Just mark “books/les livres” on the outside of the jiffy bag you send them in — the Postal Service and Customs don’t require a formal declaration of contents if books and papers are being sent abroad.

Here’s a good one: Orbital Resonance by John Barnes, published December, 1991, by TOR, ISBN 0-312-85206-1. If you enjoyed Rite of Passage and Ender’s Game, you’ll like this one.

Scholar’s Support Fund. Membership renewal. Need I write more?

Pete Lowentrott

SFRA 23 Conference Update:

Greetings from Montreal! March has come in like a lion up here; 0 degrees F. and nearly a foot of snow in the last three days. We haven’t seen the ground since early December, and it’s easy to imagine that it’s frozen solid all the way through to the center of the earth. Could summer actually melt this ice ball again?

SFRA 23 is scheduled for the weekend of the summer solstice, June 18-21, and while snow is highly unlikely, the mercury could dip into the fifties. On the other hand, we usually get a week or two of temperatures in the nineties sometime during the summer. That usually happens in July or August, but one year that kind of heat hit in May. To be totally prepared, bring a light jacket and a small fan, and you probably won’t need either.
Regarding the conference, itself, I can report that the list of writers intending to participate now also includes Joan Slonczewski and Elisabeth Vonarburg. A number of interesting discussions are shaping up on topics ranging from the taste of our next bowl of mundane soup to speculations on the ultimate destiny of our cosmic nuts.

Specifically, the 23rd annual conference of the Science Fiction Research Association will be held at John Abbott College, June 18 to 21, 1992.

Guest Writers: The list is still growing, but so far it includes: James Gunn, Phyllis Gotlieb, Bruce Sterling, Joan Slonczewski, Elisabeth Vonarburg, Donald Kingsbury, Glenn Grant, J.P. April, and Yves Menard.

John Abbott College is located in Ste. Anne de Bellevue, Quebec, which is situated some 35 kilometers from downtown Montreal at the western tip of the island. The campus is shared with McDonald College, a satellite of McGill University. It overlooks the St. Lawrence River which widens at this point into Lac St. Louis.

Access by Air: In most cases discounts will be available through Air Canada at 1-800-361-7585. Specify that you are part of the SFRA conference and give them our event code CV920737. Flights arriving from departure points anywhere in North America land at Dorval Airport. Cab fare to John Abbott College is approximately twenty dollars so sharing a ride is advisable. City buses (204 & 211) will also get you to the College from Dorval Airport, eventually, for a dollar sixty. Most flights from overseas land at Mirabel International Airport which is forty kilometers northwest of Montreal. There are regular shuttle buses from Mirabel to the town of Dorval and to the downtown area, and city buses (211) leave from there every fifteen minutes for the trip to Ste. Anne de Bellevue.

Access by Automobile: Traveling by car from the south, take U.S. Interstate 87 which becomes Quebec Autoroute 15 at the international border. Follow Autoroute 15 for approximately 65 kilometers. Cross the Champlain Bridge (Pont Champlain) and drive alongside downtown Montreal until you hit Autoroute 40. Go west on Autoroute 40, also known as the Transcanadienne, for approximately 30 kilometers until you reach Exit 41 at Ste. Anne de Bellevue. Coming by car from the west, the Transcanada 401 becomes Quebec Autoroute 40 at the provincial border. Ste. Anne de Bellevue is approximately 50 kilometers from Ontario. From the north and east, follow Quebec Autoroute 40 through Montreal to Ste. Anne de
Bellevue at Exit 41. Visitors from outside Quebec should be prepared for road signs which are in French and/or international pictorial language. Also note, there is no right turn on red.

International Border: U.S. citizens arriving from the United States are not required to have visas. Passports are not ordinarily necessary either, but they might expedite the routine at the border. Others should check with their nearest Canadian Embassy or Consulate well in advance of the conference about regulations which might apply. Entering Canada with firearms, quantities of tobacco, or alcohol is prohibited.

Accommodation: Rooms are available in the Stewart Residence at John Abbott College. Most are arranged in a number of suites consisting of two double bedrooms which flank a common kitchenette and living room. Meals can be prepared in the Residence or they can be found in the village of Ste. Anne de Bellevue, which is only a ten minute walk away. Accommodations are also available at motels in the general vicinity including: the Montrealer on Ile Perrot—514-453-6214, the Journey’s End in Pointe Claire—514-697-6210, the Holiday Inn in Pointe Claire—514-697-7110, and the Ramada in Vaudreuil—514-455-0955.

Car Rental: Reservations can be made in advance through local offices of the major companies according to varying rates and conditions. Those flying Air Canada into Montreal should inquire about their arrangement with Budget. Note that vehicles cannot ordinarily be rented in the U.S. and returned in Canada, or vice versa.

Spar Tour: Also located in Ste. Anne de Bellevue is a major facility of Spar Aerospace Ltd. Spar is one of four primary contractors for orbital satellites in the world: it is the primary contractor for the new generation Canadarm that will service space station Freedom set to be launched by the U.S. in 1996. A tour of the Spar plant has been scheduled for two o’clock Friday afternoon. Those interested should put their names on the tour list at registration.

Tourism: Many will want to explore Quebec either before or after the conference. The area affords many unique sights and experiences, both from a natural and a cultural point of view. Tourism Quebec will be happy to provide detailed information and can be reached at 1-800-363-7777.

Steve Lehman
SFRA 23 Coordinator
Recent & Forthcoming Books

Year of publication as shown. (P) denotes publication confirmed. All unconfirmed dates are tentative; delays are common. Most original books have been or will be reviewed in these pages.

REFERENCE


HISTORY & CRITICISM


AUTHOR STUDIES


**FILM & TV**


News & Information:

Embellishments Revisited

Back in 1975, at London’s Institute for Contemporary Arts, a series of lectures was given, most of them devoted to SF and most by SF authors. One of them was by Tom Disch, whose topic was “The Embarrassments of Science Fiction.” All the essays were reprinted in *Science Fiction At Large* ed. by Peter Nicholls (1976), a work still well worth reading.

The embarrassments are even more prominent today, argues Disch in the February *Atlantic Monthly*, in “Big Ideas and Dead-End Thrills,” pages 86-94. There’s a lot worth quoting, but I’ll whet your interest with his concluding paragraph:

Ideological silliness is an affliction more tolerable in the young, and, for reasons I’ve tried to lay out, exactly the same may be said for science fiction. This is not meant to be my way of abjuring the field or declaring that I am not now nor have I ever been a science-fiction writer. I have been and I continue to be. I will even go on
reading and reviewing the stuff, as long as some small portion of what is published continues to suite my taste. but I won't act as a booster for the genre as a whole, which has become, as a publishing phenomenon, one of the major symptoms of, if not a causal agent in, the dumbing-down of the younger generation and the lowering of the lowest common denominator.

Lovecraft and the Kronos Quartet

The Kronos Quartet's music is not the standard concert fare, as you know if you've ever heard this San Francisco-based group of three men and a woman, either live or on their recordings (mostly Elektra Nonesuch). A number of the American Public Radio non-commercial stations have aired their ten hour “Radio Kronos,” and on one of them I heard them playing the “ unearthly” music that Erich Zann heard in Lovecraft's “The Music of Erich Zann,” a 1922 story. A Bay area composer, John Geist, composed the music in 1979, and it's been in the quartet's repertoire ever since, according to the quartet's administrative assistant. Alas, there's no commercial recording available of the piece, which includes the narrated text. Call your local non-commercial stations (the ones with frequencies between 88.1 and 91.9 mHz on your FM dial) and see if they'll run the Kronos series. It's definitely worth a listen.

NB

Bowling Green Announcements

The fall/winter 1991/92 catalog from Bowling Green State University's Popular Press describes several books of likely interest to members and which will be reviewed. Nancy Anisfield edits The Nightmare Considered: Critical Essays on Nuclear War Literature, 19 essays exploring the influence of nuclear war on fiction, poetry and film. Anne Kaler discusses The Picara: From Hera to Fantasy Heroine, in which the autonomous woman (picara, a word I'd never seen before) is examined in texts from classical literature to modern fantasy. The other books explore many aspects of popular culture, from ferris wheels to an autobiography of Cornell Woolrich, Blues of a Lifetime, based on five “personal stories” written by Woolrich, to contemporary soap opera criticism.

NB
SFRA Members Current Projects

SFRA Treasurer Edra Bogle has forwarded more members’ listing of current projects and perhaps identification of projects which should be undertaken, along with possibly some comments of praise for Newsletter contents.

GRIBBLE, Charles E.: As many reviews as possible.

Possible projects:
KETTERER, David: an issue of Extrapolation evaluating SF scholarship to date.
LEWIS, Anthony: More active role in listing bibliographic control documents—indexes, histories, etc.

Possible praise:
BROOKS, Mary Ann: Keep up the good work!
PFEIFFER, John R. Keep up the good work!

[I hope my interpretations of the comments are correct. BH, ed.]

Call for Information

Philippe Rey is looking for information on the Captain Future novels of Edmund Hamilton which were published by Better Publications in the 1940s. He is interested in finding copies, reprints or microfilms of the stories. He also seeks a source for more information about Hamilton and all of his books, not just the Captain Future novels. Anyone with information may contact him: Philippe Rey, 47 ch. des Falquets, 1223 COLOGNY, Geneva Switzerland.

Editorial Matters

I’ll wager that you have questions about the changes in the first issues of the SFRA Review. The bright yellow cover makes it easy to locate; the band of red will remain the same for the entire year. Then, in 1993 a different yearly color band will be featured on the yellow cover. Lettering the spine of the Review will answer the requests of several members. Did you discover some of the other differences?

The major elements of the Review will remain essentially unchanged. Reviews of science fiction, fantasy, horror, and young adult novels as well as reviews of non-fictional works will continue to be featured. To satisfy the diverse interests of our readers, a primary goal is to include a balanced selection from all these areas.
In Issue 190, September 1991, I listed several items that would make our scanner work more efficiently. Reviewer response has been excellent. Both Ernie (the computer/scanner expert in our family) and I sincerely appreciate the increased ease of working with your material. Thank you all for this attention to details.

We are moving to a new home the last weekend of March. No, we usually don’t move after just a year and a half (We lived in our last place for over 20 years!) But this new house is much more suited to our needs and desires. Our new address will be: 2326 East Lakecrest, Gilbert, AZ 85234. The phone will also be a Gilbert exchange, but I won’t know the new number till later. Any mail arriving in Mesa during the changeover will be forwarded.

Join us in Montreal in June.

Betsy Harfst

Letters to the Editor

UNIVERSITY OF YORK
THE KING’S MANOR,
YORK, Y01 2EP
Telephone (0904) 430000
Telex 57933 YORKUL Fax (0904) 433433
CENTRE FOR MEDIEVAL STUDIES
Dr Edward James
FOUNDATION
University of York
The King’s Manor
YORK Y01 2EP
Tel: (0904) 433915
5 March 1992

Dear Ms Harfst,

A couple of years ago, when I printed an advertisement for the SFRA free in Foundation, Neil Barron said that he would be happy to reciprocate by putting a short piece from me, extolling the virtues and merits of Foundation, into the pages of the Bulletin/Newsletter. I never got round to this: a full-time teaching job in Medieval History, and editing Foundation, and being an editor of Early Medieval Europe, and trying to do research and to publish, doesn’t allow me much free time. However, an emergency has now arisen.
and I should be most grateful if you could insert this letter, or simply the following information, into a forthcoming Newsletter.

The Science Fiction Foundation at the Polytechnic of East London (formerly the North-East London Polytechnic) is the only sf research centre in Europe based in an institution of higher education. Since its foundation in 1971 it has built up a large library, consisting of original manuscripts as well as books and magazines, and researchers come to it from all over Europe and North America. Its journal, Foundation: The Review of Science Fiction, has been published regularly since March 1972 - exactly twenty years - and, after 54 issues, has built up an international reputation. It remains the only academic journal of sf criticism published in Europe and, if I can put in a plug, remains essential reading for any sf researcher. (Members of the SFRA can get it at a very favourable rate, as you will have seen from your renewal forms!)

At the one hundredth meeting of the Council of the SF Foundation on February 6th 1992, the Polytechnic announced that it would be withdrawing all financial support to the SF Foundation at the end of the financial year 1992-93 (i.e. in 12 months' time). The Polytechnic, of course, like all other British universities and polytechnics, is under severe financial pressure at the moment. The Polytechnic estimates the running costs at some £40,000 per year: most of this is based on the salaries of the two part-time secretaries, plus overheads; only some £12,000 relates to the cost of the accommodation of the SFF in the Polytechnic's Library (and I personally believe that the £40,000 is a considerable over-estimate of the actual costs). Unless this sum can be found, every year, the SFFF will be forced to move, or, if it cannot find alternative accommodation, to disband. The journal can probably survive, since it is largely self-financing; but the future of the SF Foundation as a research centre is clearly in doubt.

The Council of the SF Foundation, with the help of the Friends of Foundation, are naturally now beginning to look into alternative sources of funding (and any donations, made out to "Friends of Foundation" and sent to Rob Meades, 75 Hecham Close, Walthamstow, London E17 5QT, United Kingdom, will be very welcome!), and to look for an alternative home. But some of us also feel that it is not too late to appeal to the Rector (or, currently, Acting Rector) of the Polytechnic to ask him to reconsider. It may be that he has not fully realised the national and international importance of the SF Foundation. Perhaps he has not fully realised that it is incumbent upon all universities now (and the Polytechnic will shortly become the University of East London) to develop centres of excellence and centres of research, and
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I should be most grateful if members of the SFRA could please write NOW to The Acting Rector, Polytechnic of East London, Romford Road, Stratford, LONDON E15 4LZ, United Kingdom, pointing out the importance of the SF Foundation to sf scholarship, and, asking him to reconsider his
SCIENCE FICTION RESEARCH ASSOCIATION, INC.

The SFRA is the oldest professional organization for the study of science fiction, fantasy and horror/Gothic literature and film, and utopian studies. Academic affiliation is not a requirement for membership.

Founded in 1970, the SFRA was organized to improve classroom teaching, encourage and assist scholarship, and evaluate and publicize new books and magazines dealing with fantastic literature and film. The SFRA enrolls members from many countries, including instructors at all levels, librarians, students, authors, editors, publishers and readers with widely varied interests.

SFRA BENEFITS INCLUDE:

*EXTRAPOLATION. Quarterly. Oldest journal in the field with critical, historical and bibliographical articles, book reviews, letters, occasional special topic issues.

*Science Fiction Studies. 3 issues per year. Critical, historical and bibliographical articles, review articles and reviews, notes, letters. International coverage with abstracts in French and English. Annual index.

*SFRA Review. Ten times yearly (or as directed by the Executive committee). Extensive book reviews, both fiction and non-fiction; review articles; listings of new and forthcoming fiction and secondary literature; letters, organizational news, calls for papers, work in progress, etc.

*SFRA Directory. Annual. Lists members’ names and addresses, phone numbers, special interests, etc.

As a member you are also invited to:

*attend our annual meetings, where papers are presented, information is shared, and interests are discussed, all in a relaxed, informal environment. Much of the significant secondary literature is on display at bargain prices. The Pilgrim and Pioneer Awards for distinguished contributions to SF or fantasy scholarship are awarded at a dinner meeting, which the winners normally attend. Many professional writers participate in the conferences.

*participate in the association’s activities by voting in elections, holding office, contributing to or reviewing for the Review, and serving on committees.

The annual membership dues cover only the actual costs of providing benefits to members, and reflect a modest savings over subscriptions to the publications provided. Your dues may be a tax deductible expense.
Non-Fiction:

Gone But Not Forgotten


If you’re curious about how Adams writes and his literary views, *Day* will disappoint you. There are a few passing references to how scenes and situations from Adams’ experience suggested parts of his novels—he grew up near Watership Down, for example—but no sustained discussion. If, however, you’re interested in the kind of person who wrote the novels, you probably will find this low-key memoir fascinating. Adams’s concern here is how an alert, sensitive person like him learns to survive in a world that does not reward those qualities; he also wants to record for posterity the circumstances of his childhood, now obliterated by natural change and the catastrophe of World War II.

Adams describes himself as the kind of boy who could genuinely fall in love at first sight with a river. He says he can still recognize different types of trees by their smell. Later, in schools that tried to “knock the nonsense” out of students, he kept his imagination free by becoming dorm storyteller. This volume describes his active, more-or-less conventional life through World War II, all the while showing how important fantasy has been to him as compensation “for solitude ... and boring features.” The writing came later, cherishing and reshaping bits of experience too vivid to forget. Storytelling, it seems, is a way to affirm the significance of things that otherwise would be dismissed as trivial or outmoded.

This book shows some of the raw material of Adams’s fiction, but it mainly shows how someone can love the world without totally submitting to the repressive regimes that momentarily appear to dominate it. Or at least it shows how one person managed to do so.

Quietly recommended.

Joe Sanders

Lightweight Wisdom


This is a collection of 66 editorials from *Isaac Asimov’s Science Fiction Magazine*, published between 1980 and 1985. These mini-essays average
4-5 pages in length, and are followed by brief afterwards which comment upon or update their concerns. There is no overlap, save in general tone and attitude, with the material gathered in Asimov on Science Fiction (Doubleday, 1981). Asimov's style is chatty; his range of reference, in terms of historical and scientific detail, broad; his analyses basically superficial, if not insipid.

The book is divided into seven major groupings. "Science Fiction in General" tackles broad cultural issues—for example, "Women in Science Fiction," a snide, rambling, patronizing gaffe. "Science Fiction Writing" addresses various thematic concerns, not all of them clearly related to the genre of SF, such as "Satire" and "Symbolism." "Science Fiction Writers" is a short, self-explanatory section. "Science Fiction and Science" includes articles on scientific and technological topics that are connected to the SF genre in only the most tangential ways—for instance, an attack on "Star Wars!" or S.D.I. that takes off from an essay by Poul Anderson. "Science Fiction and Fantasy" contains narrow, reductive and rather snobbish pieces on fantasy and sword and sorcery. "Science Fiction Magazines" consists mostly of self-justifying editorials responding to complaints by IASFM readers. And "Science Fiction and I" is a grab-bag of topics, all giving Asimov the opportunity to display what he calls his wonted modesty and charm—or rather, if I may translate the Asimovese: his glib egotism and ceaseless self-aggrandizement.

It would be nice to be able to say that these tiny essays are models of structural concision and stylistic grace, offering penetrating insights into crucial issues, but they aren't. In fact, they're gassy ephemera, obiter dicta gathered in the same thrifty spirit as might motivate one to save string. This volume exists for no better reason than to provide Asimov yet another title in his monstrously inflated ouevre—though hardcore fans no doubt will enjoy the book for its purveyance of the Good Doctor's lightweight wisdom. For critics and scholars seeking enlightening and useful information or ideas, Asimov's most trenchant observations on science fiction remain the autobiographical material bridging the stories in Before the Golden Age (1974) and The Early Asimov (1972).

Rob Latham

Techspeak Anyone?


"This paper-based, productized bookware module is designed to support the robust implementation of a friendly, context-driven interface between the developer and the end-user." That's Barry's only slight exaggeration of the
technobabble which he sometimes defines as "meaningless chatter about technology." Although he could draw examples from high tech fields like aerospace or robotics, most come from the computer industry in which he works as an editor for Sun Microsystems' SunWorld. Barry has been in the computer field for some years but fortunately has not been infected with the technobabble virus. He writes clearly and knowledgeably, sometimes with wit, skewering the more egregious examples of his field.

Jargon and argot have always been with us. Barry traces the evolution of computerese, a narrow-band synonym for technobabble. He is especially good at showing how the many and rapid changes in computing resulted in an equally rapid growth in a specialized vocabulary. While much of his discussion is descriptive and historical, enlivened with many anecdotes, he is justifiably critical of the use of technobabble for its own sake, not because it provides more precision. He provides many examples of obfuscation, abstraction, anthropomorphism (computers "talk" to one another), dehumanization (people "interface" and call their leisure "downtime"), and extreme use of the passive voice. "Computer literacy" and "user friendliness" are savagely but fairly dealt with.

There is some mention of science fiction, especially the development of the bleak technoscapes of the cyberpunk school, as well as of fringe areas like virtual reality, fuzzy logic, artificial intelligence, etc. His study reads easily and is well documented and indexed, and a glossary—plus other definitions in the text—should reassure the neophyte. A useful vade mecum for anyone with the slightest interest in how computers have affected how we speak and, more significantly, how we think.

Neil Barron

Careful, Accurate, Unpretentious and Unexciting


Kingomania continues unabated. Two recent books add to the flood: Stephen J. Spignesi's conspicuous exercise in informational over-kill (The Shape Beneath the Sheet) and George Beahm's much less ambitious, but more useful The Stephen King Story, the "first biography" of King. Somewhat apologetically, Beahm presents this book as a kind of "interim biography," designed to fill the gap while presumably waiting for Douglas Winter's "definitive version." Whether or not such a tentative biography is really necessary, given the amount of biographical and autobiographical material available in King's own writings (especially Danse Macabre and the short essay
"On Being a Brand Name"), numerous interviews, and the mountain of critical material published by Winter, Michael Collings, et al, is problematical, but Beahm succeeds admirably in realizing his admittedly modest goal of "a literary profile: impressionistic sketches, not a mural."

Beahm traces King's life from the beginning to the present. He presents the facts efficiently with little detail, comment, or color, keeping the focus on the progress of the writing career. As with most books on King, the best reading and most perceptive insights are quotes from King himself. Beahm pauses with each work of importance to make sensible connections between King's life and his art, without forcing them or making the kinds of psychological interpretations that can enrich a really good biography but more often lead to disaster. Beahm's observations are interesting and revealing, if not particularly surprising; King has always been candid about his use of personal experience in fiction.

Beahm also surveys the works one by one, but adds few critical insights of his own, being content to more-or-less pass on the general consensus to his readers. Perhaps Beahm is too deferential in his approach. I would have preferred a clearer sense of the biographer actively engaging his subject and digging into it rather than simply reporting the facts, dutifully and unobtrusively. But if it could have been more, even as an "interim biography," The Stephen King Story does give the reader the basic facts about King's life and career in one careful, accurate, unpretentious—if unexciting—volume. Beahm's text is bookended by an "Introduction" and "Afterword" by Michael R. Collings, a "Foreword" by Christopher Chesley, and an "Afternote" by Carroll F. Terrell. The book also includes a list of "Recent and Forthcoming Projects" and an "Annotated Checklist of Fiction."

Keith Neilson

A Considerable Talent for Futuristic Paintings


John Berkey's work will be immediately familiar to movie fans for his promotional artwork for the Star Wars trilogy, the 1976 remake of King Kong, The Towering Inferno, and other films of the '70s and '80s, as well as the current release, Star Trek VI.

Berkey (1932- ) began his career as a calendar artist in 1955 for Brown and Bigelow, at that time "the largest calendar company in the world." None of the early work is reprinted in this volume, but several historical and landscape paintings demonstrate his facility with these subjects.
*Painted Space,* however, is not intended as an overview of his work but rather as a representative collection of his science fiction illustrations for movie promotions and paperback covers. Although some of the illustrations feature human subjects, the majority of the illustrations (all of them in color) can be classified as "hardware" art, mostly of space ships, shuttles, and futuristic mammoth land vehicles.

Much of the artist's running commentary consists of remarks about the genesis and other circumstances of the paintings. Berkey describes his science fiction work as being "totally made up" but containing elements both of "this is" and "what if," an artist's mixture of reality and imagination. Berkey states that what he tends to "see" first is "how the light affects the shapes," and the distortion resulting from this perspective is the most striking characteristic of his work.

Where a hardware artist like Chris Foss attempts to capture the image with photographic accuracy, Berkey's images remind the viewer of imprecise reflections in a mirror. Thus, the effect shifts from detail to mass and color, with an impression of great energy in momentarily arrested movement. At times, the ships seem caught hastily in flight, moving too quickly for the precision favored by many hardware artists.

The dark, aquatic textures of the art are generally well reproduced, although background detail is sometimes obscured. Much of the commentary is by the artist, while the rest is filtered through text composed by his daughter, Sharon. The introduction by publisher Friedlander is fulsome in its extravagant praise, but, apart from this lapse, Berkey's work is presented in a way that showcases his considerable talent for futuristic paintings.

Walter Albert

**The First Rocketeers**


In his brief introduction, Bifulco admits that Republic Picture's three twelve-chapter "Rocket Man" serials—*King of the Rocket Men* (1949), *Radar Men from the Moon* (1952) and *Zombies of the Stratosphere* (1952)—were far duller than the best serials of the 1930s. Besides credits (which do not link actors with the names of the characters they played) for each serial and several stills, Bifulco provides synopses of two to three pages for each chapter. The serials are highly repetitious, with cliffhanger chapter endings. Leonard Nimoy played a Martian in *Zombies.* *Radar Men* introduced Comander Cody, later on TV. All three serials are available on videocassette
for $29.99 each. I would think serial fans would prefer to spend $90.00 for the videos rather than $12.45 for Bifulco’s synopses.

(Bifulco also wrote and published Heroes & Villains: Movie Serial Classics (1989, $14.95 plus $2.50 shipping), which covers Columbia Pictures’s Batman and Superman serials, and Superman on Television (1988, $12.95 plus $2.50), with synopses for the 104 episodes of The Adventures of Superman (1953-57). Epi-Log issue 6 (Star Tech, Box 456, Dunlap TN 37327, $4.95 plus $1.00 postage) also synopsizes Superman and is far cheaper.)

Michaël Klossner

The Apocalyptic Temper


The last half-decade has produced fine studies of atomic war fiction by Paul Brians, Martha A. Bartter and H. Bruce Franklin, canvassing the form with bibliographic, literary-critical and sociocultural expertise. Why this new book? Joseph Dewey, assistant professor of English at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, offers, not a study of atomic war fiction per se, but rather an analysis of works informed by what he calls “the apocalyptic temper, ... a response ... to a culture suddenly convulsed by evidence of a radical discontinuity in its history.” That discontinuity is the creation and abiding threat of the atomic bomb, but the novels Dewey discusses—Kurt Vonnegut’s Cat’s Cradle, Robert Coover’s The Origin of the Brunists, Walker Percy’s Love in the Ruins and The Thanatos Syndrome, Thomas Pynchon’s Gravity’s Rainbow, William Gaddis’s Carpenters Gothic, and Don DeLillo’s White Noise—do not “under take the direct treatment of [nuclear] doomsday scenarios, but instead [deal] indirectly with how people adjust to life in peril­ous times.” Most of these works present dire situations (ecological catastrophe in Vonnegut and DeLillo, social collapse in Percy, etc.) that Dewey identifies as allegories of the nuclear crisis, all offering hope in the face of pervasive despair.

In Dewey’s analysis, this crisis is merely another challenge, though epochal, to the American cultural spirit, which has been marked by the prevalence of a genre, the apocalyptic, and an attitude, the apocalyptic temper, from its outset (the introductory chapter offers a potted historical overview, from Puritan Jonathan Edwards to Modernist Nathanael West). His study thus places contemporary fictive responses to the nuclear crisis squarely within the mainstream of American literary history, identifying the six authors he treats as artistic visionaries whose anguished jeremiads function as com-
municipal acts of healing. Dewey is considerably less interested in marginal literary genres—science fiction, the disaster novel, the techno-thriller, the post-apocalypse dystopia/utopia—which also treat the nuclear crisis; he disparages these as “forgettable speculative fiction”

“unconvincing, didactic to the point of accusative;’ offering either works of “simple, flashy pessimism” or “soft-pastel outline[s] of a brave new paradise.” Classics by Bradbury, Le Guin, and Walter M. Miller are damned with faint praise.

A thorough-going cultural snob (apparently even preferring the durability of hardcovers to the “mass market rush of doomsday novels”), Dewey rounds up the usual suspects from the post modernist canon—omitting, predictably enough, women and non-white authors, and including erstwhile genre fictionist Vonnegut, whose youthful escape from the SF ghetto again pays its academic dividend. His close readings are generally supple and interesting, though they seem rather arbitrarily selected (why DeLillo’s White Noise and not his End Zone, which treats the nuclear threat directly?) and occasionally strained in their efforts to turn authorial despair (in Pynchon and Gaddis, especially) into a baffled form of hope. Dewey attempts to justify his blanket exclusion of “speculative fiction” (a shifty moniker he deploys ambiguously) on the ground that these works do not offer the true complexity of the apocalyptic temper, instead indulging either the cynical pessimism of “the cataclysmic imagination” or the facile optimism of “the millenialist spirit” but this analytic division of the terrain seems merely a rationalization of what is basically an indefensible elitism. As a result, In A Dark Time limits itself to being a thematic study of a narrow shelf of contemporary “classics” rather than a systematic examination of the condition of the American novel in the nuclear age.

Rob Latham

Science Fiction Year by Year


Although most histories of SF are arranged more or less chronologically few include much in the way of a formal chart showing key events or stories year by year. Jim Gunn’s Alternate Worlds (1975) includes in its appendix “A short history of western civilization, science, technology, and science fiction,” from prehistory to 1973’s Rendezvous With Rama. Somewhat more detailed, and largely limited to SF, is the 56 page chronology in The Visual Encyclopedia of Science Fiction (1977), ed. by Brian Ash.
Emerson has taught himself the basics of desktop publishing over the past 15 months or so in order to achieve an ambitious goal, to publish a year-by-year history and analysis of SF in periodical format, beginning with that fabled (and largely arbitrary) year, 1926. He didn't need his computer to realize that, if he's to "catch up" to the then-current year, he'll have to publish for about 16 grueling years, six issues a year, gaining five years for each calendar year, achieving currency about 2007. Say what you will, Jim Emerson is nothing if not ambitious.

For someone new to desktop publishing, the initial issue is commendably well done, 44 pages, 8 1/2x11 inches, stapled, with the text in two columns. There are no ads, although there may have to be, since the economics of publishing will require them to subsidize the approximately $3.50 delivered cost of a subscription issue. And future issues may be lengthier and have features lacking in this initial issue, such as color reproductions.

Following Emerson's explanation of the genesis and raison d'être of the magazine are two chronologies for 1926, the "past" devoted to people or events of that year (Robert Goddard launches first liquid fueled rocket, NBC incorporated, Chuck Berry born), the future devoted mostly to people born that year (Richard Matheson, Phyllis Gotlieb, Poul Anderson, Roger Corman, etc), most of them associated with SF. Capsule summaries of 31 1926 books occupy the next four pages, followed by two devoted to five silent films. Fred Pohl's "An Astounding Story" is reprinted from a 1989 issue of American Heritage. About a third of the issue is devoted to magazines, with b&w repros of covers of Amazing Stories, Gernsback's first editorial, a profile of Gernsback, and a short history of Amazing by Mike Ashley.

I wish the editor had reprinted some of the letters and nutty ads from early issues of Amazing. First Contact is a department that will reprint the first story of authors achieving later prominence, beginning with Curt Siodmak's "The Eggs from Lake Tanganyika," from the July 1926 Amazing, which is followed by a profile of Siodmak. Forrest J. Ackerman assisted Emerson with his project, and there is, inevitably I suppose, information about FJA and his collection. One page profiles five university libraries having SF collections, including Bowling Green, where Emerson did a lot of his preparatory work. The back cover lists books used as sources for his magazine.

This is a very auspicious beginning that deserves the support of SFRA members. At the very least I hope you'll order the first issue. Emerson would welcome suggestions for future issues regarding content or format, but what he most needs now is your financial support.

Neil Barron
Borges A to Z


There is something slightly bizarre about a dictionary whose purpose is to help readers navigate a path through the works of an author of fiction, but when the author in question is Jorge Luis Borges, bizarre exercises have a certain built-in propriety. The introduction by the editors points out that their dictionary is a useful tool for the serious reader of Borges; given the extraordinary range of his reference, the unusual compactness of his style, and the delicate erudition of his *contes philosophiques* they are quite correct. Perhaps more to the point, however, is the remark made by Mario Vargas Llosa in the first of two forewords (the other is by Anthony Burgess) that this is a book which would have been to Borges’ taste. It is the sort of eccentric item which will fit very snugly into a serious collection of Borges texts.

The references which follow each item in the dictionary are appropriately Byzantine, by virtue of the necessity of having to refer to English, American and Spanish editions of collections which sometimes have different contents as well as different paginations. Only three Spanish collections (*Ficciones*, *El Aleph* and *El informe de Brodie*) are fully indexed, although there are occasional references to Borges’s other works. Translations of the contents of these collections are, of course, distributed in several UK and US editions; the ones to which page references are given here are: *Labyrinths* (US 1962; UK 1970), *Ficciones* (US 1962), *Fictions* (UK 1967), *The Aleph and Other Stories* (UK 1973; US 1978) and *Doctor Brodie’s Report* (UK 1972; US 1978). There is, alas, no listing of the contents of these various collections and no detailed bibliography of any kind; the only supplementary material the book has is a brief “biographical summary” of Borges’ life. These limitations restrict the usefulness of the book very narrowly to its primary purpose—it remains a good place for checking out abstruse references in the particular Borges stories which it covers, but one would not want to consult it for any other purpose. Students writing essays on Borges are the most likely people to find a practical use for it, and might therefore be grateful to discover it in a university library.

Brian Stableford
Martin Gardner is probably best known as the meticulous, pugnacious debunker of various pseudoscientific theories and cults, as evidenced by his Science: Good, Bad and Bogus (Prometheus, 1981), which takes on everything from psychic research to UFOs. Gardner’s Whys and Wherefores is a less cohesive but also more personable volume, gathering essays and reviews written over the past six years. It follows up Order and Surprise (Prometheus, 1983), which collected similar material from the previous forty years.

The scope of Gardner’s interests is broad, covering topics mathematical, scientific, philosophical and literary. The literary issues range from an examination of Joycean puzzles and puns in Ulysses to various essays on science fiction and fantasy writers. Among the latter are three short biocritical studies that originally appeared in E.F. Bleiler’s Supernatural Fiction Writers (Scribners, 1985), covering the fantasies of Wells, Chesterton and Dunsany, each a model of concise, intelligent analysis. Also of interest to scholars of SF are a review of Arthur C. Clarke’s collection of his scientific papers, Ascent to Orbit (1984), and the reprinted introduction to a limited edition of Ray Bradbury’s The Martian Chronicles. This last piece suffers a bit from Gardner’s firm scientism, which leads him to conclude that contemporary astronomical knowledge about the possibilities of life on the red planet makes Bradbury’s novel “the last great book that anyone will write about Mars”—ignoring the potential for metaphorical or symbolic treatments, such as Ian MacDonald’s Desolation Road (1988).

This book is not essential for critics of SF and fantasy since the three most important pieces are readily available in Bleiler’s volume. But it is recommended for anyone who likes engaging prose and intelligent commentary on a wide range of topics.

Rob Latham


The sub-title of this bibliography aptly describes its contents: all “readily accessible” written and recorded material published in English through 1990 about Star Trek in all of its incarnations—the original television series, the animated television series, the first five feature films, the Next Generation television series, the original novels—and the people who made it all possible.
Entries, all amply annotated, are arranged in roughly chronological chapters. First are listed articles about the original television series, its continued popularity, and the people originally associated with *Star Trek*, from creator Gene Roddenberry to all the stars and regulars from the series as well as the writers, directors, major guest stars, and the short-lived animated series. The next five chapters exhaust information about the first five feature films; in these sections are articles relating to the making of each film, the special effects, the cast, reviews, and box office figures. Material about *Star Trek: The Next Generation*—its genesis, special effects, cast, and crew—follows. The final chapters contain annotated listings of novelizations of series episodes and films, plot summaries of original novels featuring characters from either series, a discography and a list of available videotapes of both television episodes and films. A thorough index concludes the volume.

Entries are arranged alphabetically within each section of each chapter and the chronological movement from articles written after an event to articles previewing that event and back again can be disconcerting to the browser. The listing is all-inclusive; there is no attempt to sift entries for significance. Articles annotated range from extended critical and scholarly discussions to celebrity interviews to mere announcements of events scheduled for a local convention. Very few cross-references are provided; entries are merely repeated in full in several places. Also annoying are noticeable numbers of typographical errors and dangling modifiers.

However, the annotations themselves are thorough and occasionally spiced with editorial comments. The commentary accompanying summaries of film reviews often compares reviewers' reactions to a film with their reactions to earlier films in the series. Many entries report record-breaking box office revenues for the feature films. Also reported are fascinating tidbits regarding early ideas for feature film scripts that were eventually incorporated into later films or episodes of *The Next Generation*. Popular culture scholars will note marked differences between Trekker reactions to *Star Trek* in these entries and the cooler, more critical perceptions appearing in the mainstream media.

Several major events occurred in the *Star Trek* universe in 1991: the 25th anniversary of the original television series, the death of creator Gene Roddenberry, and the release of *Star Trek VI*, purportedly the last film to feature the original cast; all generated many magazine and newspaper articles full of retrospection and nostalgia. Thus this volume is already significantly out of date. But Trekkers will definitely want to add this lengthy bibliography to their collections; most libraries, both general and academic, will also want this volume on their reference shelves.

Agatha Taormina
75,000 Words from the Grave


*Requiem* represents two editorial concerns reflected in three parts: in Part I, to publish a few of Heinlein's works now out of print or never in print and, in Parts II and III, to present tributes and appreciations including those that constituted the program of the "Heinlein Retrospective" (10/6/88) at the National Air and Space Museum accompanying the posthumous award of the NASA Medal for Distinguished Public Service. Dr. Yoji Kondo of the Goddard Space Center and his widow, Virginia, selected the materials and wrote the prefatory notes for *Requiem*.

Part I (about 75,000 words) includes: the eponymous short story, "Requiem" (1940); "Tenderfoot in Space," a Boy's Life serial not reprinted since it appeared in May-July 1958; the novella "Destination Moon" (1950) and essay "Shooting Destination Moon" (1950); a poem, "The Witch's Daughters" (1946); two stories written for girls' magazines, "The Bulletin Board" (unpublished) and "Poor Daddy" (1949); and four Guest-of-Honor speeches "mildly edited for smoother reading" from the World Science Fiction Conventions of 1941, 1961, and 1976 and from the Rio de Janiero Movie Festival of 1969. Heinlein's brief credo, originally recorded for Edward R. Murrow's *This I Believe* (1952), is also reprinted.


The advance uncorrected proofs display several printing errors and solecisms; there is inadequate bibliographical information and no index. The collection will be of interest to serious students of Heinlein as well as fans because it contains hard-to-find or unpublished works. Having the four Guest-of-Honor speeches in one collection is particularly welcome because they juxtapose different moments in Heinlein's ideological development. In 1941 Heinlein praises SF readers for high intelligence and the ability to adapt and survive in the coming decades of war and "mass insanity." In 1961 he is in the full flush of cold-war rhetoric, predicting, as a "short-time pessimist", if successful Communist aggression or American capitulation, the destruction of the USA, and the death of 50-60 million citizens and, as a "long-time optimist," the survival and flourishing of the human race if we colonize other
planets. In the 1976 speech the social Darwinist theme reappears in his citation of the saying, "'The cowards never started and the weaklings died on the way.' And that is what will happen to the human race with respect to going on out into space."

Heinlein's cold-war conservatism and social-darwinist polemics are offset by others' memories of him as a decent, friendly, and generous man who thoughtfully remembered small children's birthdays and helped Philip K. Dick when he was down and out. The tributes range from Silverberg's judicious and professional assessment to Robinson's defensive and frenzied adulation. Most contain at least marginally useful insights or personal recollections. Much remains to be learned about Heinlein and his work, though, and Jack Williamson's closing remarks ring true: "he is surely worthy of a more complete biography than I have seen."

Philip E. Smith II

[Tom Clareson's research for a lengthier than usual Starmont guide devoted to Heinlein will contribute to Williamson's "more complete biography" and will reveal considerable information about RAH's life not previously published, much of it known only to his close friends if at all. NB]

Forgettable Coffee Table Book


Hollywood and the Comics is little more than a coffee table book giving synopses and newspaper review-like ratings for fifty-six big screen and television film adaptations of comic books and strips. At that level the volume can amuse, if only by stirring up memories of matinée serials and old TV series. But David Hofstede's book offers very little beyond a chance to flip through the alphabetically arranged entries and note Batman, Superman, Dick Tracy and other comic book characters in their various filmic incarnations.

The awkward page layout of the entries, the murky and badly reproduced photographs, and the lack of any real critical insight about the subject matter makes the volume less than useful as a study of film adaptation and almost impossible to use as a reference. Perhaps the biggest failing is the lack of any substantial discussion of the comic originals, which makes assessment of the translation from graphics and text to film in any of the adaptations impossible.

Save your money for something a little more worthwhile—like a comic book.

Peter C. Hall
Lloyd Alexander is Hot


This is the second book-length work to appear on this popular and highly-regarded children's author in 1991, the first being Jill P. May's excellent Lloyd Alexander from Twayne, which I reviewed in Newsletter 189. Jacobs wrote his dissertation on Alexander and much of the biographical material in the present volume evidently comes from three days of interviews he conducted in 1975. Tunnell also did a dissertation on Alexander, published by Greenwood as The Prydain Companion in 1989. Both Jacobs and Tunnell conducted further interviews with the author in the late 1980s.

The two 1991 volumes on Alexander have more than enough differences to justify the existence of both. Jill May's book is primarily a critical study, whereas Jacobs and Tunnell are basically interested in bibliography and make few critical judgments. Where the two books most overlap is in their biographical chapters. Jacobs and Tunnell are far more detailed than is May in their discussion of Alexander's early life, and reveal at least one important piece of biographical information not discussed by May, the author's problems with depression at several points in his career. Oddly, the two biographical chapters also differ in some of their information. May says that Alexander grew up in a home with an extensive library, while Jacobs and Tunnell claim the opposite. May states that Alexander's parents did not want him to become an Episcopal priest, whereas Jacobs and Tunnell say that they liked the idea. There are a number of other small differences in factual matters. Since both authors based their biographical accounts on interviews with Alexander himself, however, I have no idea who is the more accurate.

Whereas critical analysis is the center of May's book, and the list of selected secondary sources is brief, a mere five pages, bibliography is the heart of the Jacobs and Tunnell volume, and there are more than eighty pages of it. Besides the expected annotated lists of Alexander's books for adults and children, we have separate lists of his translations (French poetry and Sartre), foreign editions (including, among many others, Arabic, Hebrew, Japanese, and Serbo-Croatian), his short fiction, other writings, illustrations, and unpublished speeches. The bibliography of secondary sources is divided into books and monographs (it lists the May volume as forthcoming), dissertations and studies, book reviews (sub-divided by audience and book), audio-visual media, and miscellaneous sources. Everything is nicely annotated. Jacobs and Tunnell miss a few of the articles to be found in May's bibliography, including her piece "Lloyd Alexander's Truthful Harp" from the Spring 1985
issue of Children's Literature Association Quarterly, and essays by Carol Billman, Perry Nodelman, Marsha DePrez Omdal, John Rowe Townsend, and Jack Zipes, which deal with Alexander in whole or in part, but in general they've done an excellent job of combing the literature. The volume concludes with an appendix on awards, a chronology of the author's life and a detailed index.

For libraries catering exclusively to a general audience, Jill P. May's Lloyd Alexander would be the better purchase. The more extensive (though not complete) bio and bibliographic materials of the Jacobs and Tunnell volume, however, would make it a worthwhile addition to any academic library.

Michael M. Levy

A Brisk, Informed Overview


Unlike many introductory texts on utopia, Utopianism does not explicate the establishing utopian texts. Instead, Kumar has attempted to deal with the whole topic of utopianism. This is a very tall order, as Kumar recognizes. He gives an overview, discussing the history, development, distinctive literary form, and influence of utopianism on social theory, while attempting to avoid the twin perils of overgenerality and diffuseness. Specifically, he discusses five aspects of utopia: its elements, boundaries, history, practice, and impact on the world. In each chapter, he distinguishes utopia from other, often similar, theories and practices, explains the differences, and gives examples.

Kumar locates the origins of utopia in More's 1516 text, though he also acknowledges the influences of "Golden Age" mythology. For him, utopia must "have one foot in reality," while remaining a literary expression rather than a theoretical social tract. He begins by differentiating the mythic movements: down from perfection (the Golden Age), or up from barbarism. To the concept of "progress" implicit in the latter, he shows that Christianity has added "millennialism," which "introduces the elements of time, process and history," and brings urgency and action to the utopian pattern. For Kumar, "utopianism" is a western concept.

While Kumar treats utopian fiction as "a species of science fiction," he deals with few works usually considered SF, and does not say how he defines the term. He mentions Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale, Gearhart's The Wanderground, Perkins's Herland, Le Guin's Always Coming Home, The Eye of the Heron and The Left Hand of Darkness, Piercy's Woman on the Edge of Time, and Wells's The Time Machine and The Island of Dr. Moreau.
Not surprisingly, he spends much more time on Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, Morris's *News from Nowhere*, Wells's *A Modern Utopia*, and Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, using the literature to clarify utopianism, rather than the other way around.

For Kumar, utopianism is simultaneously an active social force and a type of literature. He works hard to demonstrate how these apparently disparate processes combine, and illustrate the results, which include both positive and negative treatments of the utopian concept. While he locates the birth of anti-utopian fiction in 1605, and discusses the ongoing pattern of "imitation, continuation, disputation, refutation" that followed, he feels that the twentieth century has been particularly given to social fiction which he alternately calls dystopian and anti-utopian. (Kumar does not follow Lynn Williams's useful differentiation: dystopian fiction describes a "bad place," a dysfunctional society, while anti-utopian fiction satirizes the very idea of utopia.)

There are a few other problems with this text: Kumar can be careless in literary exposition (his discussion of More's *Utopia* reads as though he takes Ralph Hythloday as a real person); the bibliography is scanty (Marcuse and Marx are mentioned in the text, but not in the bibliography); some fairly important critics and texts inevitably get ignored; his discussion of practical utopias includes Epcot Center, while his discussion of communitarianism in America ignores such contemporary innovators as M. Scott Peck. For a discussion and explication of specific texts, one should consult Ruth Levitas' *The Concept of Utopia* (reviewed in *Newsletter* 192); for a specifically science fictional discussion of utopias, Hoda M. Zaki's *Phoenix Renewed* (Starmont, 1988) is more useful. However, no other work I have seen manages so well to explain the concept of utopia without insisting that the reader be either a student of social theory or intimately familiar with utopian texts. Kumar has kept his promise; *Utopianism* does provide a brisk, informed overview of this important topic.

*Martha A. Bartter*

**Nuclear War Fiction for Youth**


This comprehensive survey of fiction dealing with nuclear war written for young readers is combined with extended meditations on the power of myth to create the hazards and solve the problems of the nuclear age. The two fit uneasily together, since little of the fiction Lenz discusses is convincingly linked to her favorite life-affirming myth, the Gaia hypothesis of James
Lovewlock, or to other myths discussed. Lenz also takes a somewhat mecha­nistic approach to mythology, seeming to suggest that healing myths can simply be prescribed for a sick society. It is not at all clear how this is to be done, especially since very few of the authors she discusses seem to have tried. Her upbeat approach leads her to neglect a more complex examination of the actual myths, most often deeply destructive and disempowering, which flow from the vast bulk of nuclear war fiction aimed at young and old alike.

But the parts are superior to the whole, and the study is an exception­ally conscientious survey of children’s and young adult’s fiction with brief, sensible comments and evaluations which will be extremely useful to any­one—librarian, parent, or scholar—interested in the topic of nuclear war as it relates to young people. She casts her net very widely, even including some works not yet translated into English. If she does not find every last relevant work (notably overlooking Dav Pilkey’s World War Won, Land­mark, 1987), her thoroughness is nevertheless very impressive.

She includes discussion of several adult works as well, sometimes, as with Denis Johnson’s Fiskadoro, suggesting that they may be suitable for mature young readers, and sometimes, as with Arthur Kopit’s The End of the World, discussing them simply because they illustrate her larger philosophi­cal concerns. Her choices sometimes seem arbitrary.

However, in an introductory survey such as this, strict consistency and coherence is not vital. It has many other virtues. Among them are its copi­ous footnotes citing an extremely wide range of scholarship dealing with nuclear war fiction, much of it not cited by her predecessors. Lenz’s notes will be an essential source for any future scholars working in this field.

Her excellent bibliography is made somewhat less useful by being bro­ken down into mini-bibliographies by chapter and topic. Since her footnotes include full bibliographic details, this arrangement is quite unnecessary and renders the bibliography rather unwieldy.

Despite its conscientious thoroughness, I wonder if this book will have many readers. Lenz, like most other scholars writing on nuclear war fiction, has failed to take note of the sharp decline of public concern about the threat posed by nuclear weapons. Even during the time she was writing the book, it was becoming apparent that a world-wide holocaust caused by a nuclear war between the two superpowers was becoming extremely unlikely. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, various dangers connected with nuclear weapons emerge, but not those so commonly detailed in fiction. It is clear that teachers and parents concerned with social issues are turning their at­tention away from the threat of nuclear holocaust toward various ecological problems. The nuclear arms issue peaked and declined so quickly that no
sooner had the number of works published justified a study like Lenz’s than it was rendered almost obsolete. Those interested in studying the apocalyptic imagination in the past decade will nevertheless find Lenz’s book absorbing.

Paul Briens

A Structuralist Analysis of SF


Though I strongly disagree with its critical methodology and differ with more than a few of its conclusions, I must say at the outset that Worlds Apart is the most intelligently organized and effectively argued general study of SF that I have ever read. Carl Malmgren, Associate Professor of English at the University of New Orleans and author of Fictional Space in the Modernist and Postmodernist American Novel, has certainly done his homework in preparing this volume: his range of reference to the primary and secondary literature of American and British SF is nigh encyclopedic (though his treatment of Continental SF, by contrast, tends to focus on a limited canon, consisting mostly of Zamiatin, Lem and the Strugatskys). Moreover, he deploys this erudition with exemplary skill: whether he’s assessing the relative merits of Wells’s and Verne’s definitions of the genre, or engaging contemporary critics like Gary Wolfe and Mark Rose, or analyzing individual works (his examples range from hard-SF stalwarts like Clement’s Mission of Gravity to New Wave polemics such as Russ’s The Female Man, Malmgren maintains a patient critical intelligence, mobilizing his wide-ranging scholarship for the developing exposition of his overall argument.

This argument is intriguing, if not entirely original. The first two chapters lay out the general framework, whose basic ideas are essentially culled from Darko Suvin’s structuralist analyses of the genre. For Malmgren, an “SF world ... contains at least one factor of disjunction [or “estrangement”] from the basic narrative world [i.e. “realism”] created by an actantial [character-based] or topological [setting-based] transformation.” Following Suvin, Malmgren calls this factor of estrangement the SF “novum” and argues that its introduction into the fictional world engages the reader cognitively. The particular cognitive work called for depends upon the type of novum and the mode in which it operates within the story.

According to Malmgren, there are basically only four Science Fiction nova—the alien being, the alternate society, the technological gadget, and the alternate world—and two narrative modes, the extrapolative (which cre-
ates "a fictional novum by logical projection or extension from existing actualities"), and the speculative (which "involves a kind of quantum leap of the imagination"). Both modes must conform, however complexly, to the assumptions of the "scientific world-view" since this ideology "is built into the genre's ontology" and thus provides its necessary limits of possibility. Works which introduce nova at the ideological level—the strategic reversal of known historical facts or scientific laws, the introduction of operational magic, etc.—thus grade into science fantasy, a bastardized genre with its own peculiar logic and significance (unlike Suvin, Malmgren does not seem fundamentally allergic to fantasy in all its forms).

Chapters three and four expand upon this theoretical schema by offering in-depth analyses of SF works paradigmatic of each potential type: Alien Encounter SF, Alternate Society SF, Gadget SF, and Alternate World SF (each considered in both the extrapolative and speculative modes), and Science Fantasy. In these chapters, Malmgren shows himself to be a sensitive and probing reader of a wide range of texts, from the well-known (Clarke's Rendezvous with Rama, Ballard's The Drowned World) to the relatively obscure (Ian Watson's The Martian Inca, Frank Herbert's The Santaroga Barrier). His analysis of Gene Wolfe's Book of the New Sun series as the quintessence of science fantasy, integrating a broad critical animus with a close attention to detail, is nothing short of masterly. Indeed, Malmgren's anatomy of science fantasy (previously published in Science-Fiction Studies 15) is almost certainly the most effective mapping of this notoriously slippery fictional terrain yet offered.

All warranted praise meted, I must admit that I remain fundamentally disappointed with Worlds Apart. My basic complaint is with its methodology. Structuralist analysis tends to operate solely at the synchronic level, delineating a set of formal features and their (putatively) systematic operation; it is a methodology that, in general, scants diachronic development: historical facts are of less importance than the idealized generic system. In the work of Suvin, this formalist bias is corrected by a strong strain of Marxism, which permits attention to the historical evolution of the genre's elements. Malmgren's borrowings from Suvin unfortunately do not extend to this confrontation with history, and as a result his schema seems to exist in a temporal vacuum, a concatenation of features whose origin and development are never accounted for. At one point, Malmgren asserts that "one can construct a valid history of SF around the genre's oscillations between" the poles of extrapolation and speculation, yet this fruitful notion is dropped without further elaboration, a casualty of structuralism's cavalier attitude toward history in general.
Likewise, Malmgren's treatment of the reader's cognitive activity in de­
coding SF texts makes no reference to a real audience. As he admits, quot­
ing Jonathan Culler, the "reader becomes the name of a place where the
various codes can be located: a virtual site" rather than an entity with a
palpable history. His assertions of this "reader"'s hermeneutic strategies,
then, become an analysis of an idealized act of reading rather than a socio­
logically grounded study of reception. I suppose there is nothing inherently
wrong with this sort of critical approach—it certainly has the virtues of clarity
and consistency—but I have to admit my dogged preference for sociohistorical analysis, however messy and unsystematic it may be. With­
out it, one is truly in danger of producing a "World Apart"—a fantasy of
narratological structures and codes whose relevance to SF as an historical
genre is open to doubt.

Rob Latham

A Modern Gothicist

Milazzo, Lee, ed. *Conversations with Joyce Carol Oates.* Jackson: Uni­
versity Press of Mississippi, 1989, xviii + 192 p. $28.95. 0-87805-411-1; $14.95
paper, -412X.

Joyce Carol Oates is one of the most prolific of contemporary writers,
having published almost 90 books since her first novel, *By the North Gate,*
appeared in 1963. These include poetry, novels, collections of stories, plays,
and literary and cultural criticism. Though most of Oates' fiction is essen­
tially realistic, she is very much an American Gothicist in the tradition ext­
tending from Charles Brockden Brown to Flannery O'Connor; her work has
thus been marked by allegorical, quasi-fantastic themes, and the stories in
*Night-Side,* one of her most brilliant collections, are often explicitly fantasy
or horror (though her influences tend more toward Hawthorne and Kafka
than Tolkien and Lovecraft). In much of her work, Oates has shown a fasci­
nation for the revelatory power of violence and aberrant sexuality, a theme
that has also informed much of contemporary dark fantasy—for example, the
work of Clive Barker. In recent novels such as *A Bloodsmoor Romance* (1982) and *Mysteries of Winterthurn* (1984), she has even taken up the task
of writing contemporary versions of Gothic romances.

She is thus a writer with some tangential connection to the genres of
fantasy and horror, and Lee Milazzo's collection of interviews with and ar­
ticles on Oates, gleaned from newspapers and journals and ranging from
1969 to 1989, will therefore be of some interest to scholars of these genres.
These pieces are of variable quality and value, the straight interviews being
much more revealing and making for infinitely more rewarding reading than
the profiles, which often have the superficial tone of lit-chat journales. As might be suggested by her voluminous publications, Oates has a brisk and energetic mind and can speak effortlessly on a wide range of literary and cultural topics. Few of these topics are directly related to fantasy literature, but Oates’ discussion of the daemon of creative energy, her analysis of pathological desire, and her defense of the representation of violence in her work, make the volume useful to students of Gothic themes in contemporary fiction. Moreover, Dates is an obsessive and fascinating talker who is interesting and entertaining in her own right.

This volume is part of Mississippi’s Literary Conversations series, whose hardcover editions are overpriced. Another book in that series published in 1989 that might be of interest to fans and scholars of fantasy literature is Conversations with Robertson Davies, edited by J. Madison Davis.

Rob Latham

Peake for Five to Fifty


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
Thorough Study, Tenuous Connection


The preface points out that this is a “tourist’s guide to the domain of Nonsense on the American Continent.” It is also a discussion of the satiric antecedents and comic manifestations of utopia, covering the range of human expression of desire from the Golden Age of Hesiod to Bo Diddley’s “Diddy Wa Diddy.” Some utopian scholars have long held that the medieval Land of Cockaigne, Schlaffarenland (Lubberland), the Hobo dream of the Big Rock Candy Mountain, and similar descriptions of a land of plenty have a distant relationship with more traditional utopian visions. Such works usually share a common, egalitarian, anti-authoritarian theme, “reversal of the social order” as a path to a better life, especially for the downtrodden. Rammell starts from this premise, takes a long detour through nonsense verse, mumming broadsides, children’s games, voyage literature, carnivals, and comic ballads from many lands to “more recent expressions of similar utopian comedy” in cinema, comic strips, and pop music. It is a fascinating journey on which the reader discovers both pertinent new works and new meanings and connections in some that he has always known, or perhaps forgotten.

Connections are at the heart of Rammell’s carefully plotted voyage. One excellent example traces the theme of food already cooked for the eating from Lucian Samosata through appearances in French and English versions of Cockaigne, the early Irish “Vision of Mac Con Glinne,” Hans Sachs, “Das Schlaffarenland,” Peter Brueghel’s “Land of Cockaigne” painting, *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*, the 19th-century Swedish ballad “Amerikavisan,” and a dozen other diverse songs and tall tales to Harry “Haywire Mac” McClintock’s copyrighted (1929) version of “The Big Rock Candy Mountain,” and the still-available recordings of McClintock, Burl Ives, Tex Ritter, Spike Jones and others, and perhaps the ultimate expression of this idea, Al Capp’s Schmoos. Similarly, several chapters describe the line from the classical Saturnalia that links, among others, the medieval Feast of Fools, the ubiquitous Doctor of the English Hero-Combat folk play, “The World Turned Upside Down” as played by the surrendering British at Yorktown, folktales the world over, the Philadelphia Mummers Parade, and the utopian visions of Thomas Lake Harris and Edward Bellamy.

In his final chapter, “The Great Dream Trees,” Rammell turns to a consideration of the way in which childhood imagination finds its way past what reason dictates to a freer, more pleasant world. In childhood games and
songs, he reminds us, are the remnants of past ritual and custom, all linking abundance with freedom. In a time ever more marked by civilization's inexorable and destructive sweep across the natural world, such dreams remain with us even as adults, and our yearning for the day when Earth's limitless possibilities can again be free for all to enjoy is reflected in their continuing manifestations in music, art, cinema, and, above all, folk activities.

This is a well-written, thoroughly-researched study, well worth reading. Careful footnotes and an excellent bibliography are further evidence of Rammell's high level of scholarship. That said, it is necessary to point out that the book is concerned chiefly with comic fantasy, somewhat with utopian writing, and with science fiction only by a very broad definition of the field.

Arthur O. Lewis

Interview With a Vampire Writer


Anne Rice is a sometimes brilliant writer, inventive and complex enough to justify the critical attention a biography suggests. Katherine Ramsland, though she appreciates her subject and has garnered much information about Anne Rice through extensive interviewing, has not found the critical distance to write a successful biography of Anne Rice.

I know from modest experience how difficult it is to write about living writers. Not only do they keep writing new works, but they read what you write about them. On the one hand, they may take exception to what you say; on the other, you may affect how or what they write. No responsible biographer can feel completely detached from these issues but one can report, analyze, and judge without being unreasonable, cruel, or controlling, and these must be among the aims of the biographer of a living author.

Ramsland does much reporting, some analysis, and absolutely no judging. She reports the events of Rice's life, gleaned from what must have been extensive interviews with Rice, her family, and friends. Most helpful to the scholar are the details about Rice's childhood in New Orleans and about her loss of a child to leukemia. Ramsland also reports, without critical evaluation, Anne Rice's analysis and judgment of her own work. And Ramsland reports in minute detail the plots of all of Rice's fiction. Upon occasion, during the plot summaries, Ramsland analyzes the novels, philosophical themes (she is a professor of philosophy) or their metaphors. She is, in fact, at her best discussing Rice's metaphorical uses of the vampire image. But this biography is strangely and utterly devoid of Ramsland's judgment.
It is neither surprising nor undesirable for interview to lead to conversa­tion and for conversation to lead to friendship, but this movement doesn’t necessitate an abdication of critical faculties. One small indication of the biographer’s difficulty is her constant reference to her subject by her first name, as in “Anne has developed new perceptions of traditional images.” A more serious indication is the refusal to judge Rice’s work in any qualitative way—all works, from an early unpublished manuscript to The Vampire Lestat, are treated as if they are equally successful, their only flaws those identified by Rice herself.

Although this lack of judgment seems caused by Ramsland’s uncritically enthusiastic admiration of Rice, its result is a trivialization of her subject. Rice’s novels, though not perfect, can stand up to rigorous critical scrutiny. It would not lessen their power for their shortcomings to be recognized but a refusal to do so suggests otherwise.

This work is not meant for scholars: its documentation is rather peculiar and there is no “works cited” page or secondary bibliography. Nevertheless, they can skim the volume for biographical material. Fans of Anne Rice will no doubt want this biography, however. Perhaps they won’t be bothered by its naively adulatory tone.

Joan Gordon

Here Come Touchy, Feelies


Although the concept of “virtual reality” has become familiar to millions of SF fans, due to such devices as the “holodeck” on Star Trek’s spaceship Enterprise, it’s still just an interesting, but improbable, concept to most people. However, as this book shows, various aspects of virtual reality are being worked on in a number of different labs all over the world. Each seems to concentrate on a different aspect and, until recently, there has been little communication between them. The author has been instrumental in chang­ing that, by lecturing in the various labs about what he’s seen in others, and by setting up a “virtual world” newsgroup on the electronic networks, so that everyone could share information.

There are many different forms of input device being tested, from the DataGlove (of which the Nintendo version is a pale imitation) through various kinds of helmets, keyboards, body suits, and screens. Most of these are still in development, although some have already been put to practical use, as in architectural design and biochemical research. The challenge is to find an unobtrusive device, one that can be used by the operator without being consciously perceived by him, to give an even greater illusion of reality.
Although work on input devices seems to be widespread and moving rapidly, the real challenge—and one which does not have so many workers—involves the output device. Most output devices to date involve only the sense of vision. The operator may appear to be walking through a building, for instance, but it's only the sight that is affected. Motion is provided by a treadmill, and one can't touch, hear, taste, or smell the appropriate parts of the visualization. This may be the greatest challenge of all: to produce full five-sense, whole-body, output in an unobtrusive manner. Work to date is promising, but not so far along as on input devices.

When input and output workers finally reach their goal, it will really be possible to live in a virtual world as though it were the real thing. The contrast between the "real" and the "virtual" will blur, if not disappear entirely. Rheingold mentions several of the possible effects of this, including the aptly named idea of "teledildonics" and other less exotic applications, such as the use of cyberspace for war games, and teleoperated nanorobots for medical repair. In addition to the challenges mentioned already, substantial increases in computing power, and substantial decreases in cost, must be achieved before widespread use will be economically possible. However, giant strides are being made in these areas as well.

Rheingold's book is an excellent exposition on the development and potential uses of this emerging technology. He treats the technical detail at length, but always in a very readable style. He also addresses some of the sociological issues and strays far enough afield to put it all in perspective, as when he links the cave paintings at Lascaux, the kivas in Arizona, and other such sites to show that they were possibly very early attempts at crude cyberspaces, used as part of a rite of passage to imprint new concepts on the consciousness of the participants.

This is a very readable book on a very important new technology. It's a "must read" for anyone who wants to learn how the world is evolving, and what strange new things we may have to face in the next ten or twenty years.

W. D. Stevens

Monster Conventions


Universal's horror films of the early 1940s were modest achievements, especially when compared with the films produced by Val Lewton at RKO during the same period (Cat People, I Walked With a Zombie, The Seventh
Victim), with Universal's films of the previous decade, from Dracula (1931) to Son of Frankenstein (1939), or with the Universal comedy Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein (1948). Nevertheless, the wartime Universals boasted lively, sometimes touching, scripts; suitably unreal sets (including new versions of Frankenstein's repeatedly-wrecked laboratory); beautiful black-and-white photography; witty references to earlier films in the series; ingenious methods of destroying the monsters at the end of each film and reviving them at the beginning of the next movie (a problem which has plagued horror series ever since, through the Hammer films of the 1960s to the Jason, Freddy and Chucky movies of our time); and a great repertory company of character actors. To resuscitate the declining series, Universal crowded as many monsters and favorite actors as possible into each picture. Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man (1943) featured Bela Lugosi in his only performance as Frankenstein's Monster and Lon Chaney Jr. as the Wolf Man, with Lionel Atwill and the magnificent Maria Ouspenskaya in support. The episodic House of Frankenstein (1944) had five monsters—Boris Karloff as a mad doctor, Chaney as the Wolf Man, John Carradine as Dracula, Glenn Strange as Frankenstein's Monster and J. Carroll Naish as a hunchback, along with Atwill, George Zucco and Sig Rumann. Sadly, Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man proved to be the last nail in the coffin (so to speak) of Lugosi's career in respectable films. Aged sixty and in poor health, unable to tolerate the thirty-five pound weight of the Monster's headpiece, costume and boots, Lugosi was replaced by stuntman Eddie Parker for most of the movie. In a final humiliation of the proud actor, Universal executives belatedly decided that Lugosi's familiar accent made the Monster sound ridiculous and cut all his dialogue from the film.

Riley's latest books contain the same features as his previous volumes on Universal films for MagicImage Filmbooks—a chapter on the production of the film by Gregory William Mank, author of It's Alive (1981), the standard history of the Universal horror classics; dozens of illustrations showing the participants who did not appear on camera as well as the actors and the sets; the shooting script; and the original pressbook. The House volume reproduces a letter from Hollywood's official censor, Joseph Breen, warning Universal against "unnecessary gruesomeness, brutality and horror, in accordance with the requirements of the code" and noting several violent scenes which caused particular concern. Wolf Man was scripted by Curt Siodmak; House by Edward T. Lowe based on a treatment by Siodmak. The Wolf Man script includes Lugosi's lost Monster dialogue. Most libraries will probably choose from this excellent series only the volumes on the most important films, but for the detailed study of Universal horror, all Riley's books are needed.

Michael Klossner
Rucker Bag


*Transreal!* collects Rudy Rucker's poems, short stories, and quasi-autobiographical essays—very much a mixed bag. Stories like “Inertia,” “Inside Out,” and “Probability Pipeline” are based on the high school concept, “Wouldn't It Be Neat If ...,” in which we are treated to long-winded pseudo-scientific explanations that hinge on “quarkonium,” and to gimmicky, smart endings. Italo Calvino has shown in “Night Driver” that symbolic manipulations of mathematics can convey an emotive human content; Rucker can do it, too; the proof is his moving ode, “Kurt Godel.”

Rucker is not hamstrung in the same way when it comes to satire or parody. “Inside Out” in fact begins promisingly: “You might think of Killelellle as a town where every building is a Pizza Hut.” Almost every Rucker story takes place in Killelellle, and what “Bringing in the Sheaves” does to the town is malicious, mean-spirited, and extremely funny. It becomes even funnier if one knows of Rucker's strained relationship with Lynchburg, Va., home of his confr_re Jerry Falwell. Rucker also satirizes SF conventions about aliens adeptly in “The Facts of Life” and “Pacman,” but his best stories interpolate fantasy into historical events. “Storming the Cosmos” (written with Bruce Sterling) gives an alternate account of an expedition to the Tunguska meteor, an account which revises the history of Soviet and American space ventures; “The Jack Kerouac Disembodied School of Poetics” and “The 57th Franz Kafka” are as good as their titles. The marriage proposal Kafka sends to Felice B.'s father is a brilliant piece of writing, showing restraint in the most outrageous of circumstances: how exactly should Kafka explain to the father of his beloved that any worries about an age differential are quite unfounded, since Kafka has a newly-minted golem whose body he will soon possess?

Because many of the essays really want to become stories, Rucker's style doesn't change much from one section of *Transreal!* to another. “Bob's Three Miracles and 'Me,'” “Jerry's Neighbors,” and “Phil Dick Lives, 1983 and 1986” derive their strength from Rucker's twisted understanding of autobiography, in which events are not always distinguishable from hallucinations or from wishes. Of course you will want to know what Dick has been doing lately, where exactly in Campbell County and San Jose he has been appearing to his last disciple. If you can get past some hippy language (“My head was in a very bad place in the spring of '81”), you'll find some good writing: “The Garbage King is Phil's rotting corpse; the Meth Biker is his dry ashes. He is dead, he is glad to be dead, he doesn't know he is dead, you can relax imagining yourself so dead.”
You'll also be happy to discover, as I was, that boredom is an objective quantity, based on information-bits per word. To "What is Cyberpunk?" Rucker answers, "information density." As I understand it, this makes Lawrence Sterne cyberpunk. Although Rucker likes to style himself as cyberpunk's Godfather (and although several of his stories—"Enlightenment Rabies," "Buzz," and "Plastic Letters"—show interest in simulation), his affinities are with Dick and with the reality-distortion techniques described in "A Transrealist Manifesto." Certainly, to divide his work into pre-cyber and post-as he does is merely self-advertisement.

The academic value of the essays, as might be guessed, is low. "The Central Teachings of Mysticism" turns the Buddha into the equivalent of the Easter Bunny, and the satiric veneer barely masks a facile and unexamined allegiance to 'sorta-kinda' mysticism. The more convincing illuminations come from popular culture: "If things tie together in a comic-book, shouldn't they tie together in reality?" That ought to be enough for $15, but I expected more.

Reinhold Kramer

Three Boxtops and a Dime


Zap! is one of the best-produced books about science-fiction toys I've ever seen, rivaling this publisher's volumes by Teruhisa Kitahara or even Pierre Boogaerts's out-of-print classic, Robot (Futuropolis, 1978). Singer has assembled 97 color photos of rayguns and associated items, starting with the rusted out hulk of "an ancient Buck Rogers Disintegrator" and ending with a plastic Radio Shack zapgun that I bought for my nieces a few years ago. (My sister-in-law was very glad to see the battery die.) About half the items date from the '50s, not only because that is the time of the author's childhood (charmingly recalled in his introduction), but because it is the great decade of the raygun. In the early '50s, following on the success of Buck Rogers and his rival Flash Gordon in the funny papers and the Saturday matinee serial, television brought forth the low-budget space adventures of Captain Video, Tom Corbett, and the Space Patrol, and each program in turn generated the toys that kids like Singer and me used to create our own space operas.

The book looks very good, thanks to striking photography by Dixie Knight and the design and production work by Chronicle Press and their Japanese printers: the bright yellow Planet Jet gun jumps right off the cover. With such sharp images, backed up by descriptions and price estimates, Zap! will doubtless become a reference for dealers and hobbyists, but it is less
about buying and selling than, as Singer says in the preface, "about the power of design and imagination."

*Russell Letson*

**Howard Marginilia**


Except for his connection with Robert E. Howard, Clyde Smith would be little remembered outside Brown County, Texas. Smith and Howard were close friends from their teens until a year before Howard's death. Both became writers, Howard as the inventor of Conan and other adventure heroes, Smith most notably as a regional historian. In high school and later, they collaborated on several pieces of fiction. One, reproduced here from Smith's amateur magazine, was perhaps the first published incarnation of the Howard pulp-heroic style: "He jerked his sword from his scabbard and made a lunge at me.... I jerked my pistol from my pocket and fired into his face!"

*Report on a Writing Man* is a miscellany of Smith's writings about Howard—poems, prose sketches, introductions and forewords. It is not so much a book as an archival file between soft covers. One of its most interesting and frustrating components is a set of Smith's biographical notes about his famous friend. Smith declined to be interviewed by the de Camps for their biography of Howard, wanting to write his own; but by the time he died, he had expanded only a few notes into two brief essays, here included. Rusty Burke's carefully researched essay on Smith himself concludes the volume. Overall, we learn a good deal more about Tevis Clyde Smith than about Robert E. Howard. We are left wondering (along with Rusty Burke) how much Smith influenced the direction of Howard's writing.

Though Howard was primarily known as a fantasy/adventure writer, he tried to exploit every pulp market available. The newly assembled "fight magazine" reprints six of his stories from the prizefight pulps of the early 1930s, featuring Sailor Steve Costigan and his white bulldog Mike. Steve is entertained by his own toughness: "They wasn't a ounce of flesh on me that wasn't like iron, and I believe I could of run ten miles at top speed without giving out." Mike can tree a gorilla in a ship's rigging, or break a leopard's neck "with one crunch of his iron jaws." Though the fight action gets as repetitious as the Rocky movies, the violence is relieved by a rough humor simi-
lar to that of Howard’s western stories. Arnold Schwarzenegger would be terrific as Sailor Steve. Mike the bulldog may be harder to cast.

Alan C. Elms

Well-Argued but Dead Wrong


My initial reaction to this book was the feeling of impatient condescension one gets from listening to a painstaking argument emerging from a deeply flawed, even absurd premise. For example: Shakespeare was a great writer, for one can see how his culminating masterpiece *Pericles* triumphantly fuses all the themes foreshadowed in earlier plays. Or in this case: Ballard is a great writer, because his work is “an affirmation of the highest humanistic ideal: the repossession for humankind of authentic and absolute being.” For Stephenson would prove all the critics, oneself included, wrong: Ballard’s work does not represent “a nihilistic or fatalistic preoccupation ... with devolution, decay, dissolution, and entropy” but reveals the author as transcendentalist, the fiction as “heir to the spirit of the prose romance.”

Condescension is certainly inappropriate, for whatever the ultimate defects in Stephenson’s thesis, he argues it with considerable force, and one must in the end take it seriously. His study exhibits a firm grasp of all Ballard’s fiction from “The Violent Noon” to *Running Wild*, economically packaged into five chapters. The study is fired by enthusiasm for its subject and comparatively free of jargon. A chapter oddly positioned as a conclusion reveals that Stephenson has thought usefully about Ballard’s influences and affinities. But this study stands or falls on its vision of Ballard as a cleanser of the doors of perception, through which a realm of timeless absolutes, higher reality and authentic being can be glimpsed.

Although Stephenson provides a mass of evidence for his portrait of Ballard the Transcendentalist from the fiction, I believe that he is entirely wrong. What to my mind denies the validity of Stephenson’s thesis and the book really is the articulation of a thesis—is that the critic, aside from a concluding reference to Ballard as a wry and subtle satirist, finds not a trace of humor in any of the texts he analyzes.

Ballard’s humor is black, an irony initially so guarded and context dependent that it might not seem like humor at all: Vaughan at the end of *Crash* trying to launch himself into the sky by driving off the edge of a flyover; Laing at the beginning of *High-Rise* sitting on his balcony eating a dog, pleased that normality has returned to the building. More recently, however, a mellower
and more overt satirist has emerged: the Professor Tribe of Boston in Hello America who call all their women “Xerox”; the psychiatrist-narrator of Running Wild viewed by his colleagues as a “dangerous maverick, overly prone to lateral thinking.” It is not that Stephenson misses the jokes themselves, but the subversive ironies that the jokes signal. In perhaps the most extreme example of his imperviousness to these ironies, Stephenson reads the end of The Unlimited Dream Company as a paradigm of achieved communal transcendence to the ontological Eden, without noting the fact that the trustworthiness of narrative tends to be undermined by the fact that it is told by a (corporeally) dead psychotic, Blake, for whom sexuality is not so much union with, but absorption of, the Other. Blake’s “survival” at the level of embodied desire allows him to fulfill his potential: as a Charles Manson-like mass-murderer with messianic delusions.

So Stephenson’s book, though in some ways strong, is also a little scary, in its reading of Ballard as an articulator of “our urgent need to evolve from and to transcend our superficial, finite selves and our fierce resistance to doing so.” I resent those “our”s, in that I, like the critics that Stephenson dismisses in a footnote to page 1, read Ballard as moralist in quite a different way: as a writer who warns of the danger, not of the illusory world of the senses, but of the simulated reality with which we surround ourselves and the way it is generated by, and reinforces, our self-destructiveness. Stephenson has enclosed himself in a critical vacuum, blithely noting that he became aware of Brigg’s 1985 Starmont guide to Ballard (which covers the same ground up to 1984) after completing this study. But then other critics have the disconcerting habit of making one ponder the validity and originality of one’s own ideas.

Stephenson might want to consider Rosemary Jackson’s point, in her “Afterward” to Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion, that the modern fantastic on the one hand expresses “dissatisfaction and frustration with a cultural order which deflects or defeats desire” for unity, yet on the other hand “refuse[s] to have recourse to compensatory, transcendental otherworlds.”

Nicholas Ruddick

Everything Went Wrong


In 1987, Terry Gilliam began pre-production of a long-dreamt-of project, The Adventures of Baron Munchausen, soon after his bitter fight with Uni-
versal Studios over the final cut of Brazil (1985). Even that struggle, chronicled by Jack Mathews in The Battle of Brazil (1987), could not have prepared Gilliam for Munchausen, which has become infamous as perhaps the most disaster-prone film production ever. The movie was budgeted at $23,500,000 and finally cost $46,000,000. Feuds between British and local crews at the film’s Italian and Spanish locations, corruption, accidents, administrative and budgetary chaos, lost costumes, bad weather and assorted other calamities slowed filming to a painful crawl. An elephant stampede damaged an elaborate set and expensive equipment. Marlon Brando and Sean Connery refused to join the production, as did several top European film technicians, one of whom explained his decision by saying “I prefer to lose money rather than my reputation.”

A plunge in the value of the dollar drastically increased location costs. Gilliam and the film’s producer, unpredictable and egotistical Thomas Schuhly, were not on speaking terms for most of the shoot. David Puttnam, head of Columbia Pictures and a lukewarm Gilliam supporter, was replaced by a new regime which considered Munchausen a highly undesirable inheritance. Lawyers and accountants from the film’s increasingly frantic completion guarantor and from Lloyd’s of London, the guarantor’s re-insurer, took over the production and threatened to kill the film or fire Gilliam. Lawsuits flew. Toward the end of the nightmare, exhausted and desperate, Gilliam warned, “I will sacrifice myself or anyone else for the movie.” Surprisingly, even the appalling Schuhly and the men from Lloyd’s seem to have been genuinely enthusiastic about Munchausen; they were all, as Yule puts it, “seduced by the Baron.”

After the completed film did mediocre business in Europe, Columbia released it in America with minimal promotion and only a few dozen prints. Several reviewers liked Munchausen and Gilliam claimed that the movie could have found an audience if Columbia had supported it properly. This seems unlikely. Mel Brooks summed up Munchausen’s commercial prospects when he asked Gilliam, “Are you serious? You’re going to make a movie epic about a seventy-five-year-old man and an eight-year-old girl set in the eighteenth century? Give it up, kid!” Ironically, if the erratic Schuhly had not underbudgeted the film in the first place, it would probably never have been made; no studio was prepared to risk much more than $25,000,000 on Munchausen. Fantasy film fans should be grateful that Schuhly’s deviousness or incompetence and Columbia’s miscalculation gave them an enjoyable though flawed film. Against all expectations, Gilliam’s career survived the fiasco.

Yule, who interviewed Gilliam, Schuhly and many other participants, makes the complicated story compulsive reading. Shunning the easy path
of depicting Gilliam as an artist beset by philistines, Yule places some of the blame on Gilliam's perfectionism and obsession with his vision of *Munchausen*. *Losing the Light* sheds light on the complexity and high risk of modern, big-budget filmmaking, covers a crucial episode in the career of one of Hollywood's most interesting directors and belongs in all but the smallest film collections.

*Michael Klossner*
Fiction

Nuclear Winter in Northern Alaska


In Michael Armstrong’s second novel, *Agvig*, Claudia Kendall, an archaeologist specializing in precontact Inuit cultures, is on a dig in Northern Alaska just down the coast from Barrow when nuclear war breaks out. She and her research assistant manage to survive the fallout that comes sweeping across the Arctic Ocean from Siberia, but then must struggle against man and nature to get back to civilization. The research assistant dies, falling through thin ice as they flee a group of hostile Inuit hunters. When Claudia eventually reaches Barrow, she discovers the town in chaos, its white population largely gone or dead, its native population attempting to hold together the town’s infrastructure with only limited success.

The Inuits spare Claudia’s life, in part because she’s a woman and they see women as useful property if they’re willing to work hard. More importantly, however, Claudia, as an archaeologist, actually knows more about traditional Inuit culture than do the natives, most of whom have lost any real sense of cultural identity due to the destructive effects of white civilization. They thus see her as a teacher, someone who can help them regain what they’ve lost.

In many ways *Agvig* is standard, post-holocaust, survivalist fiction and it addresses exactly the questions one expects from that sub-genre. To what extent can and should one attempt to preserve pre-collapse society? Is violence a legitimate tool in a world where all the old rules have failed? Must women become entirely dependent upon their men folk to survive in such a world? A short story version of this novel previously appeared in Janet Morris’ anthology *After War* (1985) and, as one would expect from a story with those roots, *Agvig*’s answers to the above questions are very much in line with the kind of right-wing, hard-ass feminism that Morris usually espouses.

What raises *Agvig* above the level of most survivalist fiction, however, is the caliber of the writing, the strong character development, and, of course, the book’s well-realized, exotic setting. Armstrong, who lives in Anchorage, knows a fair amount about both Northern Alaska and Inuit culture. This is not a novel that will appeal to everyone, but it shows considerable talent. Michael Armstrong has the potential to become a major voice in the genre.

*Michael M. Levy*
Believable Contact Novel


The title tells any reader this is a woman's book, but the reader must note the book jacket's "a science fiction novel" to realize it is not one of the *Clan of the Cave Bear's* ilk.

It is truly a woman's book, by a woman writer who has written fantasy novels, the latest, *Daughter of the Bear King.* Its major protagonists are women—Nia of the Iron People, and Lixia, the field worker from an exploration ship 120 years out of Earth making its first planetary visit. And the problem on which the plot is based is one commonly thought a particular feminine concern—What is the proper behavior?

In *A Woman of the Iron People,* the problem of proper behavior is one of ethics, not etiquette. (But isn't etiquette applied ethics?). Here the ethics ask, how should cultures meet? Particularly, how should a culture with superior technology and one with less advanced technology meet?

Earth's scientists came with the directive: "The problem when dealing with a less advanced species is karma. We don't want to hurt them. Our species has done a lot of harm over time.

"Be very careful if you encounter people whose technology is not equal to ours. Remember all the cultures destroyed ... Remember the other hominids which are no longer with us ... Go very slowly. Think about what you are doing."

Those aboard the orbiting exploration ship, though in agreement on the importance of this directive, differ on how to interpret it. The field workers on planet have their own agenda and interpretation; the radioed instructions they receive affect both. The natives react to the field workers variously; only Lixia, of the eight on planet, makes a contact with potential for continuation.

This is as much due to the adaptability and independence of Nia and a few other natives as to Lixia. The natives, too, have to handle the question of what is proper behavior with strangers with such differences in social structure and attitudes.

The actions resulting from the various attempts to find solutions are low-key ones. Talk replaces violence and does so without delaying the development of the story. The character of the half-dozen men and women involved influences what happens.

The jacket blurbs quote half a dozen well-known authors who call the book "non-predictable ... can't-stop-reading it", say it has "delightful glints of humor", and decide it is "about ... reconciliation: an art, a process, an intricate and never-ending dance." Surprisingly, I agree with all of this; so will you.
Amasson has given us a readable and, unlike much otherwise excellent science-fiction, a believable story. Even the last touch is probable: the scientists realize that Earth has changed so much in the century they have been gone that, when they return a century hence, they are going to be alien to their own society.

Is this feminist science-fiction? I wouldn’t know, but it’s a woman’s book a woman will enjoy.

Paula M. Strain

Loony-tunes Abattoir


A few pages into Mongster, while reading a detailed description of a thirteen year old boy being brutally beaten, you have to decide how you’re going to take the novel. Boyll’s stated inspiration is Stephen King, and the kid hero is one of King’s patented super-competent adolescents. On the other hand, much of the novel seems to echo the gleeful redneck carnage of Joe R. Lansdale, and it’s hard to take even the most outrageous brutality seriously. You have the feeling that these characters are likely to un-mangle themselves, like Wile E. Coyote, and dive into the action again.

Mongster’s action is centered around the hunt for a stolen Egyptian sarcophagus. Along the way, the boy learns some magic words to animate dead things, such as the not-quite-human mummy—which is a good thing since he’s being chased and abused by every drunken scum in small-town Indiana. Lotsa bashing, slashing, etc.

Boyll writes with energy and ingenuity. He’s also very funny sometimes, though you may be appalled to see what you can laugh at. In all, if you’re the kind of person who thinks Tales from the Crypt would be more fun if it weren’t so stiff and inhibited, this is your kind of book.

Joe Sanders

Collaborative Novel


Once, long ago, Ruwenda was a vast lake with a number of islands on which cities were built. Now only ruins remain on this high, swampy plateau, landlocked between Labornok and Var. The population of this kingdom consists of humans and a diverse group of tribes collectively known as the Folk. A long stable period, chiefly the result of magical intervention by
the Archimage (or White Lady) is coming to an end as her powers decline. When the queen bears triplets, the White Lady names them, gives each a talisman, predicting a "fearsome destiny" for them. Years later, as they approach maturity, the king of Labornok, assisted by the wizard Haramis, invades Ruwenda, overruns the citadel and kills the king. The three princesses escape, aided by the White Lady and three of the Folk. Each finds that she must recover a magical talisman, which, when united with the other two, will restore the balance of nature in Ruwenda. Alternate chapters follow them through the course of their quests. Not only must they struggle against natural obstacles, but against those Haramis sets in their paths as he attempts to gain power over both kingdoms.

Of course, when authors with the reputation of these three set out on a collaborative venture, the reader has the highest expectations. In this case those expectations are certainly not frustrated. Each of the three princesses is distinctively drawn, each a well rounded, interesting character. The adventures they encounter are highly imaginative and suitable to the development of the individual princess. The over-all plot, though somewhat conventional, is well paced and effectively holds the reader’s attention. The suggestions that lost technology may be regarded as magical add a thoughtful note to an otherwise not very profound book.

Highly recommended for all readers of fantasy, especially those fascinated by quest motifs.

Robert Reilly

Varied Repertoire


Brennert’s eight stories, the longest, at 44 pages, “Sea Change,” and the shortest, at eight pages, “Steel,” were written for a variety of venues. These include the CBS *Twilight Zone*, a mixed author anthology and an impressive list of magazines from *Pulphouse* to *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. They span over ten years of writing, from 1976 to 1989, and, as might be expected, their quality varies from good to excellent. Brennert has mastered the short-story form, where his slices of reality (or unreality) burst like bitter-sweet filled candy on the intellectual palate. The title story, “Her Pilgrim Soul,” shows the effects of being a *Twilight Zone* episode, with its amalgam of science and fantastic moralism. Nevertheless, it is an effective short-story, complete with twists of plot and character, and it takes on a pressing social issue, child abuse and its long-term effects. “Healer,” in the
tradition of narratives which link a past and present character, also moralizes around the interrogation of modern media evangelists like Jim Baker and Jimmy Swaggart.

While all of the stories are good, some are surprising for their insight. “Queen of the Magic Kingdom” explores the abandonment felt by an elderly woman who escapes to her only available fantasy, Disneyland’s Magic Kingdom. Her pathetic joy at this banal, ineffectual and commercialized fantasy is undone by its ultimate failure as an escape. The pathos of this “Queen” is underscored as the reader realizes that society has rendered her incapable of more self-fulfilling fantasies and the only one she has closes after dark.

Another story, “The Third Sex,” erupts in the middle of the anthology. It begins with the Freudian primal-scene—the young child seeing his parents at sex—and sets the reader up for a predictable set of adolescent problems, an expectation quickly frustrated by the child’s realization that s/he is not like Mommy, even though s/he is treated as a girl, but not like Daddy either. The child, named Patricia or Pat, is told at age eighteen that s/he is genetically neither male nor female; furthermore, s/he’s not the only child like this and s/he can be easily turned into a female, if s/he so chooses. Unfortunately, she will be sterile and incapable of sexual arousal because there is “no tissue of the same sensitivity as a penis or a clitoris.” S/he declines the operation and goes in search of others. The resolution of his/her dilemma is not what elevates this piece of fiction. Brennert’s virtuosity unfolds as if one reads this character of “the third sex” as a person we all, male and female, strive to create out of the material of separate physiological sex and social gender. Indeed, several of the statements show unusual insight into the problems of gender and difference. Pat’s conversations with the wife of his oldest male friend result in this statement:

All my life I’d felt like a member of a different race, human but not-human, similar but separate. And now I realized that this was, to some degree, how men and women viewed each other at times—like members of a different species entirely.

This leads to Pat’s discovery of his/her mission as a bridge to help men and women understand each other once again.

Brennert has demonstrated a varied repertoire in this anthology, whetting one’s appetite for more of his work.

Janice M. Bogstad
Fascinating but Gloomy


Brown has created a future in which travel between stars is possible by entering the nada-continuum: Enginemen push the ships through it while in sensory deprivation tanks, where drug taking is accepted and young children are operated on to make them telepathic. Within this he has written these short stories, each of which (with one exception) explore aspects of this world. All the stories are excellently written but tend to suffer from the fact that his characters find themselves in unpleasant situations, sometimes without a glimmer of hope. In two stories, (the title story “The Time-Lapsed Man” and “Pithecanthropus Blues”) the Engineman involved has developed a syndrome as a result of his job for which there is no cure. Although the tales are fascinating they make for gloomy reading.

Most of these stories have previously appeared in *Interzone* between 1987 and 1989 and it is very unusual for an author to have a collection as his first published book. He is, however, a newcomer to be watched carefully for future developments. Perhaps there is a novel in the near future.

Pauline Morgan

A Gifted New Writer


In the wash of new books that appears every year, I missed out on Michael Cadnum’s debut, *Nightlight*. If it’s anywhere near as good as this new novel, I wish I hadn’t.

Cadnum is that rarity: a literate writer with a number of poetry collections to his credit and ties to the literary community who uses his considerable gifts as a stylist to make his prose more immediate, rather than obscure. His characterizations are superb, his prose flashes with brilliance at times but it never detracts from the story itself, and his work contains images that range from the lyric to the extremely disturbing, both of which the reader retains at the close of the book with startling clarity.

*Sleepwalker* is at once that set piece of the horror genre—the cursed archaeological site (this time in York, England)—and so much more. Cadnum presents the archaeological lore with a surety that’s at once inform-
ing and unobtrusive. His characters are fully-fleshed, especially American archaeologist David Lowry, trying to come to terms with his wife’s death and the strange twisted mind of Peter Chambers and his haunted past. But even the bit players come across as flesh and blood, particularly Lowry’s enigmatic love interest, Irene Saarni.

While the story does seem to owe somewhat to The Mummy of B-film fame, what we have here in the discovery of the Skeldergate “bog man” and the subsequent hauntings around the dig is not so much a modernized version of the classic story, but a more mature one. Cadnum is a gifted writer and the field is lucky to have him working in it.

Charles de Lint


As an addendum to the above review, I’d like to thank Gordon Van Gelder at St. Martin’s for running down a copy of Cadnum’s first novel for me and to let you all know that Sleepwalker isn’t a fluke.

This one tells of a restaurant critic who goes looking for his cousin, Leonard Lewis. Lewis has been missing for a couple of months; he also has a hobby of photographing cemeteries at night and, worse still, he ... ah, but I’ll let you find that out for yourself. What I will tell you is that the fine writing and insights that make his new novel such a pleasure, are all present here as well.

With all the books that flood the bookstores each and every month, I know just how hard it is to keep up with what’s current, little say find the time to track down older titles, but in the case of Cadnum I have only two words for you: do it.

Charles de Lint

Surrealistic Nightmare


Here Campbell has experimented by moving from his normal clear exposition of character and setting to produce a superb surrealistic nightmare. Although written in the third person, everything is highly subjective; all scenes and events are reported in an impressionistic, untrustworthy fashion; the result is terrifying.
The protagonist is a writer, no longer young, probably named Simon Mottershead, though he has trouble remembering things, including his name. He is certainly paranoid, possibly a manic-depressive, perhaps even schizophrenic; at any rate, he has difficulty coping with normal life. Waking in the morning, he is initially fazed by the sight of robed figures (curtains) and an open horizontal box (wardrobe). Odd things seem to happen to him all the time. He feels threatened by men in bus queues who speak gibberish. He doesn’t know where he’s going or why. He buys a copy of his own book in a second-hand bookshop and it, Cadenza, begins with the opening words of Needing Ghosts. Everybody he meets seems to be rude or indifferent towards him. Is he really a writer? Has he really written this book? Is he mad? Is everybody mad? (Yes, others have made use of this material before Campbell, of course, but that doesn’t matter.) It’s almost like real life, but just a little worse and much more frightening.

This is not a subject or a style which would stretch to fill a novel without risking tedium; nor would it be sufficiently impressive crammed into a short story. But here, as a novella, it works brilliantly. The effect is helped by interior illustrations by Jamel Akib.

Chris Morgan

Unambitious Sequel


In Lisa Cantrell’s well-received first novel, The Manse, an evil infestation turned a small North Carolina town’s Halloween Spooktacular into a House of Horrors, literally so, killing thirty-seven. In this unambitious sequel, the survivors of the Manse carnage come back to face the same rapacious visitation.

Two years have passed; the burnt ruins of the Manse have been cleared to make way for condominiums. But the evil has remained. Those who survived the House of Horrors seem to know it; they are a pathetic lot, some dysfunctional, all haunted by memories of that night and by the beckoning voices of their dead friends and lovers.

As Halloween approaches, the evil force pervades the town; the construction project for the condos is beset by unaccountable accidents, equipment failures, cave-ins, and the like; corpses of those who lost their lives in the Manse tragedy are found missing from open graves. Even newcomers Sonny O’Hara and Jennifer Clark—he, a trouble-shooter for the construction company, she, an interior decorator—find themselves persecuted by disturbingly analytical, even vengeful dreams.
These events proceed apace, interleaved with shifts in viewpoints as the author delves into the background of Sonny and his growing relationship with Jennifer (scenes that make some of the book's most interesting reading), building up to Halloween night when the ghostly Manse phases back into this world and opens its doors for business, room-by-haunted-room.

Despite her skill in giving the novel moments of chilling intensity, her well-wrought characterizations, and her ear for (refreshingly accurate) rural North Carolina dialogue, Cantrell fails to make *Torments* do more than leave the reader with a few memorable scenes. The impact of the book is weakened by patches of overwriting and intrusive interior monologue used to heighten suspense; on a deeper level, the relationship between the psychosocial themes (Sonny's past, for example) and the horror itself is never realized. More distressing, however, is the ending, which comes off rushed and emotionally flat.

In sum, *Torments* makes a good choice for whetting one's appetite during those first cool days of October, but it won't satisfy on the 31st.

*Barry H. Reynolds*

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**Engaging Fantasy**


A second volume concerned with the mishaps of several young wizards and their friends, *Chernevog,* like *Russalka* before it and *Yvegenie* after it, is set in a forest near Kiev, in pre-technology Russia. The first title, *Russalka,* begins on a low note, with the betrayal of Pyetr, a happy-go-lucky hanger-on to rich men's sons. He embroils the town jinx, fifteen year old Sasha, in his schemes, and the central pair set off on questionable adventures in a haunted woods. That title ends with a minor triumph of Sasha, Pyetr and a young woman, Eveshka, over other evil wizards. So the second novel begins on a high note and for the first few chapters, we are treated to a view of Pyetr, now twenty-six, his young wife, Eveshka and Sasha, now eighteen, living together in a comparatively lavish, enlarged version of Eveshka's old family cabin. All three live well off the use of limited magic but lead an otherwise normal peasant life with occasional visits from old mythological friends like Mishigi, a "leshy" or tree-spirit. They also have their 'dog-like' familiar, Babi, to guard Pyetr and keep rats out of the food supplies. If all was well, of course, there would be no story and we soon find out that all is not as it should be.
One persistent theme in this series of books is based on the old saying, “be careful what you wish for,” but power is added to the ominous side of wishes because Eveshka, her now-dead father Uulamets, her mother, Draga, Sasha, and the young man who seemed to be the enemy of all of them, Chernevog, are all wizards. With even a wizard’s best wishes, it seems, go a lot of unpredictable side-effects that may adversely affect the wizard or the target of his benevolence. Sasha, always insecure about happiness, either provokes or discovers evil afoot. Before he can truly get a handle on it, Eveshka steals off in the night, and he and Pyetr are off once more, as in Russalka, where she was actually a kind of malevolent wood sprite, chasing after her. In addition to providing us with another glimpse of many creatures from Russian folktale and myth, Cherryh here furthers the story of Eveshka’s father and how his daughter became a Russalka in the first place.

It is a very sordid story of old witch-women seducing younger men with the promise of wizards’ knowledge, and culminates in a confrontation between Eveshka’s mother, Draga, who claims to have just wanted her daughter back before the birth of her and Pyetr’s child, Chernevog, whom one is never sure about, and Sasha. The narrative is written to obscure until the end who is on what side, and whom poor Sasha, Eveshka and Pyetr can trust, in preparation for another dramatic conclusion, which I will leave up to the author. Although one can predict some of the failures and triumphs of the three, they are engaging characters in a picturesque, alternative universe, and their story has the kind of logic to it that makes Cherryh’s fantasy more palatable than most. Those in the mood for a fantasy series with a non-European flavor will like this book and its companions.

**Janice M. Bogstad**

**Persistent Social Ills**


Nineteen authors present their unique visions of sex with aliens, be they the aliens that make up the opposite sex or non-humans, terrestrial or otherwise. Datlow, in her introduction, and William Gibson, who has written a forward entitled “Strange Attractions,” remind us that all the stories are self-reflexive in offering metaphors or simple explorations of the alien-ness of men to women and women to men, perhaps the alien-ness of sex itself. Some of the tales are earthy, others lyrical; all hold a tinge of sadness/horror as they consider persistent social ills centered around physiological sex and social gender. Despite its thematic center, this anthology shows an amazing diversity of talent, encompassing writers at various career stages and
from all types of writing. One does not expect to see Connie Willis and Louis Shiner stories in the same anthology, yet it is a credit to Datlow's vision that she can create a space for such disparity to flower. She also offers her own short assessments of the authors and space for them to comment on the stories, often adding to their poignancy.

The stories are technically and philosophically gripping, from Leigh Kennedy's "Her Furry Face," where a human becomes increasingly attracted to the orangutan he is teaching to sign, to Pat Murphy's "Love and Sex Among the Invertebrates," where animated metal sculptures of dinosaurs are left to inherit an Earth devastated by nuclear war. The talents of Ellison, Niven, Farmer, Bruce McAllister, Ed Bryant, Geoff Ryman, Louis Shiner, and Pat Cadigan, Matheson, Jetter, Tiptree, Roberta Lannes and Michaela Roessner are also represented; it is difficult to choose from all nineteen a few to represent its depth. Nevertheless, four especially caught my attention.

"War Bride," by Rich Wilber, shows the sense of self-preservation which will allow a person to abandon his/her fellows to enslavement or death and go off with aliens, whether they be Vietnamese women with American men or, as in this story, a human male with an alien female. Wilber's tale, inspired by the Filipino situation in World War II, is essentially a horrible reversal of Tiptree's "The Women Men Don't See."

Tuttle's "Husbands" is relentless in reworking the question of female separatism. Like Russ's "When It Changed," she postulates a world where men have disappeared and speculates that building a female-only society might be impossible because of some inherent human need to force humans into categories, especially the two of male and female. It's a chilling look at the nature of difference and illuminates both genders' collusion in the misunderstanding.

"Incubus" is, at first glance, almost too saccharine for this anthology. Industrial waste and alien mold invade two humans who have been previously unable to sustain a human relationship inside their marriage. The molds allow them to create a fantasy world that they attach to one another. Yet when one considers the difficulties we often have leaving space in our own fantasies for those of others, even our partners, the story becomes more comforting than chilling.

The most arresting story, "All My Darling Daughters," exposes both sides of sexual repression. Willis has overturned a large rock that, even in the late twentieth century, hides the morass of human sexuality when it is used as a privilege of authority. Her villains in this story are fathers with strict, authoritarian control over their daughters who use this control to molest them. She introduces a creature even more defenseless than a young daughter as the perfect object of perverted male desire—a victim who cannot ever resist. She
shows how the concept of sex as control or power can be introduced as part of the male maturation process and also how someone might attempt to substitute a weaker victim for oneself. Also, it is to recognize the frightening collusion that lets us all, male and female, tolerate victimization of the weak in order to escape suffering ourselves.*

The stories in Datlow’s collection provide fruitful departures for discussion because none offers a one-dimensional view of human sexuality. They do not reassure us all is well nor do they close off debate as to whether all could be better, but they relentlessly illuminate chilling situations which we would often like to keep hidden.

Janice M. Bogstad

*[Even though the cause of victimization differs, recall Le Guin’s “Those Who Walk Away from Omelas”. BH/ed.]

**Mixed Forms of Humor**


This is a high comedy which can’t decide what it wants to be. It is first a satire, full of all the cliches of a bad science fiction movie. This goes well with Fenn’s style of cynical character comedy. He creates a crude universe full of likeable sociopaths; a place where one can’t be sure if the cute little kid with the dog is going to survive the attempt to befriend the monster. It is also a silly gag and pun comedy, which doesn’t quite mix with the rest.

The hero is an out of work soap actor, whose town is under attack by a Really Ugly Thing from Mars. He almost makes it to being an attractive protagonist, but he is a little too self-interested to be liked directly, but not self-interested enough to be liked for his flaws. Perhaps he will develop into something better with future novels.

The real problem comes when Fenn sacrifices what he has going for a gag or pun. One might think a mix of silliness might sweeten the cynicism a bit, but unfortunately it has the opposite effect. It gives an even more callous feel to the story, which sacrifices characters for a joke. He sacrifices some aspects of the plot to these jokes as well.

Fenn acknowledges Craig Shaw Gardener—author of wonderfully silly, quirky humor—for the “jokes.” Perhaps Gardner was too much of an influence on him. I suspect Fenn will develop a more cohesive style as he goes on, and if so, the series is worth watching.

Thom Dunn
Not Dark, Just Gloomy


Colin McMahon is an ordinary guy (what did you expect?), who only wants to draw ads with his partner for their ad agency. Colin, though, begins having violent dreams about dark druidic ceremonies and evil monsters. In his dreams, he lives in Celtic Ireland, with fierce monsters, blood offerings and Cromm Cruaich, an evil deity. As the dreams become more real to Colin, a mysterious wanderer appears and demands he go to Ireland for answers before it is too late. Colin unwillingly heads to Ireland to search for his dream's locations, and discovers Cromm lives again. Only he can stop the evil! Will he survive? Will he stamp out the vile presence forever, save the beautiful Megan and the villagers? And on, and on.

Although this sounds like a typical plot, several things make it a good read. The first is Colin himself. He's cynical, hates to be bothered, and has a quirky sense of humor. He gives Cromm and his minions new names, such as "Rocky and friends," each time they come up in conversation. He also could not care less about saving the world, which doesn't improve his mood any. Cromm's minions are also winners, spreading mayhem, dismemberment and eviscerations wherever they go. Some of the book's scenes are violent, but nothing compared to what's on at the local theater. Colin's alter ego (also named Colin) is courageous, brave, fearless, and polite. In fact, he's everything the modern Colin is not, which is a pleasant contrast. The story also moves pretty well, with poor Colin one step ahead of Cromm until the end. The villains are also clear cut—either misshapen monsters or smooth, oily humans.

Flint has a deft touch for dark rooms, caves, decaying mounds and other unsavory places. He makes you feel as if you were there. Other places are sometimes sketchy, but still blend well with the book's characters. So, this fantasy isn't so dark, just occasionally gloomy. This isn't an essential read, but it's still pretty good.

* Ben Herrin

Fast-paced Adventure Plus More


The interwoven conspiracy and treachery support a complex of intrigues that make Flynn's *In the Country of the Blind* a fascinating read. Set mainly in Denver and the nearby Colorado high country, the scene shifts to both of
the American seaboards as hidden and open pursuers/pursued engage in bloody, sometimes cruel, and often insane attempts to protect the confidentiality of a Secret: in the nineteenth century, Charles Babbage's primitive computers and programming apparatus were developed to such a high level that secret societies were able to compile and analyze social/political/economic data. They were thus able to spot trends in human socio-politico-economic development. These people were, in effect, able to forecast the future successfully—within limits. The facts that more than one secret society of conspirators was at work, and that only some of these societies knew of the existence of other such societies make for the intrigue. These groups are also divided into good—or at least non-threatening—societies and bad—or manipulative and terrorist—societies. Explosions, sudden deaths (called "deletions" by one faction), and disappearances mark the book's movement.

All of this could make for a fast-paced adventure story that would merit a quick read and leave little in the mind. Two elements in it lend this novel a sense of solidity that similar stories—Asimov's Foundation pieces, for instance—sometimes lack. First, there's a good deal of discussion among the characters about the moral propriety of the manipulations, their philosophical implications, and indeed whether their manipulations have any effect at all. The discussions consider questions about whether the manipulations prove that human history can be materialistically determined or simply be statistically forecast.

In addition, the mix of characters and personal situations is such that the novel flows in a future that grew out of our own time. For instance, though not much attention is called to them, the romantic pairings are not conventional today, but they are not unusual either.

Alexander Butrym

More Editing Needed


Given a tall, dark, silver-eyed, handsome hero with a cool elegant manner, there are three possibilities—he's the misunderstood lead in a late Victorian romance, the central character of a modern vampire novel, or the hero/villain of *Black Sun Rising*, the Neocount of Merenth, Gerald Tarrant. Add the thickset swordsman-priest, Damien Kilcannon Vryce; the charming Loremaster Ciani; and her assistant Sienzi, who yearns for her innate ability to sense fae. The first volume of the new fantasy trilogy, *Coldfire*, reports their adventures on Erna.
Erna is a world colonized by man but enough different from Earth that man has had to adapt. Fae, rakh, xandu and other unfamiliar things or creatures appear on the pages. Some, such as the tidal currents of energy called fae, are partially explained as one reads on. Others, shown us as brief incidents, are never explained. The story develops slowly as the reader builds up a picture from the bits of information Friedman lets drop. Friedman is no Hal Clement: her use of the planetary differences she describes is superficial, rather than rigorous. She writes fantasy, not science-fiction.

The story begins with the ravishment of Ciani's memories in a sudden, mysterious attack that destroyed home and business. The search for thieves and memories becomes a hunt for the Master of Lema who ordered the theft. The hero/villain and the priest, who entered the story with a mission to destroy the heresy Tarrant represents, must cooperate, however unwillingly, to achieve the destruction of the power-mad Master. The book ends with the incompatible duo sailing off together to the deathlands of Novatlantis to confront another evil which "corrupts a whole environment."

Friedman holds one's attention, though I find Tarrant extravagantly overdrawn, and the heroine uninteresting. More careful editing in the next volume will catch the infelicities of style that are so frequent in this. In a world where even the simplest machinery is unreliable and the weapons are sword and knife, to hear a character say, "have a clear shot at our enemy," or, "we are standing on a time-bomb," clangs in the ear. Common twentieth-century expressions, such as, "don't get me wrong," or, "that makes two of us," grate when the same characters also say, "excellent, your lordship," and swear with, "your vulkin' pilot forgot."

Paula M. Strain

**Edge of Seat Thriller**


Stephen Gallagher's latest novel also has a character investigating the death of someone close to her. This time it's Lucy Ashdown, trying to find the hit-and-run killer of her sister Christine. There's a vague supernatural element—which admittedly could be merely the character's perception—definitely a mystery and the feeling of a suspense novel, but what *Rain* is really about is obsession.

It's not just Lucy's obsession in finding out what happened to her sister. Her search takes her on a journey from her countryside origins and the truckstops where she's been trying to track down a witness to London's West End where she begins to repeat her sister's life, mistakes and all. There's also
a policeman named Joe Lucas who has an obsession with bringing Lucy back home to her father—a fixation that grows increasingly uncomfortable as the book progresses.

Gallagher is equally at home in delineating the dark paths of a person’s soul as in writing a high action scene—both of which appear in equal abundance in *Rain*. The novel features some of his most accomplished writing to date, is an edge of the seat thriller—I read it all in one sitting because I couldn’t put it down—and has, upon my finishing it, immediately leapt up into my list for the year’s top ten novels.

He reminds me of an English James Ellroy. Like Ellroy, his prose is tough, yet evocative; he won’t shy away from the brutal and unpleasant, but neither will he dwell on it; and most importantly, his work has real heart.

*Charles de Lint*

**Keystone Cliffhangers**


If you like tacky old movies, you will like Craig Shaw Gardner’s Cineverse Cycle. These books aren’t even serious enough to be called satire. The Cineverse is a downright silly place where everything works exactly like a B-movie. Each world is a different kind of movie (i.e. Western, Musical, Gangster, Beach Party, Swashbuckler). The key to this universe is a little plastic toy—a Captain Crusader decoder ring—which once could be found in cereal boxes. Things are bad in the Cineverse, however. “The Change” is coming. It is breaking down the old cliches and causing movies to be not as good as they used to be. They need an outside hero real quick, and Roger Gordon is just the man. He still has all seven of his Captain Crusader decoder rings.

One great thing about this particular nonsense world is that the author doesn’t have to create the strange and silly rules of the universe. The rules were created long ago by Hollywood. This gives Gardener a little more leeway in creating suspense. Since we readers already know the cliches, he doesn’t have to set up every twist or solution ahead of time. If he does need
to explain something, he even has a Hollywood precedent for that. As side-kick "Big Louie" points out, it's part of a sidekick's job to move the plot along.

The whole series is set up in constant cliffhanger segments, like an old serial. Unfortunately, the climax can't quite rise above the tension of all the little cliffhangers, so it isn't a fully satisfying end. That was always the problem with the old serials, so perhaps it isn't inappropriate for this Keystone chase of a series.

*Thom Dunn*

[See Newsletter #176 for earlier review of *Slaves of the Volcano God*. BH/ed.]

**Ice Age Alaska**


The last few years have seen a great improvement in the sophistication of popular fiction about prehistoric humans, notably in the novels of Jean M. Auel (beginning with *Clan of the Cave Bear*, 1980) and Elizabeth Marshall Thomas (*Reindeer Moon*, 1987, and *The Animal Wife*, 1990) and the film *Quest for Fire* (1981). Auel has been the most popular writer in the field and Thomas has attracted the best critical reception, but the Gears, a husband-and-wife archeologist team, are making their mark with a series of novels about the Paleo-Indians, the first humans in the Western Hemisphere. It is interesting that of the four authors prominent in this subgenre, three (all but W. Michael Gear) are women.

In Alaska at the end of the last Ice Age the People, divided into clans and factions ruled by rival Elders and Dreamers, are trapped between the war-like Others and the ice sheets. In these tiny, hard-pressed groups, individual tragedies such as unrequited love, an abusive marriage or sibling rivalry can tear apart the whole society. Two brothers compete for leadership of the People and the love of the heroine. One turns to war, the other to Dreaming. Advanced Dreamers can contact each other over great distances; the greatest Dreamer foretells the future of the American Indians, including the pyramid-building civilizations of Mexico. Women are important as hunters and Dreamers and sometimes as warriors and leaders. The Gears draw a vivid and plausible picture of a tough, courageous, intelligent and sophisticated people leading lives of almost unimaginable hardship.
Unlike Thomas, Auel and the Gears are only adequate novelists, but they are important as popularizers of reliable knowledge about Stone Age technology and reasonable conjectures about Stone Age lifestyles. The Gears write better than Auel, but Auel pulled off the coup of describing humans whose mental capabilities were far different from those of modern people—in some respects inferior, in other ways superior. The People of the Wolf are much more advanced than Auel’s Neanderthals. It is a welcome development to portray very ancient people as sophisticated rather than “primitive”, but sometimes the People seem too modern. Some of these Indians are ready to go on Meet the Press, with lines like “I’m trying to give you enough information so you can decide quickly that your best interests are in supporting me”.

Scenes in which Dreamers “call” animals to sacrifice themselves to the needs of their human “brothers” throw light on the spiritual connection that exists between hunters and their game, but in general the supernatural Dreaming powers shared by several characters tend to undercut the harsh realism of the rest of the novel. The People would appear even more heroic if they found the way through the ice barrier and led the peopling of what was then truly a New World, without the aid of a mental Superman who sniffs geyser fumes. People of the Wolf is also needlessly long and complicated, with too many characters and too much dialogue. These must be the least laconic Indians in fiction.

However, such problems have not kept People of the Wind from becoming a paperback bestseller. This epic is recommended as a grim, convincing portrait of an almost unknown time and place. Followed by a sequel, People of the Fire (1991), with another book in the series expected.

Michael Klossner

Imaginative Debut


This is a first novel by a young British writer and is an imaginative debut. Eleanor Knight is a spoilt bitch. She has only one concern, herself. Then during a party she finds herself transported to another world. Here it is cold and dark and dangerous. At first she thinks some joke is being played on her but gradually she begins to understand that not only is there no way back for her, but that the people who summoned her are in grave danger. Eleanor is forced to grow up. An inauspicious beginning, perhaps, and it is some while before Eleanor’s presence in this fantasy world becomes at all necessary or clear. The first half of the book could have well done without her.
The fantasy world is something different. It is in stasis. Time is unchanging. There is no night or day, no changing of the seasons. At the centre is the Sun God Lycias whose high priest Lefevre maintains the stasis. For those who live at the centre it is always daylight and always summer. Away from the centre it becomes perpetually dark. On a small island near the boundary live the Cavers, followers of the Moon Goddess Astret. They have summoned Eleanor in the hope that this will somehow break the stasis. Beyond the island is the impenetrable boundary through which nothing can pass, not even the giant birds that act as willing mounts for the Cavers.

To survive, the Cavers must raid the Sun God’s domain for food. In one such raid, Fosca are used against them. Fosca are warped, flying creatures which kill to feed. In this raid, Phinian Blythe’s pregnant wife is killed by one of the Fosca. In his despair Blythe begins to question the actions of the Sun God and then to discover that the so-called paradise he lives in is far from that for most people. He throws in his hand with the Cavers.

The book is action-packed and the characters reasonably well drawn. There are a few flaws in the plot but these can generally be overlooked when the novel is considered as a whole.

*Marginal Novel*


This first novel concerns a type of space cowboy called an Outbanker, whose ship can only function within the Cygni System. While on patrol, Ian MacKenzie discovers a ravaged ship with an important device aboard—and a contingent of killer robots. At the same time, his ship’s computer, Sheila, becomes sentient. His ex-girlfriend Svetla happens along, so they work to retrieve the device. When detected by Rashadian (Hindu) terrorists, they flee, but they accidentally leave the Cygni System and become stranded in Ian’s ship. However, Sheila figures out that space/time is an illusion and teleports them to the planet Red Cliff.

Ian is told to confess to a charge of collaboration so that this new technology can be kept secret. However, he finds out that people are lying to him, and through a legal loophole manages to gain the aid of the planet’s prefect. A raid returns the kidnapped Svetla and Sheila to him, and the three are taken to a place where they can try to replicate the “space jump.” The prefect cracks down on the Rashadian sympathizers in the government, Ian and Svetla face up to their neuroses, some terrorists attack (and die), and Ian ends up as the military governor of Red Cliff.
This is, quite simply, a mediocre and uninspired book, filled with clichés and inconsistencies. For one thing, you know there’s something wrong when the most interesting character is a computer. All the humans are dull, especially Ian, who is given to bouts of introspection and metaphysics. The portrayal of a “Nihonese” (Japanese) judge is particularly bad; he says “Ah, so” once (probably an unintentional slip, but what kind of editorial decision left it in?) and barks and growls many of his lines. The terrorists are stock players, and the traitorous colonel is obviously a villain from her first lines.

Whereas the inhabitants of Cygni are supposed to be East Europeans, Arabs, and the like, only one of the principals (Svetla) belongs to this group; the rest are Anglo-American, Japanese, western European, or “Libonian” (black, but God knows what their nationality is supposed to be; the one time a Libonese man puts on an accent, it sounds like it’s supposed to be Jamaican.) Worse, the Dutch are blamed for trying to overthrow the government and for sympathizing with the Rashadians—but they are not directly introduced as an organized group. Although some of the villains have Dutch surnames, there is only one early reference—“wooden shoes”—to suggest that they might be an organized force. Certainly Ian never thinks to himself, “Oh, that rotten Dutch colonel, trying to screw me over like that! All those Dutch are alike.”

The story would have been more compelling and original if it had focused on the problems that a teleporting ship would cause, rather than on the stale terrorist stuff and the mental problems of Ian and Svetla (which aren’t very realistic anyway.) As it stands, it is a marginal work.

Aviva Rothschild

A Hackwork Orange


One-Eyed Jacks is an undistinguished fix-up of fifteen stories continuing a “mosaic-novel” series written by eight members of The Wild Cards Consortium. This collective composing farm of sixteen sharecropper writers includes editor George R.R. Martin and assistant editor Melinda Snodgrass, both of whom also occasionally contribute stories. Epic Comics publishes an associated Wild Cards Illustrated series of “deluxe-format comic books” with “all new stories” by the same writers.

The first volume in this series of shared-world novels appeared in 1987 and was reviewed favorably for its re-writing of mid-century history with prankish comic-book energy. In this alternative universe an alien virus deployed after World War II created two kinds of super heroes, Aces and Jok-
ers. Their adventures were related in chapters by Howard Waldrop, Roger Zelazny, Walter Jon Williams, Melinda Snodgrass, George R.R. Martin, Victor Mil_n, Lewis Shiner, Edward Bryant and Leanne Harper, Stephen Leigh, and John J. Miller.

Five of the eleven writers from the first volume contributed one story each to One-Eyed Jacks; in addition, William Wu and Chris Claremont wrote one story each; the remaining eight stories were all written by Walton Simons. In volume one the humorous pastiches of recent American history, populated and punctuated by Dick Tracy-esque characters and some witty dialogue, helped offset the inevitable comic-book power-fantasy elements. By volume eight not much is left but hack-fantasy, gross-out scenes of bump-and-grind sex, killing, disfigurement, vomiting, drugs, mostly featuring adolescent toughs like Blaise, the "jumper" grandson of the alien Tachyon (one of the characters who's been around since volume one). Blaise can switch bodies, control minds, and, jealous of grandpa's power and girlfriend ("the completely naked Cody") seeks to wreak grand-Oedipal vengeance.

The stories exploit urban decay and violence; the writing is average hackwork—it gets the job done fast, and there's little stylistic flair to distinguish the work of the various contributors. Even more volumes are in production, alas.

Philip E. Smith  II

Beginning of a Series?


Elven lords rule the world, having subjugated humans by their special magic powers. They kill, at birth, children born of elven-human unions, before the children can wield their inherited elven magic, and the lords attempt to identify and destroy any full humans who show signs of having human mind-magic. In the world is a third, mostly unsuspected magic as well, that of the shape-shifting reclusive dragon clans. Both elves and dragons are immigrants from other, less favorable worlds, but only the elves are greedy competitors for wealth and power. The dragons quietly observe both humans and elves, and a few mischievous ones spread the legend of a half-blood Elvenbane who will be the downfall of the elves.

That is the situation as the book opens. One presumes it is the creation of Andre Norton, the "grand dame of science fiction," who lives in Florida. The tale that develops with the birth, growing up with dragons, and teen-age adventures of the red-haired Shana, daughter of the elven Lord Dyran and a human concubine, is largely, one believes, the work of Mercedes Lackey,
a newer writer of fantasy who lives in Oklahoma, because it lacks the trademark touches found in Norton’s writing.

Lackey had one obvious problem. Too many characters and events must be part of the story, so that characters are unevenly portrayed; sometimes they are people we believe in, at other times just shadow puppets moving one-dimensionally. This is occasionally true even of the heroine. Only Alara, the dragon clan shaman, and the boy dragon Kamen are consistently interesting personalities.

Action is slow in the first two-thirds of the book, because it occurs over fifteen-to-seventeen years. The last hundred pages pull the various threads together in action that occurs more briskly, over only a few weeks. The climaxing action, the defeat of Lord Dyran and the elven treaty with the half-bloods, is dealt with so briefly on the last five pages that one guesses the authors had reached the wordage limit given them and had to stop writing forthwith. Although loose ends seem tied, the abrupt ending suggests Shana and the half-bloods’ struggle to end elven domination may reappear in later books, by the same two authors, or by Norton and another new fantasy writer.

*The Elvenbane* is an entertaining fantasy which has interesting details and aspects that are unique creations of the book’s two authors. It does not, however, represent the best work of either of them. Joint authorship is not easily achieved when the authors are separated by a thousand or so miles, even though they have electronic assistance at maintaining contact. Nor can joint authorship be entirely successful when the junior author is simultaneously working on her own book for another publisher (*Winds of Fate*, DAW Books, November 1991).

Larry Dixon did the interior illustrations (he also illustrated Lackey’s new book) Boris Vallejo did the cover. Both did dragon portraits that look as if they had been drawn from life.

Paula M. Strain

No Sorcery, Just Sword


Andrew Offutt’s *Deathknight* takes place on an Earth stripped of her natural resources, a world lacking the fossil fuels and other materials necessary to support an advanced society. It is a time when men fight not with powerful guns, planes, and “smart” bombs but with swords and knives, while riding mutant “dargs.” Like the Samurai warriors of an earlier time, it falls on the shoulders of the knights of the Order Most Old, commonly called
death-knights, to preserve the fragile peace between city-states. Falc of Risskor is such a deathknight, and he unexpectedly discovers that his fellow knights are being ambushed and slain with the hope of destroying the Order Most Old. Together with Jinnery, a young woman who persists in accompanying him, Falc struggles to uncover the plot before the Order is destroyed.

Offutt has done a wonderful job with this post-apocalyptic novel, for Deathknights world is painted with passion—it is fully-realized, with characters that ring true. The Order Most Old is a complex organization that demands and expects much from its knights, not a comic book adaptation of the Knights of the Round Table. May the sequel be as good. Highly recommended.

Rick Osborn

Flawed but Entertaining


This is the final volume of the trilogy which began with Dreams of Flesh and Sand. Set in an unspecified, but not distant, future, this series postulates that evolving nanotechnology will allow the merging of hardware Artificial Intelligences (AI) with human brains, to create a new breed of intelligence. Although referred to somewhat disparagingly as "meatmatrices", especially in the earlier volumes, these constructs have awesome potential. In fact, they evolve into god-like beings, if not actual gods.

Technically, this volume can be read without benefit of having read the previous books. Practically, it's difficult to keep up with events and people even if one has read the entire series. The story involves a multi-sided war between a number of different parties, not all of whom are completely aware of what's going on. As the plot twists mount, and the reader is whirled through a number of pseudo-realities manipulated by the god-like entities in a setting of Hindu mythology, confusion is rampant.

The climax, which seems hurried and awkward, attempts to bring all the plot threads together but the jargon employed just serves to obfuscate the message.

In spite of this, it's an entertaining book. It should be read, though, in conjunction with—and immediately after—the first two volumes.

W. D. Stevens
Pursued By Chaos


As the Prologue to this fifth novel in the Bifrost Guardians series tells, it all began when the Norse god Freyr took the nearly-dead American, Al Larson, from a Vietnam battlefield and locked him into an elvish body in a world where sword and spell replace rifle and grenade as weapons of choice. Al, as Allerum, soon finds he is a pawn of the gods that had summoned him. Trapped in an unfamiliar land, Allerum allies himself with Taziar, a master thief, and Silme, a Dragonrank sorceress. Faced with situations even he never could have imagined, Allerum quickly becomes entangled in the endless struggle to maintain the balance of Chaos and Law. The scales continue to tip dangerously toward the side of Chaos until, halfway through this sequel, Allerum finds himself and his companions in his own New York City shortly before he had enlisted. Thus, it is in the twentieth century that the three have their final confrontation with the Chaos force that has pursued them through time.

Mickey Zucker Reichert has introduced an extremely wide range of characters, each embodying some trait in which a reader can delight. Whether it be the amusing harlequin antics of the master thief or the mothering quality possessed by Silme, each has a unique style and flavor. Both major and minor characters also suffer some flaw that adds depth to their respective personalities. Allerum, for example, is especially prone to quick flashes of temper which he is hardpressed to control. Only through sheer strength of will is he able to keep his wits about him during his frequent flashbacks to the Vietnam horror.

However, as wonderful as the characters are, they are trapped in a severely limiting plot. The sequences in the alternate world lack energy, causing it to be difficult to maintain interest in the happenings. Also, since I haven't read the earlier four novels, I can't be sure, but I even suspect the events may be repetitious. However, as the plot shifts to New York City, this drab novel suddenly springs to life. The characters begin to live up to their potential as they react to an environment completely alien to them. Even Allerum, as Al once again, has a difficult time readjusting. This third quarter is thus full of life, humor, and pathos.

Disappointingly, though, all the generated excitement fizzles out as the novel concludes with a *deus ex machina* quality: a Norse god appears to counsel the characters one last time, and there's the impression that Al, Silme, and Taziar will get along fine in their new-found home, New York City. Neither the one exciting portion nor the cast of creative characters is enough to save *By Chaos Cursed* from its problematic plot.

*Joseph Jeremias*
The Apocalypse According to Robbins


I've always considered Tom Robbins in three ways: as a kinder, gentler, and less elliptical version of Thomas Pynchon (not necessarily a bad thing); as someone who flirted with SF themes (especially in his first novel, *Another Roadside Attraction*); and as someone who wrote great beginnings and middles, but had difficulty ending his four previous novels. In *Skinny Legs*, Robbins disposes of two of those preconceptions and totally deflects the other. Pynchon could not possibly have written this novel, because it relies on a fantasy concept, fully and joyfully developed; and the ending is, for once in Robbins's oeuvre, both satisfying and inevitable.

One of the nice things about reviewing a Robbins novel is that one can reveal a good deal of the plot without really spoiling the read for anyone; getting there, with Robbins, is most of the fun, even if one knows the general destination. *Skinny Legs* is primarily the story of one Ellen Cherry, niece of media evangelist Buddy Winkler, and her lover Boomer, a good ole boy with surprising (to us northern liberal stereotypers) capacity for sensitivity. Uncle Buddy becomes a Falwell-style sensation in his advocacy of a right-wing Israeli government for his own reasons, having interpreted the Old Testament as predicting that the establishment of a new temple in Jerusalem will signal the battle of Armageddon and the subsequent (radiation-scarred) victory of the Lord. Ellen and Boomer have their problems, because of Ellen's talent as an artist, both in paint and as a belly dancer for a New York coffee house run by a renegade Israeli and a renegade Palestinian who love each other as human beings.

The fantasy element comes about from a sexual/love encounter between Ellen and Boomer that, thanks to a talisman from the court of the Old Testament Jezebel (badly treated by the prophets), gives life, in a Utah wasteland, to a discarded bean can and dessert spoon, who make a trek to New York to preserve their creatrix from harm.

I've said quite enough about the plot. Though Robbins runs the usual risk of being too fey, and the unaccustomed risk of being too politically engaged, he successfully negotiates the tightrope and always brings the reader back to the gently satiric tone that infuses all of his work. The ending is unpredictable (as usual) until it happens, but, unusually, this novel achieves genuine closure. Robbins fans will judge that statement in context; for those to whom *Skinny Legs* will be their introduction, it won't matter except as an assurance. I still think *Another Roadside Attraction*, despite the
letdown ending, is Robbins's most imaginative work, but, in Ellen Cherry, *Skinny Legs* has by far his best protagonist since Sissy Hankshaw of *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*. Though he comes close to easy parody in the character of Buddy Winkler, both Boomer and the Israeli/Palestinian odd couple of Isaac and Ishmael transcend stereotypes, and the paranoid fantasy of evangelical Christianity seeking to touch off an atomic war is treated with so much humor that one feels like sending a copy of the book to one's favorite (?) televangelist. It wouldn't do any good.

In sum, recommended to anyone who has not yet sampled the joys of Robbins's peculiar appeal. It is out-and-out fantasy, grounded in magical realism. I will reread the section in which the tomato can and the dessert spoon take refuge in the basement of St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York many times. Buy it; the Bantam paperback is inevitable.

*Bill Collins*

**Exciting Adventure**


Firmly in the tradition of the swashbuckling adventure tale on the high seas, *Chase the Morning* tells the archetypal fantasy of a man of worldly success but inner emptiness who is called to a life-transforming adventure in the beyond. The story is set in contemporary London (the Core) with forays into a fringe area where sailing vessels and *vodoun* are still in use—(the Rim). The first-person narrator gets involved with weird happenings down by the wharves and winds up defending the Core from invasion/infiltration by the spirit of a corrupt Spanish colonial slaveowner who has distorted the worship of the *loas* for his own ends.

The pacing of action and style is breathless, alternating between adventure sections, which predominate, and somewhat relaxed intervals in which the narrator pauses for a night's rest and doubts what he has just experienced, or has long quasi-philosophical reflections. The climax is reached in a horrific *vodoun* ceremony in 17th-century Haiti which, in its own inner climax, alternates between Haiti and a business conference in London, so that the two are seen to be different faces of the same conflict.

The characterization is appropriately stereotyped for this genre of adventure tale—the good are good, the evil are evil, and the only ambiguous character morally is a cross between a wizard and a slimy old street scum, who does in fact turn out to be good. A stab is made at feminist consciousness in the figure of a woman pirate who is the outstanding swords-person of the crew (and who sleeps "on both sides of the bed," in her euphemistic phrase
for bisexuality.) This does not prevent Rohan from placing the narrator's secretary as the helpless kidnap victim, complete with torn dress, providing the motivation for the narrator to join the chase. This confusion regarding female characters is undoubtedly a symptom of the transitional stage we are in, as seen in the recent _Robin Hood_ film's Maid Marion, where writers want to be both liberated yet clinging to traditional formulaic types.

One other element—which Chase shares with the horror genre _en Gros—is the (admittedly) twisted _vodoun_ ceremony. This lengthy scene is graphic and effective; it is explained that the rituals are being misused, and the main character, through his self-sacrifice, turns the whole rite around and defeats the evil character. However, certain esoteric writers (Nicholas Roerich and the anonymous author of _Meditations on the Tarot_, for example) caution against the use of such rituals in literature, even when they are ultimately reversed as here. Jung, on the other hand, states that enlightenment is attained not by envisioning beings of light, but by rendering Shadow elements conscious. I am in no position to judge—_caveat lector._

_Chase the Morning_ is an exciting read, well-crafted, blends the "real" and beyond believably, and should bring Errol Flynn back from the Rim to play in the film version.

_Ignore This Book_


Rosenberg's macho story about mercenary soldiers on some distant planet is at best ordinary; at its worst moments it's boring. The plot revolves around the attempts of a family of mercenaries to save face for its youngest member, whose cowardice takes the form of freezing in the face of enemy fire. No matter that the definition of cowardice is simplistic; the real problem is that heroism is defined as pre-adolescent mindless obedience to orders, an obedience that's insensitive to moral considerations as well as to personal safety.

The action is often bogged down in Rosenberg's over-attention to detail in describing military procedure. The loads of circumstantial detail in this story are included in glossaries, tables of organization of military units, and descriptions of field strategy that are irrelevant to the story. Readers do not need all the administrative detail; there are less awkward expository devices than the glossary at the back of the book.

This novel isn't recommended for any purpose.

_Alexander Butrym_
Modern Monsters


Ever since Universal Studios released *The Wolf Man* in 1941, the curse of the pentagram has symbolized to horror fans both the basic duality of the human condition and the ability to displace that condition, transforming into something completely unknown and far more monstrous. Now, forty-nine years later, Jeffrey Sackett gives us a smart, pithy werewolf tale for the 90’s that retains the mood of the Chaney film through use of the customary band of Gypsies, the Power of the full moon, and plenty of wolfsbane to ward off evil.

But Sackett’s Janos Kaldy is far more pitiable than Chaney’s Larry Talbot, for Kaldy has borne his curse for over three thousand years, his memory long ago collapsed under the burden of time. Thus not even knowing who he is, Kaldy and his Gypsy companions are captured by the White Homeland Party, a neofascist sect wishing to attain Hitler’s dream of racial purity by creating their own indestructible army of monsters.

The novel develops from a number of view points, following at once the progress of Frederick Bracher and chemist Petra Loewenstein as they search for the chemical source of lycanthropy with which to create a society of “lycanvolk,” and the attempts of Kaldy to recover his memories through hypnotic regression. Some of the hypnosis sections slow the novel’s otherwise steady pacing, such as when Kaldy meets a Carpathian nobleman “with power over life and death” (Dracula) and “a great wizard in the lands of Britannia” (Myrddden or “Merlin”). However, the story of Kaldy’s imprisonment in the Bastille at the hands of Nostradamus and his liberation at the end of the French Revolution is quite appealing, as are the tales of the true identity of the female werewolf, Claudia, and finally of Kaldy’s own connection with the Zoroastrian priesthood.

An entertaining read for the horror alone, Sackett’s novel approaches the level of what John Kuehl calls “metafiction” by incorporating contemporary social issues with “historical fantasy.” Thus, the author presents us with a picture of modern humankind which is ultimately much more fiendish than anything surviving in legend or cultural history.

Highly recommended.

Joseph M. Dudley
Perfunctory Writing


Several of John Saul’s novels have exploited the theme of the evil or dangerous child. *Second Child* features a beautiful, charismatic and evil teen-ager. Teri McGiver burns down her house, killing her mother and stepfather, in order to move in with her (very wealthy) father, his second wife and their daughter. Once in Secret Cove, the resort town in Maine where her father’s family spends its summers, she embarks on a complicated plot to have her half-sister committed to an insane asylum. The novel offers no reasons for her behavior: she is simply evil.

Melissa Holloway, Teri’s foil, seems doomed. Shy and awkward, she lives amid the emotional extremes of a doting father and a coldly nasty mother who hates her for being less than perfect. The mother, predictably, becomes enamored of the beautiful and socially adept Teri. To add to poor Melissa’s woes, the Holloway house is haunted by the ghost of a shy young woman named D’Arcy who was wronged by her wealthy lover a century before. D’Arcy plans to use Melissa as part of her desire for revenge against the rich of Secret Cove. She takes over Melissa’s mind during her mother’s crueller punishments. When Teri learns of Melissa’s belief in D’Arcy’s existence, the success of her plans seems assured.

The plot, essentially Cinderella meets Iago, offers few surprises or pleasures. The twin schemes of Teri and D’Arcy converge in a predictable Happy Ending. The undeveloped and generally uninteresting characters exhibit capitalized qualities like Teri’s Ambition and the mother’s Cruelty. Saul even writes in a housekeeper to represent Loyalty and her son Friendship. The violence is subdued. As for Melissa, Saul provides an epilogue with the not surprising news that she matures into a beautiful, clever and noble young woman. The writing is almost perfunctory, giving the impression of an author already thinking about his next annual novel. A return to his over-mined field of the young who are evil for no apparent reason other than evil’s usefulness to move a plot along, this is one of Saul’s weaker efforts.

Dennis M. Kratz

Another Queen


*The Summer Queen*, Joan D. Vinge’s sequel to *The Snow Queen* (1980) and *World’s End* (1984), continues the story of the beautiful planet Tiamat,
whose only valuable export is the water of life, a liquid distilled from the blood of the mers that grants eternal youth—immortality. Moon, the Summer Queen of Tiamat, is relieved when the Black Gate closes and the Hegemony can no longer make it to Tiamat. For a hundred years, the Gate will be closed, and in that time, her goal is to make her planet technologically independent so she can break the cycle of exploitation, and to that end she uses the sibyl network (human computer ports linked somehow to a vast, all-knowing computer). She also bans all hunting of the mers; only Moon knows that the mers are linked to the sibyl network, and their destruction will result in the destruction of galactic civilization.

But on another planet, BZ Gundhalinu, once Moon’s lover, discovers plasma drive, making faster-than-light travel possible. Suddenly, and years too soon, the Hegemony will be returning to Tiamat to obtain the water of life, not realizing that the decimated mer population is directly linked to the distressing errors in the sibyl network—and not caring that the mers are intelligent beings. Moon stops her technological advancement—alienating her people—and pours all her effort into saving the mers. Meanwhile, the sibyl network, in a desperate attempt to save itself, calls to life its brilliant creator, Vanamoinen, and puts him in the body of psychotic Reede Kullervo, but two factions vie for control of Reeve. Reede and BZ both feel called to Tiamat—BZ because he loves Moon, and Reede because something pulls him. The sibyl mind, however, has plans for everybody, though it doesn’t work out quite the way She had anticipated.

The Summer Queen is impressively large, impressively detailed, and hard to put down, with the layered texture of The Snow Queen. This is not a stand-alone book; it’s necessary to read the beginning one first (but not necessarily World’s End; the events in that book are covered in detail in this one. Vinge’s writing is a little intrusive at times; she tends to ellipses and strives for Significance (with a capital S) too often. The biggest problem with this novel is its lack of clear protagonist. The first book was clearly Moon’s story; World’s End was BZ’s. This new story is Moon’s, BZ’s, and Reede’s, and also tells the story of about six other characters. Too much happens to too many different people for this book to have the pointed impact of the first tale, but that doesn’t make it any less of an achievement. If you loved The Snow Queen, you’ll love seeing all the old characters in all the old haunts.

Karen Hellekson
Murder in New Mexico


Although he's written everything from sea stories to mysteries and from space opera to science fictional comedy of manners, Walter Jon Williams is best known for such action packed, borderline cyberpunk novels as *Hardwired* (1986) and *Voice of the Whirlwind* (1987). He's clearly one of the more versatile and talented writers in our genre. Such versatility can cause problems, however, because book reviewers sometimes get testy when they aren't sure how to categorize an author's latest work. This may account for the generally mixed reviews that *Days of Atonement*, Williams's well-done new novel, has heretofore received in a number of other venues.

Although the book contains its share of action, it's relatively sedate when compared to the author's other novels. There's some interesting scientific extrapolation, but it isn't presented in a particularly spectacular manner. Memorable outer space scenery is entirely lacking. None of the novel's characters is a wetware-augmented mobster or cyberspace cowboy. Rather, *Days of Atonement* is set in the run-down, twenty-first century town of Atocha, New Mexico, and features as its protagonist a middle-aged, slightly overweight small-town police chief named Loren Hawn. Deeply religious, but not particularly likable, Hawn possesses a violent temper. Obsessed with the concept of community and the need to protect Atocha from the outside world, he is not above beating up those he considers a danger to his town. Further, Hawn finds no conflict between his religious beliefs and the fact that he regularly accepts bribes from a number of local business concerns.

As the novel opens, the police chief is particularly edgy because his town is in the middle of an economic crisis. The local copper mine, Atocha's biggest employer, has just gone under, pollution is so bad that everyone drinks bottled water, and ATL, a recently-built high-tech research laboratory which is enormously important to the tax base, is conducting potentially dangerous, top-secret experiments at the edge of town. With a budget crunch forcing cutbacks in the police department, Hawn and his men are hard pressed to cope with even the most routine sorts of small town crime, and their resources are stretched to the limit when they receive notification that big-time drug dealers are heading for Atocha. That same day a car crashes into the police station and a man stumbles out, his bullet-riddled body dying in Loren Hawn's arms. A murder in Atocha, New Mexico is a rare occurrence in any case, but this crime is something special because the victim is an exact duplicate of Randal Dudenhof, a local resident whose dead body Hawn had pulled from a car wreck some twenty years earlier.
Hawn is convinced that ATL and its sinister head security officer, William Patience, are somehow involved in the murder. A number of problems hinder his investigation from the first, including a lack of evidence, the mayor of Atocha’s desire to smooth things over with ATL, and Hawn’s own temper, which has sparked an inquiry into his competence to remain in office.

Is the dead man Randal Dudenhof? Well, yes and no. Williams’s explanation of the mystery is perhaps the weakest part of the book. Although hardly stupid, Hawn is not a well-educated man, and most readers of Days of Atonement will figure out the nature of the faulty scientific experiment that led to the murder long before the police chief does. Two things make this novel well worth reading, however. The first is Loren Hawn himself. Williams’s portrait of a small-town police officer is both complex and sympathetic. Hawn’s contradictory mixture of honest piety and thoughtless violence, deep-seated corruption and absolute loyalty is entirely believable. Also fascinating, in all its outworn, art-deco gaudiness, is the town of Atocha itself. Williams has breathed life into the place and made it very real indeed.

Although a bit on the long side and flawed by a somewhat weak ending, Walter Jon Williams’s Days of Atonement is an excellent piece of science fiction. Less spectacular than his novels in the cyberpunk vein, it is nonetheless well worth reading and in some ways is Williams’s best book to date.

Know Your Mind


A thoroughly absorbing post-nuclear holocaust novel, Wren’s Gift also probes the human spirit in its most edifying as well as its less attractive aspects. While this is definitely a novel with an agenda, attacking fundamentalist and literalist interpretations of the Bible, it is also an irresistible narrative. Many kinds of love and hate, brutality and kindness, all find their place in the struggle for survival. The chronicle is set forth in the form of a series of stories told by Mary Hope, an elderly woman at the time of its telling. She survived the social and nuclear Armageddon as a young woman in her twenties. She tells her story to Stephen, a young protege, who shares a farmstead with her and fewer than twenty other adults and children.

The narrative revolves around the farmstead, Armana, originally owned by Rachel, Mary’s friend. Rachel was elderly when she saved Mary’s life, many decades before the “now” of Stephen and his family. Mary narrates
her experiences of the year before and the first few decades after a worldwide nuclear war, focusing specifically on her life with Rachel and their collective mission to save thousands of books so that the knowledge of the past will not be lost. Mary has lived most of her life since at Armana, holding together the farm and protecting the books, now in a vault. The narrative moves back and forth in time as Mary narrates her past and describes the events of her present.

For eleven years, Rachel lives with her and they endure the chaos that precedes the war, the nuclear winter that follows and solitary subsistence farming. Here she also spends her last days, making sure the chronicle is written as well as appreciated. Her life with Rachel is briefly interrupted when they save a young man, Luke, from death. He wanders into their neighborhood in a fevered delirium and stays to persuade Mary to accompany him back to his home. He comes from a small, dogmatically Christian community called The Ark, which is presided over by a patriarch and has few fertile women.

Mary’s life with the Arkites ends after a few months because of Rachel. The Patriarch of the Ark cannot tolerate Mary’s unorthodoxy or Rachel’s knowledge and, when Rachel comes seeking help after an injury, he refuses to help her and also drives Mary away. Mary tells this story as part of her battle for the minds of Armana’s children and under the onslaught of another generation of literalist, dogmatic Christianity led by Luke’s daughter, Miriam. In order to save the children and the books, Mary must discredit Miriam’s brand of simplistic Christianity.

The story of the oppressive Arkites is used to warn Stephen and the rest of the Armana community, which includes the few survivors of the Ark, of the dangers of dogmatic belief, especially in literalist interpretations of the Bible. In fact, this entire text is a masterful warning against the oversimplification of the human condition sanctioned by most literalist or fundamentalist religions, as she notes when making her main argument: “You don’t know your god, because you don’t know the incredible dimensions and richness of the universe you say you believe your god created. That’s what I want the children to understand! You’re worried about their souls? I’m worried about their minds. Human beings have been given astounding capacities to create, to understand, to love, and if we don’t use them, if we lock ourselves in cages of dogma, then we are no longer human, we are nothing more than talking animals capable of cruelty.” That she also tells a good story does not undermine Wren’s pedantic intent.

Janice M. Bogstad
Young Adult:

Comprehensive YA Guide


Beacham's publications resemble similar works issued by Salem Press, a publisher best known (or reviled) for its *Masterplots* series, and have some similarities to Gale Research's *Contemporary Literary Criticism* series. They are targeted almost exclusively at the junior/senior high school, community college and public library market. Earlier Beacham publications include *Beacham's Popular Fiction in America: 1950-1986*, 4 vols., 1986, *Popular World Fiction 1900-Present*, 4 vols., 1987, with these sets supplemented by *Beacham's Popular Fiction 1991 Update*, 2 vols., 1991, with presumably more updates to follow.

The first three volumes of the YA set "cover mainstream novels and short story collections, historical novels, classics, biographies, autobiographies, and nonfiction; volume 4 covers science fiction, adventure novels, myths, epics, and mysteries; volume 5 covers fantasy and gothic novels. Periodically, individual volumes will be added to the series to pick up new titles or cover old titles that could not be included here" (from the preface).

Each of the two volumes within our scope discusses 82 books, with many of the 50+ contributors, mostly college instructors, writing for both volumes. The articles are arranged by title. Supplementary material in each volume includes a list of the Newbery winners and Honor Books that are the subject of articles, a theme index, a glossary of 47 literary terms, and a cumulative author/title index.

Each article is identically structured: type of work (novels mostly, some plays), other works for young adults by the author, a biographical sketch, an overview of the book, discussions of the significance of the book's setting, its themes and characters, literary qualities, topics for class discussion or papers, a list of related titles (especially for series books), an annotated secondary bibliography, and a category called "asocial sensitivity." The editors reassure us in the preface that "none of the contributors advocates censorship, and that, indeed, we oppose it," but notes also that "contributors ... have been encouraged to ferret out even remote possibilities of potentially disturbing materials," which as written gives me pause, since it resembles the sort of self-imposed mandates congressional committees investigating com-
munism or unamerican activities claimed to have. But given the propensity of groups from the religious and political right and left to impose their smelly little orthodoxies on others, it probably makes sense to alert teachers and libraries to "disturbing" or "controversial" matters in the books.

The selection of titles for works like this is always a problem. The editors say their original list included more than 4000 titles, pared to a thousand, and then to about 400 (roughly 80 per volume), relying on the suggestions of librarians and of teachers at various levels and which met the selection criteria (popularity, literary merit, awards, "appropriate" for a younger audience). The scope noted above includes many books clearly falling within SF (Burroughs, Asimov, Bradbury, Heinlein) with others on the fringes (I'd have guessed The Once and Future King to appear in vol. 5) and still others obviously not SF, such as Robert Service's Collected Verse or Robert Graves's The Siege and Fall of Troy. The choices for volume 5 more clearly fall within its stated scope, although gothic is used in its lower case generic sense of horror fiction; none of the traditional 18th century Gothics are discussed, nor are any of, say, Stephen King’s novels discussed, in spite of their popularity among all ages (the other Beacham sets include authors who write mostly for adults only).

This set is competing directly with Salem Press's Masterplots II: Juvenile and Young Adult Fiction Series, ed. by Frank Magill, 4 vols., 1991, $350/set. As the name suggests, the Salem set stresses plot over other elements. The Beacham set is more classroom oriented. Beacham permits its books to be evaluated for 30 days on a trial basis and returned if in salable condition, and Salem may also. Given the cost of the sets, a trial comparison for a month makes a lot of sense; no library needs both.

[Since the publisher sent me the two volume Beacham’s Popular Fiction 1991 Update, I’ll describe it here, since readers teach far more non-SF than SF. This set contains updates for 146 authors and 35 entries for authors not previously treated in the preceding eight volumes. Among the authors discussed are Kingsley Amis, Poul Anderson, Asimov, Barker, Beagle, Benford, Bester, and 16 other authors specializing in fantastic fiction, plus others who write it occasionally. The update for de Camp, for example, discusses a 1988 and 1989 novel according to a standard format: social concerns, themes, characters, techniques and literary precedents. The new piece on Roald Dahl includes a brief publishing history, analyses of selected titles as above, a selective list of other books and a selective annotated secondary bibliography. These popular fiction volumes would be a reasonably sound place to begin the investigation of an author and should be welcomed by public, high school and community college libraries.]

Neil Barron
A REAL Potboiler


A group of gifted teenagers from around the world (the USA, Russia, Venezuela, Germany, New Zealand, Japan) is picked to train for manned flight to Mars. Plunked down together in Houston, this smorgasbord of bratty whiz kids has to compete against other teams of kids and the program itself while learning to live with rules and work as a team. In an emergency during a survival trek back to base, they learn to pull together in rescuing a sneaky, underhanded team that sabotaged them. Shortly afterward, they are blasting off for Mars.

What would be a passable YA potboiler is hampered by the format and by being first in a series ("The Young Astronauts," released every two months). It takes too much of the book to introduce the characters. When together they become largely indistinguishable (although keeping a bit of their national or personal "schtick"). They and their mentor, Dr. Thompson, having no internal reality, seem unmotivated and inconsistent. The plot is standard, if acceptable, but the ending is not merely rushed, it's jerked in from nowhere. On one and the same page they seem to have just qualified to train, and they blast off.

This series is a joint venture of Zebra Books and the "Young Astronaut Council," whose mission, among other things, is "to promote the study of space-related subjects." It is "presented" by Jack Anderson, founder and chair of the Council. Ronald Reagan and President and Mrs. Bush are co-chairs, and the preface was written aboard the Soviet space station MIR by Alexander Serebrov, "Cosmonaut Hero of the Soviet Union." It's all rather silly, and it's hard to see how bad fiction can promote anything.

William Mingin

Across the Time Barrier


Young Patrick wanted a computer more than anything in the world. One day when playing with a computer on display in a local store, something strange happens. The screen goes blank, and a mysterious invitation appears asking Patrick to be a contestant on the game show "Finders Keepers." This is his chance to win fabulous prizes, maybe even his dream computer, and all he need do is tune into channel eight at ten o'clock the following Satur-
day morning. But why hasn’t he heard of the show before? And why on channel eight, which doesn’t even broadcast in his town? Little does Patrick know that being a contestant will take him on an adventure straight through the fabric of time.

Emily Rodda has created a unique parallel world adventure that grabs a reader’s attention at the very beginning. Rodda keeps up the suspense as young Patrick slowly discovers how the game show works and what it is all about; nor do there seem to be any particularly Australian references that could have created problems for American readers. Also, Noela Young’s simple but attractive jacket and black and white inside illustrations, mostly showing Patrick doing something, add to a reader’s enjoyment.

Best for upper elementary readers, Finders Keepers’s creative approach to the concept of time and of time travel and its strong verisimilitude have resulted in a light, endearing story that a beginning fantasy and science fiction enthusiast can delight in.

Joseph Jeremias

Punk & Mysticism in Bordertown Adventure


On the edge of the real world where faerie infringes upon reality, lies Bordertown, a runaway’s haven. Elf and human gangs roam the graffitied streets. Elsewhere, a bookstore, has peculiar books, strange proprietors, and weird customers. Fortune tellers and wizards set up shop as magic crackles in the air. This is where Ron Starbuck will begin his pilgrimage in search of his brother Tony, who had run to the magic of Bordertown some time before.

Ron is quickly introduced to the harsh reality of runaway life when he is thrown off the train on his way to town. As he continues forward on foot, he meets Mooner, a half elf with a quick mouth and a mean streak. Befriended by Mooner, Ron is taught the ways of Bordertown and is brought to Castle Pup, a run down building where elves, humans, and halvies live in a communal setting. It is from here that Ron begins his search for what becomes more than for a missing brother.

Will Shetterly has borrowed the setting of Bordertown from Terri Windling’s Borderland and Bordertown (NAL 1986) to which he himself had contributed. It is an original setting where magic and technology blend together naturally; yet Elsewhere can stand alone. This Bordertown is a place where spell-box powered motorcycles spew exhaust that smells like wildflowers, and security spells replace burglar alarms. Also, Shetterly popu-
lates the streets with a wide array of characters, ranging from the charmingly eccentric to the wickedly scheming. From the wise-cracking Mooner to the residents of Castle Pup to the multitude of secondary characters, each being possesses a truly memorable, unique personality. Every individual Ron encounters enhances the rich atmosphere of this highly stylish fantasy and the reader becomes completely enchanted by the mystique that surrounds them.

Although Elsewhere, a Jane Yolen Book, is intended for young adults 14 and up, who will quickly identify with the youthful protagonist and his precocious independence. Mature young adults and adults will appreciate the attention to detail that Shetterly weaves throughout this highly faceted novel. Shetterly has truly succeeded in eliminating all age barriers.

Joseph Jeremias

Wilde Fairy Tales


Oscar Wilde’s “fairy tales” are not new, but they are classics. Although “The Happy Prince” and “The Selfish Giant” are perhaps the best known, the other three in this volume—"The Nightingale and the Rose," “The Devoted Friend,” and “The Remarkable Rocket”—are equally worthy of attention. Wilde’s fairy tales, written in imitation of the folk and fairy tales that were in vogue in the nineteenth century, contain his own personal view of the beauty and tragedy in the world. The Prince of the title story is happy only when he has given everything he has for others, and in the end, when the Prince and the swallow are taken to heaven, the reader sees that Wilde’s perceptions of beauty and worth may be as different from those of his fellows as was his lifestyle.

This edition of Wilde’s fairy tales is not really new either. Books of Wonder, the New York City bookstores specializing in old and new imaginative books for children, and the William Morrow Publishing Company have combined to present this facsimile of the 1913 edition of Wilde’s stories. Happily, this means that the volume also contains Charles Robinson’s illustrations, twelve color plates and several dozen black-and-white illustrations from marginalia to full-page dividers. Even the book covers have the elegant feel of a bygone time.

Wilde fans and scholars will want to add this book to their collections. Someone unfamiliar with Wilde’s fairy tales will find this book a first-rate place to get to know them. An afterword by Peter Glassman discusses Wilde, Robinson, and the history of Wilde’s fairy tales. And anyone looking for a classic as a gift for a child could not do better than this edition of The Prince and Other Stories. Highly recommended.

C.W. Sullivan III
Two Old Stories


Two stories about Steven Dalt, sometime Colonial Survey operator, are re-told here.

"Pard", first published in 1971, tells how Dalt adapted to the invasion of his body and brain by a symbiotic intelligence, and how the duality dealt with a super computer that, surviving a crash on a primitive planet, achieved human intelligence and dominated some of its inhabitants.

The longer story, "The Tery", was published in part in 1973 and 1978. Dalt, using the planet name Tlad, is not the major hero. Jon, the tery, a bear-like creature native to the planet, is hero and victim. Humans had settled there long enough to have divided into two groups, those with Talents and the larger majority who feared the Talented. Both groups considered the sentient teries animals to be butchered. Tlad, renewing the planet's contact with earth, discovered a wounded Jon, befriends and then uses him in destroying the dictatorship that persecutes the Talented. The tery's sacrifice becomes the basis for a new religion.

The stories are formula stories based on an earlier SF tradition. They are told well enough to be fresh to the teen-aged discoverer of science-fiction.

*Paula M. Strain*

Excellent SF Introduction


Scott Childers and his mentor Tiaf return in a sequel to *The Antrian Messenger* and *The Seer*. Scott, who had believed he was an "Earther" for 14 of his 15 years, is in truth a young Zhyposian seer from another system. However, wanting to be with other young people, he teleports to a Dallas park where he joins a group of young people wearing the same uniform. Though he fully intends to hide his special powers, his precognitive faculties make him aware that, in moments, one young fellow will be hit by a car. Scott saves him, but, in the process, he himself is injured. And, when he awakens, he finds himself a prisoner in the Institute of the tyrannical Dr. Edgefield, who has been experimenting with increasing the telepathic powers of those youngsters Scott has just met.

Now Dr. Edgefield has captured a more interesting subject, one he suspects is not only telepathic but has gifts of precognition, telekinesis, and teleportation. Naturally, to complicate the plot, Dr. Edgefield has removed
Scott’s ring, with which Scott might have communicated with Tiaf even through the Institute’s barrier circuits, which prevent mental waves from passing. How Scott gains the trust of the other young people and manages to escape is the subject of the rest of the novel.

Callous experimentation in the name of science and/or exploitation of those whose capabilities exceed the norm are undeniably familiar themes to long time readers of science fiction. Yet these topics are by no means cliches to the audience for The Mind Trap, upper elementary, middle school, and reluctant junior high school students who haven’t read A.E. Van Vogt’s Slan (1940), Wilson Tucker’s Wild Talent (1954), or John Hershey’s Child Buyer (1960). Even I want to read The Antrian Messenger, for I’d like to respond to the reaction of Scott when he discovered that he was not the All-American boy he thought he was. Also, I expect that the first book in the series and possibly the second are as fast paced as this one. I do know that The Mind Trap is totally self-contained though it is the third in a series that has the potential for continuing on and on.

For these reasons, I strongly recommend The Mind Trap, with its clear type and few pages, as an introduction to science fiction and to such themes as psychic powers, the alien in our society, or superior youngsters in the hands of scientists, particularly for reluctant 12-to-14-year-old readers.

Muriel R. Becker

Second-Rate Wynne Jones


In the city of Zanzib in the Sultanates of Rashpuht, Abdullah the carpet merchant is taken by a flying carpet to a royal garden where he meets Princess Flower-in-the-Night. They fall in love, but she is stolen by a djinn, Hasruel. In pursuit Abdullah finds a bottle with a bad-tempered genie and is transported north to the land of Ingary. He falls in with an ex-soldier and two cats, and they discover Hasruel in a castle in the clouds, where he keeps princesses captive for his brother, Dalzel. Abdullah and friends help free Hasruel from the hold of Dalzel; the genie, cats, carpet, and soldier are freed from enchantment and the princesses from captivity. Abdullah wins his Princess.

Castle in the Air continues the world and characters of Howl’s Moving Castle. Many of the usual Wynne Jones characteristics are in evidence: clear, lively writing, a sense of humor, a pleasing complication of plot and incident, and a vivid imagination that gives us colorful images and bright, intense moments of sensory perception.
But she has not re-imagined her "Middle Eastern" setting freshly, as she has so much else in her many books, from witches to Norse mythology; she has taken it on, lock, stock and cliche, like the background of a cheap film. Abdullah, flat and stereotyped, is a bit too querulous to be fully sympathetic. His way of speaking in apostrophe provides thin humor, if any. The use of modern Western terms (mugging, scam) seems sloppy, as does the appearance of both a genie and a djinn.

While it is not strictly necessary to have read Howl's Moving Castle to appreciate this book, the characters who reappear here—Howl, Sophie, Lettie, Justin, etc.—can only seem to a new reader like unknown relatives at a family reunion.

Finally, the machinations of the djinn Hasruel, which drive the book, are not easy to follow in retrospect, and his motivation is neither clear nor convincing.

Still, Castle in the Air does have more virtues than faults. While not first-rate Wynne Jones, it is quick, imaginative, and fun.

William Mingin
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<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 ________

If you wish to receive the British journal *Foundation* (3 issues yearly), add $17 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 SFRA Directory:)

Name: __________________________________________

Mailing Address: __________________________________

Telephone: [Home] (___)___-_____

[Office] (___)___-_____

[Fax No.] (___)___-_____

BitNetNo. ________________

GEnie Address: __________

My principal interests in fantastic literature are (limit to 30 words):

________Repeat last year's entry.

______________________________________________________________________

(This subscription form may be copied.)

4/92 (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.

_______________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________