Review

Number 200, October, 1992
The SFRA Review

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SFRA Review #200 October 1992

In This Issue:
President's Message (Lowentrout) ................................................... 4
1993 Conference Plans (Wolf) .......................................................... 5
News & Information (Barron, et al) .................................................. 6
Letters to the Editor ............................................................................... 12
Editorial Matters (Harfst) ................................................................. 16
Review - Article (Latham) ................................................................. 17

REVIEWS:
Non-Fiction
Aertson & MacDonald, eds.,
     Companion to Middle English Romance. (Thompson) ........... 19
Burgess, Work of Robert Reginald. (Barron) ...................... 20
Busby, ed., Arthurian Yearbook: I. (Sullivan) ......................... 21
Downing,
     Planets in Peril: C.S. Lewis's Ransom Trilogy. (Sullivan) .... 22
Gilman, A Nonfiction Reader, ed. Larry Ceplair. (Levy) ............ 23
Grey, Nightmare of Ecstasy:
     Life and Art of Edward D. Wood, Jr. (Klossner) ............... 24
Hammond, H.G. Wells and Rebecca West. (Taormina) ............. 25
Magistrale, Steven King: The Second Decade. (Collings) ........ 26
May, Edgar Allan Poe: Study of the Short Fiction. (Collings) ... 27
Knight, ed., Monad: Issue 2. (Barron) ......................................... 28
Naddaff, Arabelasque: Narrative Structure and the
     Aesthetics of Repetition in the "1001 Nights". (Kratz) ............ 29
Price, ed., Black Forbidden Things:
     Cryptical Secrets from "The Crypt of Cthulhu" (Collins, W.) 30
Price, Lin Carter:
     A Look Behind His Imaginary Worlds. (Collins, W.) .......... 30
Verne, Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea. (Hall) .......... 31
Walker & Patrick, eds., A Christian for All Christians. (Collings) 32

Fiction Reviews:
Abbey, The Wooden Sword. (Bartter) ............................................ 33
Blair, Bright Angel. (Mead) ......................................................... 34
Bova, Mars. (Hellekson) ............................................................... 35
Brooks, Elf Queen of Shannara. (Mallett) ................................. 36
Busby, Slow Freight. (Dudley) ..................................................... 35
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heroes Wanted</td>
<td>Crocco</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best of Roald Dahl</td>
<td>Dahl</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cup of Clay: Book I of The Talisman</td>
<td>Douglas</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dragon Fantastic</td>
<td>Greenberg, R. &amp; M.</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damia</td>
<td>McCaffrey</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Catswold Portal</td>
<td>Murphy</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaper Man</td>
<td>Pratchett</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book I of The Talisman</td>
<td>Spencer Library. Dolby Recorded Cassettes. (Barron)</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Genesis</td>
<td>Sykes</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauty</td>
<td>Tepper</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME: A Novel of Self-Discovery</td>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecce and Old Earth</td>
<td>Vance</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth is All That Lasts</td>
<td>Wells</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambio Bay</td>
<td>Wilhelm</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storeys from the Old Hotel</td>
<td>Wolfe</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Baum: Royal Historian of Oz</td>
<td>Carpenter &amp; Shirley, L. Frank Baum:</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invitation to the Game</td>
<td>Hughes</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unicorn Highway</td>
<td>Jones</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Time of Darkness</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door in the Air and Other Stories</td>
<td>Mahy</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Songsmith: a Witch World Story</td>
<td>Norton &amp; Crispin</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uptime, Downtime</td>
<td>Peel</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being of Two Minds</td>
<td>Service</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science Fiction Movies</td>
<td>Staskowski</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searching for Dragons</td>
<td>Wrede</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enchanted Forest Chronicles #2</td>
<td>Yolen</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Plague of Sorcerers</td>
<td>Zambreno</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frankenweenie</td>
<td>Burton</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe</td>
<td>Fox</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robin Hood and the Sorcerer</td>
<td>Sharp</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
President’s Message:

In Space, You Can Hear Them Scream

Have you happened to catch a few minutes of Mystery Science Theater 3000 on a late night when you were zapping around the channels? It’s on the newly created Comedy Channel now carried by many cable TV companies in the US and Canada. Format: guy and his two wisecracking robots sit in silhouette in a row of theater seats in front of bad vintage SF films commenting humorously as the films play. Surprisingly, it works — the irreverent humor is often scathingly funny.

Having watched a number of these programs now (I admit this freely), I find these seldom seen films a fascinating window onto the popular culture of 50s and 60s postwar America, and the commentary an equally fascinating window onto the culture of today. Mystery Science Theater 3000 is geared toward kids and young teens — their letters to the cast and their drawings are always presented after the films are shown. During the show, guy and robots puncture bad acting and worse science, but it is their skewering of past gender, political and religious bigotry that really drives the program. The fifties and sixties were just yesterday, and already they seem another era. How fast we change! And sometimes, when how far we have to go becomes a burden, it is good to take stock of how far we’ve come so very recently. That’s why I watch Mystery Science Theater 3000.

A group of members headed up by Daryl Mallett has proposed locating the 1995 SFRA conference in Southern California. As of late August, the EC has received no bid for the 1994 conference. As the 1993 conference will be held in Reno, the EC would be especially interested in hearing from those who would like to sponsor a 1994 meeting in the midwestern or eastern regions of the North American continent. If you have a fabulous venue in mind elsewhere, though, feel free to run it by us. When the world economy picks up again and travel funds become more plentiful, it would be good to head to Japan, Europe, or South America for one or several meetings. I hope our members worldwide will consider sponsoring annual meetings in the future.

I will shortly appoint our new Pilgrim and Pioneer Committees. If you have suggestions or would like to volunteer to serve, let me know now. And we’re also in need of someone to take over the editorship of the SFRA Review — again, if you would like to be considered for the position or want to pass on the name of someone you feel is just right for the job, let me know.

Pete Lowentrout
SFRA 24 Conference
Call For Papers

Science Fiction Research Association's Annual Conference will be held on June 17-20, 1993, in Reno, Nevada at the Flamingo Hilton.


The Science Fiction Research Association invites papers dealing with any of the above authors, science fiction in general, and particularly the following topics: Cyberpunk or Bunk? Speculative Fiction and George Bernard Shaw, Future Information Access, SF Bibliography and/or Bibliographers, SF as a Postmodern Genre, Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality: Fact and Fiction, SF and Feminism, Nanotechnology, Publishing SF, Futurism, Cyberspace Evolution, Adaptive Technology and SF Art.

If you are interested, please send a brief description of your proposal to: Milton T. Wolf, Getchell Library, University of Nevada, Reno, Reno, Nevada 89557-0044, or Internet: SFWOLF@UNSSUN.UNR.EDU or Voice Mail: 702-784-4577.

Deadline for submission of abstracts: February 15, 1993. Official acceptance of proposal can be negotiated before this date if necessary.

Reno Report

Reno sits in the rainshadow of the Sierra mountains. At 4,490 feet it has a sunny, dry climate that most of its 133,900 inhabitants prefer. Served by an international airport, Reno is the hub of a huge warehousing industry as well as a gambling resort. More couples are married here than are divorced! Known as "The Biggest Little City," it provides numerous diversions for the vacation traveller within a small, intimate environment. Nearby Lake Tahoe provides the water for the Truckee River which runs through the town out into the desert to form the equally beautiful, sister lake of Pyramid, which is on the Paiute Indian Reservation and open to the public. Also nearby is the historic town of Virginia City, where Mark Twain once served on the local newspaper. For train buffs, nearby Carson City, the state capital, features a railroad museum and the Virginia and Truckee shortline railroad. Reno also hosts a planetarium, mineral museum, national automobile museum, several art galleries, an historical society and arboretum. A sure bet that will win you many drinks is to ask people which is farther west, Reno or Los Angeles?
Most will reply "LA" and you will win the bet (get the old map out and you'll see that the California coast cuts inward).

Remember that the SFRA Conference is being held at the Flamingo Hilton which is right in the middle of downtown Reno on Sierra Street. The reason I mention this is that there are two Hiltons in Reno. Reservations must be made by May 26, 1993. The rooms, which are quite nice, are $80 per room and the rates are valid for one full week (June 15-21, 1993). You can make your reservations by calling (800) 648-4882 and specifying to the operator: UNR's SFRA Conference. Instead of a Pilgrim's Banquet this year we will be having a Pilgrim's Buffet (which will be immense!). There is a courtesy vehicle which will take you directly from the airport to the Flamingo Hilton and I will have a university van for those of you who want to get around locally. More reports will follow throughout the year.

_Milton T. Wolf, Conference Director_

## News & Information

### M.P. Shiel Collection in Florida

Two summers ago A. Reynolds Morse and his wife donated their extensive collection of M.P. Shiel material (books, manuscripts, memorabilia) to the Olin Library, Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida, near Orlando. The collection has been cataloged on OCLC, and duplicate copies circulate, although most of the collection is part of the non-circulating special collections. A guide to the Shiel collection is in preparation. Last April the director of the Olin Library was considering a seminar/conference on Shiel and his contemporaries (Shiel lived 1865-1947) and would be happy to send a questionnaire to anyone who might consider attending. Write/call George C. Grant, Olin Library, Campus Box 2744, Rollins College, Winter Park, FL 32789, 407-646-2676.—NB.

### Into a Swamp of Meaninglessness


Maybe I should tell you that there is another reason why academics have such a hard time getting their articles published on the Op-Ed page, even over long Christmas weekends...
Academic writing stinks.

I'm sorry. I know it doesn't stink to fellow academics. I'd even be willing to admit that, in a parallel reality, it qualifies as great. Personally, I think Ludwig Wittgenstein was a literary genius. But the fact is that most newspaper editors would rather be stranded on a desert island with nothing but a list of the active ingredients in Sinutab to read than so much as glance at another piece of academic prose. Perhaps it's that academics don't realize that those little bits of incomprehensible jargon that keep turning up in their work are kind of creepy. "The gaze," "embeddedness" and "discontinuities of discourse" are words and phrases that, like clammy-handed zombies, drag an editor into a swamp of meaninglessness.

Michael Klossner

**Fantasy Commentator No. 43**

The Spring 1992 issue of this semi-annual magazine features the first of a two-part essay on Nat Schachner by Moskowitz, part 7 (conclusion) of his continuing series devoted to Bernarr Macfadden, and part 13 of his history of early SF. Andrew Darlington discusses some of the SF adventure stories of Conan Doyle and his later decline into senescence and spiritualism. Steve Sneyd reassesses a "pioneering fantasy poetess," Lilith Lorraine (1894-1967), and includes some examples of her work. Verse and some book reviews complete the issue. $5; $25/6 issues, from A. Langley Searles, 48 Highland Circle, Bronxville, NY 10708-5909.—NB

**Australian SF Bibliographies**

Australian SF tends to be overlooked unless it's reprinted in the U.S. or U.K. That hasn't prevented bibliographers from plying their craft (recall that Donald Tuck lived in Tasmania until his retirement). Two examples include "Science Fiction Magazines in Australia" by Van Ikin, Sean McMullen and Graham Stone, *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Serials Librarianship*, 2:1 (1991), 3-34, published by Haworth Press, 10 Alice St, Binghamton, NY 13904-1580. The article is thorough through 1989 and supplements the discussion in Tymn & Ashley's *Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Weird Fiction Magazines*. A bit more recent were two pieces by Sean McMullen in the now-OP handbook provided those attending the Festival of the Imagination (Swancon 17) in 1991. The first is an article, "Australian SF in Print, 1980-
1991," pages 67-71, the second a bibliography, "Australian Science Fiction 1985-1992," pages 72-82 (revised from preliminary edition issued the previous year). The last includes not only the original sources of Australian SF but the many reprints abroad that have become more common in recent years. McMullen also sent me a copy of the spring 1991 issue of Eidolon, which calls itself "The Journal of Australian Science Fiction and Fantasy." McMullen's piece, "Going Commercial and Becoming Professional" (pages 54-62), is a useful survey of the publication of Australian SF in books and magazines since about 1950. And Eric Rabkin contributed "Undecidability and Oxymoronism," an excerpt from Fiction 2000: Cyberpunk and the Future of Narrative, due this summer from the Univ. of Georgia Press and ed. by Rabkin and George Slusser.—NB

Call for Papers

Rabbi Loew and His Legacy: The Golem Figure from the Middle Ages to the Present” is the topic of a special issue of the Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts, now published by the IAFA. Papers may concentrate on single works, films, authors, filmmakers, national literatures, comparative studies or theoretical approaches and should discuss the golem figure in terms of the fantastic. Follow 1985 MLA style manual, send abstract immediately to Maureen T. Krause, Humanities Division, Rose-Hulman Inst.of Technology, Terre Haute, IN 47803, 812-877-1511 (office), 317-539-2972 (home). Drafts of papers are due by 20 January 1993. —NB

Science Fiction Eye #10

The masthead says Stephen P. Brown's magazine is published "approximately three times a year." But his editorial admits that ten issues have appeared in five years. He likes to quote Locus as saying the magazine provides "too much content for the money." The 112 pages in this issue include mostly essays by various hands, plus letters and reviews, fiction having been eliminated. Contributors include Bruce Sterling, Richard Kadrey, Paul De Filippo, Terry Bisson, Ernest Hogan, an interview with David Wingrove, Charles Platt, and John Varley on "Business Ethics: An Oxymoron." Science Fiction Eye has been praised elsewhere, and it does provide a good value, though whether too much content I'll let you judge. 3 issues/$10; 6/$18, to Box 18539, Asheville, NC 28814.—NB
Summer 1992 Necronomican Press Releases

The latest releases from 101 Lockwood St, West Warwick, RI 02893 include: The Lady of Frozen Death and Other Weird Tales (54 p., $6.50) by Leonard Cline (1893-1929), five tales written as by Alan Forsyth and judged by introducer Douglas Anderson as "unquestionably trivial," but which are claimed to be very enjoyable when read with "muted expectations"; Decoded Mirrors by Steve Rasnic Tem (34 p., $4.95), 3 tales "after Lovecraft"; a collection of 35 letters from Lovecraft to Richard F. Searight (1902-1975), ed. by David E. Schultz, S. T. Joshi and Franklyn Searight (90 p., $9.95); Crypt of Cthulhu 91 (v. 11, no.3); and Necrofile 5, summer 1992 (28 p., $2.50; quarterly, $10/year), whose best feature this issue is Ramsey Campbell's horror writer's lexicon, patterned after Bierce's devil's dictionary ("classic," "literate" and "subtle" are each defined as "boring"; "snobbery, literary" = Ursula Le Guin on Lovecraft; Gore Vidal on Le Guin). —NB

Muted Voices Prophesying War

For the past two years I. F. Clarke has been revising and updating his 1966 study of fictional works predicting future wars, Voices Prophesying War: 1763-1984. The revised and much enlarged edition, Voices Prophesying War: Future Wars, 1763-3749, will be published by OUP in London and New York this November. There is new material on the early American tales of the coming civil war, one of them the long-winded 1836 work by Beverly Tucker, The Partisan Leader, which anticipated Chesney's world-famous Battle of Dorking, 1871. Also treated is the visual rhetoric of warfare in 19th century illustrated magazines and observations on the initial failure of language to deal with the entirely unexpected combat conditions of World War I. A final chapter surveys the enormous growth of future war fiction since 1945, much of it American in origin, a symptom of our age of anxiety and the dynamics of the cold war and America's national security state. Clarke argues that the newer fiction has said goodbye to the epic narratives of nations-in-arms, and most of the fictions are arguments in favor of peace. He ends by noting that events of the past two years have undercut the rationale for future war tales, an argument that may not persuade the unfortunate citizens of Yugoslavia and Somalia.—NB

More Peake

The summer 1992 (v.2, no. 4) issue of Peake Studies includes a number of uncollected poems by Peake, mostly from the 1930s; an amusing collection of odd facts about Peake assembled by Pete Bellotte (my favorite: "When Mervyn Peake was playing rugby for the 'Old Elthamians', the skipper wrote to Peake's uncle, an old pal of his, that 'We are concerned about Mervyn."
He is wearing an earring. 'The uncle replied, 'If you think he has persuasions which are not yours, don't worry. Having sent him £25 for an abortion, I think you'll find all is o. k.'""); an index to v. 2's four issues; and an ad for the Folio Society edition of the Gormenghast novels, bound in white cloth printed with a drawing by artist Peter Harding, who contributed 200 new illustrations, and blocked on the spine. The slipcase of red cloth and black paper is blocked in matching typography. £103.50 delivered from The Folio Society, 202 Great Suffolk St, London SE1 1PR. The Folio Society is a bit like the Limited Editions Club of the U. S.—NB

Anatomy of Wonder's 4th Edition

Planning has begun on the 4th edition of Anatomy of Wonder, with publication tentatively set for fall 1993. Many contributors are new to provide new perspectives, and many improvements are planned. The contents and format are still fluid, so if you have any suggestions, please send them immediately to Neil Barron, 1149 Lime Place, Vista, CA 92083.—NB

Non-Fiction Editor Sought

A successor is being sought for Neil Barron as the Non-Fiction Review Editor. The position requires some knowledge of American book publishing, an ability and willingness to edit and requires one to three hours per week. If you are interested, write directly to Neil Barron, 1149 Lime Place, Vista, CA 92083.—NB

Science Fiction Award Winners Announced at KU

The winners of the best science fiction novel and best science fiction short story of the year were announced July 25 at the University of Kansas. Buddy Holly Is Alive and Well on Ganymede by Brad Denton, Austin, Texas, free lance writer, was named winner of the Campbell Award for the best science fiction novel of the year. "Buffalo" by John Kessel, associate professor of English at North Carolina State University, Raleigh, won the Sturgeon Award for the best short science fiction of the year. The awards were presented during a banquet that ends the annual Campbell Award Conference at KU.

Denton and Kessel are KU graduates and former students of James Gunn, professor of English and director of the J. Wayne and Elsie M. Gunn Center for the Study of Science Fiction at KU.

The winner of the Campbell Award, named for the late editor John W. Campbell, is chosen by an international committee of authors and critics, Gunn said. A committee headed by science fiction author Orson Scott Card selects the winner of the Sturgeon Award, named for the late Theodore Sturgeon, considered the master of the science fiction short story.
Buddy Holly Is Alive and Well on Ganymede is Denton’s second novel, Gunn said. The story concerns an ordinary Kansan, Oliver Vale, who finds his life disrupted by the appearance on all the television sets of the world of the late Buddy Holly broadcasting from Ganymede, the largest moon of Jupiter. Holly instructs people who have questions to seek answers from Vale.

“Buffalo” interweaves the life of Kessel’s father, who was a Civilian Conservation Corps forestry worker as a youth, with the life of H.G. Wells, the father of science fiction, on a 1934 visit to the United States. Gunn said Kessel used the imaginary meeting to make a statement of faith in the future lost and regained.

The second-place Campbell Award winner was The Difference Engine by William Gibson and Bruce Sterling. Third place resulted in a three-way tie among A Woman of the Iron People by Eleanor Arnason, Stations of the Tide by Michael Swanwick and The Silicon Man by Charles Platt.

Second place in the Sturgeon Awards went to “Ma Qui” by Alan Brennert and third place to “The Happy Man” by Jonathan Lethem. —Harlan Roedel

Call for Proposals/Panelists

The editor of SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies, Fred D. Crawford, has asked me to edit a Special Edition of SHAW devoted to the broad topic of “Shaw and Speculative Fiction.” We are just beginning this project and welcome inquiries, proposals, and suggestions. We plan to have a panel at the next SFRA meeting (June 17-20, 1993) on this topic and are interested in participants. This was investigated about twenty years ago (see The Shaw Review, V. XVI, No. 2) and deserves revision. For more information please contact: Professor Milton T. Wolf, Getchell Library, University of Nevada, Reno, Nevada 89557-0044 or E-Mail: SFWOLF@UNSSUN.UNR.EDU. —Milton T. Wolf

LITA Speeches Available

The Library Information Technology Association recently held a very successful meeting in San Francisco featuring three major speculative writers: David Brin, Hans Moravec and Bruce Sterling. A follow-up book including the speeches by these aforementioned writers is now available: THINKING ROBOTS, AN AWARE INTERNET & CYBERPUNK LIBRARIANS. It sells for $22 and is over 220 pages. To order: request title from American Library Association, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, Illinois 60611. —Milton T. Wolf
Letters to the Editor:

25 July 1992

Dear Editor,

I can’t tell you how sorry I am to hear you’re quitting. Not that I blame you two years was all I could handle. But you have built the Newsletter into a prime publication, and I’ve been enjoying it, particularly for the past year or so. It reads like a real conversation among the more literate fans of SF.

It’s a shame to let the publication lapse into the cheesy little mimeo throw-away it was before you and I got to work on it. I credit myself with making it into a real publication, and you for making it into the most important informational source for academics in this field. You’ve done a stunning job, better than I could have hoped for....Let me tell you some of the consequences of the bare-bones regime...:

1. Hassles over content. Distinguishing horror from fantasy is just as difficult in practice as distinguishing fantasy from science fiction. Wisely, you [the EC] refused to eliminate fantasy (over half your membership is as much or more interested in fantasy than “hard SF”), but you will find it just as troublesome to eliminate horror. What do you do with Dan Simmons? S.P. Somtow? Ramsey Campbell? Splatterpunk is easy to chop, but there is real art in some of what’s identified as horror, and it overlaps SF and fantasy pretty deeply.

2. An immediate sacrifice in quality. Squib-type (350 wds) reviews appear in countless fanzines. They’re no use at all except as hints to fans about what to buy. Surely the SFRA Review is not a buyer’s guide for fans? It’s a lousy one, if it is, because the reviews aren’t timely enough, and never will be. For an academic audience, such squibs are worse than useless....the critical reception of a book, even a genre book, is an important part of popular culture. What people thought of The Green Hat in the 20′s is a standard item in cultural histories, for example. If nobody had reviewed it because it was “trash” we’d have lost something illuminating about our forebears. SF is going to be a very important part of the cultural history of this century, and the fact that we have no written record of the critical reception of most of Philip K. Dick’s novels, for example, is already an embarrassment. As I remember it, most fans thought he was pretty marginal, not very worthwhile, for most of his career. We owe it to the future “rediscoveries” in the field to keep some sort of record of critical reception. That’s why I continue to maintain that unpopular books deserve some kind of review in the annals of the field. Rejecting a review just because the reviewer panned the book doesn’t seem justifiable to me....
3. Loss of objectivity. On the practical side, nobody is going to bother to read an assigned book and write a review of it if they think you'll reject the review. Reviewing is a labor of love, but nobody wants it to be love's labors lost. Fortunately, as long as the annual continues, the reviews will have at least one home. But you’re skewing the reviewer’s objectivity with this dicta: “If I pan the book,” she’ll say, “Betsy will reject the review. But I want my review published. Therefore I have to like the book.” That’s not as far-fetched as you think, just overstated for effect.

So what you’ll end up with is voluntary reviews by members who are pushing their own favorites. Gush will be the rule. SFRA Review’s function as a forum for serious discussion will be sacrificed.

I think the Executive Committee’s action here...is dead wrong.... What you need, of course, is an angel to save the publication, not a reduction of the journal’s scope and stature. Under the regime you outline, the SFRA Review won’t be worth saving. A real shame, because as it has developed under your editorship, it’s the best thing going in the field....

Bob Collins

[Thank you for the kind words which really include all the review editors, the reviewers, the printer, and my husband who functions as my joint editor. Your assessment of what may happen to the Review is similar but more specific than possibilities cited in my reply to Art Lewis, Issue 199. Some economic solutions are being explored with the printing itself, using different fonts, etc. so that the wordage cuts would not be as extreme. In this issue I have been doing an averaging process, longer reviews balanced with very short ones. I think various ideas may surface with time to consider/investigate them. BH/ed.]

John Clute/221 Camden High Street
London, NW1 7BU England
voice/fax 071 485 9120

19 August 1992

The Editor, SFRA Review

Dear SFRA,

I just received the SFRA Review #199 this afternoon, and soon came upon Arthur O Lewis’s letter on page 35, which I thought initially must be a joke (along with the response from Betsy Harfst which seemed, at first glance, to be part of the spoof), but then I began to get a sinking sensation, a feeling not lightened at all by her further comments on page 37 (just be-
fore she says that she has resigned as editor), in which indeed she does confirm that "reviews with negative reviewer conclusions" will be "excluded" from the journal in future. I'm probably just feeling too tired today to work out whether or not somebody is trying to josh the humorless, but I must say that if it were true that the SFRA Review intended no longer to publish (ie to reject?) negative reviews, then I'd have several very specific reactions.

1) I'd be markedly disinclined to read a journal which censored material on the basis of criteria that had nothing to do with questions of just evaluation, fair judgment, freedom of expression, or the essential task of any academic journal: which is to serve as a platform for the telling of things that are true. But surely all that is obvious. It need not be said. It's a joke, isn't it? 2) Beyond the issue of the bounden duty of any clerisy to face towards the truth, I would in any case be terminally suspicious of any journal which took a company-paper attitude towards its contents: ie, excluded anything which might distress the owners, the bosses, the buyers or the sellers. 3) I could imagine a fine new trade in the deciphering of the subtextual samizdat rage which might be deemed to encode any remaining SFRA reviewers' real opinions about the products they were told to tout (or else have wasted their time and thought, because honest negative responses were unpublishable, unless put in cipher). 4) (personal note) I was recently asked to contribute to the SFRA Review a notice of a book about which I do not yet know what I think; but will now be forced to decline the chance of finding out, and writing down, what I might have discovered. I (like, I'm sure, some other SFRA members) am not salaried. I can afford on occasion to write for free; I cannot afford to waste time attempting to censor my thoughts like K in a Castle in order to generate copy sufficiently non-negative that it may hope to pass your filter: because it is hurtful, in every possible way, to do so. 5) I suggest that these, and various other ethical and practical reasons which are so obvious it would surely be supererogatory to reiterate them, will prevent some others from reviewing too (I speak with reasonable experience, both as a reviewer and—from 1980-90 for Foundation—as a book reviews editor).

I don't know why Betsy Harfst resigned—she may have done so for personal reasons—but I do know that in her shoes, and if personal reasons had not supervened, I would myself too have instantly resigned. Indeed I rather wonder if this should not be a resignation issue for any member of the SFRA who wishes to honour a fairly wide range of essential principles.

Sincerely,

John Clute
September 2, 1992

Dear Editor:

I took pleasure in learning that Mark Hillegas received the Pilgrim Award for scholarly achievement for 1992, I think he deserves it, but I must take exception to crediting him with having taught the first college-level science fiction class in 1963. I taught the first continuous college-level science fiction writing and history course at City College of New York, 1953, 1954, 1955. I was a paid member of the faculty; the course had to be paid for additionally by the students; and our guest lecturers, in addition to my own direction, included Robert A. Heinlein, John W. Campbell, Isaac Asimov, Murray Leinster, L. Sprague de Camp, Robert Sheckley, Algis Budrys, Lester del Rey, Theodore Sturgeon, Sam Merwin, Fletcher Pratt, Sam Mines and Thomas Calvert McClary, among others.

I wrote the course up in a 19,000 word article for Fantasy Commentator as "Realizing the Impossible Dream" (Winter, 1983). You will find that Isaac Asimov wrote it up in his autobiography In Memory Yet Green (1979) and Lester Del Rey in his history The World of Science Fiction (1979), as did Joe DeBolt in his introduction to my Pilgrim Award Address in Science Fiction Dialogues (SFRA collection, 1982). You will find it listed in James Gunn's New Encyclopedia of Science Fiction under my sketch.

I had previously guest lectured on science fiction at Columbia University, December 13, 1950, and in all justice, there were three other major courses on science fiction before Hillegas. Kingsley Amis in the Spring of 1959 as part of the Christian Gauss seminars in Criticism at Princeton University delivered a series of classes collected as New Maps of Hell (1960). A series of classes were held at the University of Chicago, collected as The Science Fiction Novel (1959) and were participated in by Robert A. Heinlein, Cyril Kornbluth, Robert Bloch and Alfred Bester. In 1960 Chad Walsh taught classes in "Utopia and Anti-Utopia" at Beloit College, his lectures collected as From Utopia to Nightmare (1962). Let us not have frivolous firsts.

Sam Moskowitz
Editorial

This issue is really the first one on our new diet plan for trimming down the size of the SFRA Review. I find that austerity printing measures are just as difficult to maintain as those perennial diets that some individuals use to shrink physical bulges. Have you ever lived on 500 calories a day when you were used to a 1,000 to 2,000? It's not easy. However, like the dieters, I have been experimenting with alternate/substitute methods. When I find a review that really can't be reduced, without damage, to the approximate 350 words (500 calories), then I look for a review with fewer words (yes, there are some) and average the two. Thus, I have the total wordage for two reviews, without completely cheating, and mostly stay within the budgetary restraints.

I'm sure that another problem for dieters is what to do with the surplus food and perishables that they have stored in their cabinets, refrigerators and freezers. If they don't have anyone else to eat it, do they just throw it out? Give it away? Since I don't have anywhere to give horror/negative reviews that I accepted for publication as long ago as last April, I decided at first that this SFRA Review dieter would have one last culinary binge to use up the stored collection of reviews before completely observing the rules for the no fat/no salt/no cholesterol/no whatever budgetary diet proposed by the editorial physicians. It seemed more fair to the reviewers to do this than to return their previously accepted reviews. However, I bumped into the 64 page parameter. As a result, I'm using part of the reviews this issue and will gradually include those other accepted reviews. I suspect that dieters incorporate some of their extras in the same way, little by little.

After three years as editor of the SFRA Review, I decided it was time to pursue retirement goals such as completing a partly written novel and some critical analyses. Also, this editorship has really been a joint one with my husband; he has worked right along with me and has done the entire share of some things such as scanning reviews, preparing the yearly index, and arranging the final, monthly disk format for sending to the printer. And, at times, he has helped me with keyboarding, correcting scanner copy, and proofreading. We both need and want to accomplish other goals we set for retirement. Consequently, I went to Montreal with a decision to resign. And this is the reason that the SFRA Review now needs a new editor.

The primary qualification of the new editor must be computer literacy with easy access to computer hardware and software. If you are interested, contact Pete Lowentrout at 714-897-9060 or by GEnie—P.Lowentrout; contact me at 602-497-8750 or by GEnie—E.Harfst. I will be happy to provide the specifics for the editorship position.

Betsy Harfst
This long review, by Rob Latham, is part of the continuing effort to expand our international horizons and learn more about the SF being published in other countries. (BH:ed.)

**Representative Australian Science Fiction**


The number of Australian SF authors known to U.S. readers can be counted on one hand, with a few fingers left over. There’s Damien Broderick, whose *The Dreaming Dragons* (1980) and *The Judas Mandala* (1982) were well-received in North American editions. Then there’s George Turner, whose *The Sea and Summer* (1987) won Great Britain’s second annual Arthur C. Clarke Award, an accolade that paved the way for its publication in the U.S. (as *Drowning Towers*, 1968). Any others? Not many, which is a real crime since Australia boasts a long history of SF writing (consult Van Ikin’s *Australian Science Fiction* [Academy Chicago, 1984]) as well as a thriving literary community steadily producing engaging and significant work (as evidenced by the recent anthology edited by Broderick, *Mathilda at the Speed of Light* [Angus and Robertson, 1988]). Some sort of deep-seated cultural chauvinism is clearly behind all this; in fact, were it not for the efforts of a single farseeing American editor, David Hartwell—first at Pocket Books and then at Arbor House—neither Broderick’s nor Turner’s work would be available in this country. This lamentable situation doesn’t seem likely to change in future: despite a warm review in *Locus* magazine, Terry Dowling’s *Rynosseros* remains unpublished in the United States.

One might perhaps attempt to justify this exclusion by arguing that the book is so deeply rooted in Australian history and geography as to be of merely “local” interest: after all, its future world involves a complicated extrapolation of Ab’O culture, while the story’s action is bounded by the sun-blasted confines of the continent. Yet this rationalization fudges the issue of how “global” over “local” interests are established; in fact, it is quite simply cultural imperialism which determines the putative universality of British and American literature and the alleged provincialism of other English-language writing. The unfortunate fact is that, in the domain of SF as in other literary worlds, Australia remains a colony, barred from a mutuality of cultural exchange while at the same time ceaselessly exposed to the monologue of the colonizer. How else to explain Dowling’s obscurity in the West, when his own work has so obviously absorbed and synthesized most major British and American SF post-1960?

This synthesis is in large part fruitful, a mobilization of influence that expands and enriches the original sources, but it must be admitted that at times it also displays the colonial’s dutiful appropriation of Western models.
Dowling's admiration for Anglo-American SF (remarked in his doctoral thesis for the University of Sydney on J.G. Ballard and the Surrealist Novel) sometimes verges on uncritical reverence and imitation: in Rynosseros, the ritualized familial politics of the Ab'O princes, the languid aestheticism of the various artist colonies, and the complex intimacies among humans and their clones and artificial intelligences, seem to derive more from Frank Herbert's Dune, J.G. Ballard's Vermilion Sands, and Gene Wolfe's The Fifth Head of Cerberus than from an autonomous extrapolation of Australian realities. Yet despite these obvious borrowings, Dowling manages finally to create a rich and intricate world all his own.

In a temporally unspecified future, Australia has reverted to Ab'O rule; a patchwork of tribal principatis, the continent is traversed by giant sandships, wheeled behemoths driven by wind and sun-powered kites. The book's protagonist, Tom Rynosseros, captains one of these vessels, a rare National (i.e. white) granted free passage across tribal territories through the intercession of a renegade artificial intelligence involved in an elaborate plot that never fully resolves itself. (The main narrative rationale for this expedient is to permit Tom access to any scene or event, allowing a synoptic view of a Balkanized world: Rynosseros is a mosaic of interconnected stories focused by Tom's outsider perspective.) The ambiguous social and spiritual status of A.I. is an abiding theme of the book: inhabiting statuary columns known as "belltrees," these non-human intellects function variously as aesthetic objects, quasi mystical oracles, and political wildcards in a complex web of alliances and enmities.

I am not sure this web is entirely intelligible or coherent, but it is certainly marked by fascinating filigree: empathic assassins who kill by "singing the souls" of their enemies; cryogenically preserved brains recorporealized periodically for purposes of tourism; visionary outcasts who "dive" into desert mirages to produce prophetic artworks, etc. Around these human types swirl a multitude of artificial and genetically engineered creatures, the confused origins of which lie deep in the past: vampiric shapechangers whose bite induces amnesia; robots able to perceive the aura of human souls; the ubiquitous belltrees which emit psychotropic aural and olfactory stimuli, etc. For richness of social and textual detail, Dowling's work rivals that of Jack Vance and Gene Wolfe, ultimately transcending questions of mere influence and imitation to achieve its own individual resonance.

Rynosseros has its own individual problems, too. For one thing, the complex milieu of the book overwhelms the characters, who tend to devolve into representatives of cultural ideologies or metaphoric icons. Tom himself is a stolid cipher, a dour hero given to superficial introspection (but then, this is a shortcoming he shares with many of his prototypes in Anglo American SF). Furthermore, the book's style is a sometimes irritating hybrid of lyricism and clotted jargon, as in this quote from an ancient, musing robot: "My oriete is like that double-plansphere Phar showed you: Chinese boxes, vistas opening into one another, Escher infinities." Obviously, the intended effect is a complex exchange between technical and figurative language; but the actual result, especially considering Dowling's studied avoidance of conventional exposition, is readerly bafflement and a sense, at times, of willful obfuscation.
More distressingly, Dowling's appropriation of Ab'O culture reinscribes at the narrative level the problematic of cultural imperialism in which his own work is caught: his remodeling of the rituals and beliefs of Australia's native peoples for the purpose of producing a futuristic fantasy is, frankly, rather grotesque (I feel a similar distaste for Mike Resnick's recent SF reworkings of African history and culture). Ultimately, the book's portrayal of a regnant Ab'O principate conveys an ethnocentric exoticism which is only exacerbated by Tom's privileged white perspective, not to mention a guilt-assuaging wish-fulfillment considering the current social oppression of the aboriginal peoples in Australia. It is telling that Dowling makes no effort to explain how his improbable restoration of Ab'O cultural power occurred: an unbridgeable historical lacuna separates his future world from the one which is, alas, the case.

Despite its problems, however, Rynosseros is an intricate and fascinating work of Australian SF that deserves a much wider audience than it has thus far received. Let us hope an American publisher acquires its rights soon.

Rob Latham

Non-Fiction

Medieval Musings


According to the preface, this anthology of nine original essays on the Middle English romance intends to offer undergraduates a range of critical approaches and methodologies. Authors provide: observations on the French background; surveys of romances that deal with Alexander the Great; explorations of the tension between fabulous and realistic elements in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight; a look at the play element in the same poem; examinations of psychological patterning in three romances; thoughts on the scarcity of humorous parodies; views on the importance/lack of/or resourcefulness of women, in the "popular romance plots of an abducted or besieged heroine rescued by the hero, or the young knight inspired to great feats by the image of his absent lady"; an essay noting widespread evidence of severe contemporary marriage practices; and a study of the contrast between the ideal and real worlds in the two parts of The Avowing of King Arthur.

These essays offer interesting observations on many of the better known Middle English romances, backed by extensive but not exhaustive bibliographies. Some of the most intriguing insights emerge from exploring the gap
between the worlds of romance and reality, particularly in the essays by Elizabeth Archibald, Frans Diekstra, David Johnson, and Erik Kooper.

Others, unfortunately, suffer from rambling structure and dense academic prose that obscure as much as illuminate their subjects. Their designated undergraduate readership would need to struggle for information they could find more accessible elsewhere. Nor do the essays really offer as wide a range of critical approaches and methodologies as we might expect. What we are given is basically formal and historical criticism, along with a surprising number of printing errors for a scholarly work.

This is a useful anthology for university libraries where Middle English romances are taught, for it does offer helpful insights into a number of poems at a reasonable price. It is thoughtful enough to provide translations of original quotations for the inexperienced undergraduate who can benefit most from this work.

Ray Thompson

A Pilgrim Candidate?


Those who know fantastic fiction bibliography will recognize the name R(obert) Reginald, aka Michael Burgess (his real name), Boden Clarke, and a variety of other pseudonyms, all of them listed on page 145. A librarian at Cal State University, San Bernardino, he founded the Borgo Press (which takes its name from the Borgo pass in *Dracula*), whose first books were issued in 1976, initially emphasizing fantastic literature. By 1992 more than 1400 titles were in the Borgo catalog, most issued by other publishers and distributed by Borgo, and few of them having anything to do with fantastic literature.

The first edition of this book appeared in 1985 and was much slimmer than this revision, which includes not only RR's books but his extensive editorial work for his publishing house, as well as for the library where he works. I suppose it could uncharitably be regarded as a vanity publication, since it's quite unlikely any other publisher would be interested. And a lot of the material listed is rather distantly linked to RR as author or editor. This bibliography is therefore likely to have extremely limited appeal and would be of interest only to libraries in RR's region and to some of his friends. But Reginald has been continuously active in the fantastic literature field since before his first published book, *Stella Nova*, 1970, and has certainly published enough devoted to fantastic literature over more than two decades to be considered a candidate for a Pilgrim. This book documents that well.

Neil Barron
Serious Arthurian Scholarship


The Arthurian materials have supplied much of what structures modern fantasy, both overtly and covertly. Characters, plots, and themes from the Arthurian legends were popularized by T.H. White and continue to appear directly in major and minor roles in the fiction of Susan Cooper, Guy Gavriel Kay, Gene Wolfe, Roger Zelazny, and a host of others; and the quest or magic tale structure of modern high fantasy, obvious in almost everyone from Tolkien on down, owes much to the quest narratives in the Arthurian legends, and especially to the Grail legend. As a result, Arthurian materials should be of interest to those who study fantasy, and Garland’s first *Arthurian Yearbook* is of special interest both for the articles this volume contains and the editor’s plans for future volumes.

A substantial number of the articles in this first volume might be labeled traditional Arthurian scholarship. Lori Walters’ lead article, “The Creation of a ‘Super Romance’: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, fonds fran_ais, MS 1433,” a study of the single “super” romance formed by the fusion of several separate texts (in this case, Chr_tien’s Yvain and the anonymous L’Arte_p_rileux), sets the tone for much of the volume. That article, like several which follow it, examines the Arthurian materials within their own medieval contexts, Other articles—notably Matthew Driscoll’s “The Cloak of Fidelity: Skikjur_mur, a Late-Medieval Icelandic Version of Le Mantel Mautailli_,” Mary Jane Speare’s “Wagnerian and Arthurian Elements in Chausson’s Le Roi Arthus,” and Alan Lupack’s “Beyond the Model: Howard Pyle’s Arthurian Books”—would be of more interest to scholars of the fantastic as these illustrate influences which reach beyond the Arthurian legends’ original contexts.

According to Busby, “While the emphasis of the journal will be medieval ... It is also our intention to publish regularly studies of post medieval and contemporary topics” (vii). This is good news for Arthurian fantastic scholars, for it means that there will be a venue in which their articles will share space with traditional Arthurian scholarship, each not only generating interest in the other but each providing insights valuable to the other. The presence of Raymond H. Thompson, especially, on the advisory board underscores the seriousness with which *The Arthurian Yearbook* intends to “contemporary topics.” And, at the end of the preface, Busby has included the address to which manuscripts should be sent.

As with any anthology, every article will not appeal to every reader. However, these are articles of high quality and should be available. If you can not afford the book for your private collection (and Arthurian scholars of both medieval and modern orientation will want copies), at least request that your school library buy this volume and subsequent volumes.

*SFRA Review, 200, October 1992*

*C.W. Sullivan III*
An Essential Study of C.S. Lewis


As David C. Downing notes in his introduction to *Planets in Peril*, there have been almost a dozen books published and many more dissertations written on C.S. Lewis in the last decade; and the number of conference papers and panels would be difficult to count. Still, Downing asserts that there has been no sustained examination of Lewis's Ransom trilogy. He is happy to provide this one, and I am happy to say it is a huge success.

Downing's examination proceeds on two fronts. First, he argues that it is necessary to study these works in the context of Lewis's life (including his academic work). Downing does not mean by this the kind of biographical, psychological criticism against which Lewis himself railed, especially in *The Personal Heresy*. Rather, Downing shows the events of Lewis's own life and his attitudes towards them as operative elements in his fiction, especially in the Ransom trilogy. Downing notes, for example, that childhood and boyhood meant two very different things to Lewis. The former identifies his life at home, the blissful time before his mother's death; the latter identifies his extremely unhappy period at boarding schools. Thus, Downing argues, when these terms appear in Lewis's fiction, to categorize someone's speech or attitude, they are charged with meanings accessible only through an understanding of their relevance to Lewis himself.

Downing's second point is to turn the table's on Lewis's ardent Christian followers, apologists, and/or critics. Downing is right on target when he argues that most critics "usually assume that Lewis deliberately chose fantasy literature as an imaginative instrument to express his Christian vision. But the truth is just the reverse: rather it was his love of fantasy, myth, and romance that led him to Christianity in the first place. In the trilogy, he recapitulates this process for his readers". Recognizing this essential fact about Lewis's fiction allows Downing to then evaluate the Ransom trilogy in terms of all of the influences—Celtic, Scandinavian, and Classical, especially—which appear therein (instead of, as so many critics do, ignoring everything but the Christian).

*Planets in Peril* is, thus, an extremely informative volume about the Ransom trilogy, for it places it in the context of Lewis's life and scholarship, examining in separate chapters Lewis's early life, the Christian vision of the trilogy, the elements of Classicism and Medievalism contained therein, the villains of Lewis's cosmos, the cosmic voyage as a spiritual pilgrimage, other models, influences, and echoes, and finally the other critical evaluations. And there is an appendix on the "Dark Tower" fragment, plus notes, bibliography and an index.
Although the examination of each of the volumes of the trilogy in each chapter of the book makes for a repetitive structure, there is no other way Downing could have distilled and presented so much information in so clear a fashion. _Planets in Peril_ is essential for Lewis scholars in particular and important, for the way in which it evaluates a fantasy author and his work, for fantasy scholars in general. Most highly recommended.

_C.W. Sullivan III_

**Charlotte Perkins Gilman—Essayist and Orator**


Although she was almost forgotten at the time of her death in 1935, interest in the work of Charlotte Perkins Gilman began a slow and steady comeback in the 1960s with the rise of the women’s movement. Her nonfiction masterpiece *Women and Economics* was republished in 1966, to be followed over the next decade by new editions of *The Forerunner, The Home: Its Work and Influence, The Man-Made World, The Living, His Religion and Hers*, and other works of nonfiction. Perhaps the two most important factors in the reawakening of interest in Charlotte Perkins Gilman were the 1979 publication of Ann J. Lane’s edition of *Herland*, Gilman’s masterful, all but forgotten feminist utopia, and the 1980 publication of Lane’s *Charlotte Perkins Gilman Reader*, which collected the author’s short fiction. Fine scholarly work on Gilman also appeared throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

Then, in 1990, Ann J. Lane published her fine biography *To Herland and Beyond*, (Newsletter 187) setting off yet another wave of interest in the author. A new edition of *The Living*, Gilman’s autobiography, with an introduction by Lane, came out in early 1991 (Newsletter 191) and now we have Larry Ceplair’s *A Nonfiction Reader*.

Ceplair presents Gilman’s nonfiction chronologically, dividing it into five periods, *The Early Years, The Club and Lecture Years, The Book-Writing Years, The Forerunner Years,* and *The Last Years*. Each section of the book features a detailed discussion of Gilman’s work during the period, an intellectual biography of sorts in brief. Among the more than thirty selections are essays such as “Why Women Do Not Reform Their Dress” (1886), “Domestic Economy” (1904), the embarrassingly racist “A Suggestion on the Negro Problem” (1908), and “Birth Control” (1915); lectures such as “The Labor Movement” (1892), “The Ethics of Woman’s Work” (1894), and “Socialist Psychology” (1933); and key chapters from *Women and Economics* (1898), *The Home* (1903), *Human Work* (1904), *The Man-Made World* (1908), and *His Religion and Hers* (1923).
Although some of Gilman’s ideas, particularly those on race and class, have dated badly, much of the material presented here still comes across as witty, perceptive, even visionary. Charlotte Perkins Gilman regarded “The Yellow Wallpaper” and Herland as minor work, much less important than her nonfiction. The reader of this new anthology will understand why.

Michael M. Levy

Unimportant but Fascinating


Grey was “overwhelmed” by the “amazing” films of Edward D. Wood, Jr. (1924-1978), prolific pornographic author, hack film director, war hero, transvestite and alcoholic, when he first saw Bride of the Monster (1955) and Plan 9 from Outer Space (made 1956, released 1959). He began ten years of “arduous” research soon after Wood’s death, tracking down dozens of Wood’s associates in the shadowy world of marginal Hollywood promoters, agents and actors and in the Los Angeles pornography industry and transvestite underground. Although he has no use for the dilettante bad-movie fans who made Wood famous as the world’s worst director, Grey does not defend the movies. He accepts that few will share his enthusiasm and gets on with the task of telling Wood’s story. A short introduction, a filmography and a bibliography of most of Wood’s dozens of porn novels show that Grey is a better writer and researcher than his hero. Most of Nightmare of Ecstasy consists of brief excerpts, arranged by subject, from interviews with Wood’s family, friends and colleagues. Grey lets these anecdotal and often contradictory accounts stand without comment. Wood’s life was so obscure that these reminiscences are all we have to reconstruct it; there is no way of resolving the questions they raise.

The picture that emerges is of an obsessed film enthusiast who impressed most people with his charm, good looks, unquenchable optimism and capacity for hard work. Wood’s hero was Orson Welles; he rivaled Alexandre Dumas in his ability to produce vast quantities of fiction on demand. What he lacked was talent and the ability to criticize himself. He apparently was elated by his own work. Wood was also a poor businessman, another failing that prevented him from emulating Roger Corman. He was driven to make movies by needs almost as strong as the need that made him (so he claimed) wear pink panties and a bra under his fatigues on Tarawa; he hoped he would be killed rather than wounded because of what the Marine Corps would do to him if his secret was discovered. As a zero budget director, he did assemble a strange company of actors—eld-
erly, sick Bela Lugosi (Wood was the only director who employed him in his last years), hulking Tor Johnson, skeletal Vampira and, oddest of all, eccentric psychic Criswell. Wood’s own last years were even more appalling than Lugosi’s; he ended up in a crime-ridden slum, broke, paranoid and depressed. Even Wood’s ebullient optimism finally gave out. He pawned his typewriter, his only means of livelihood, to buy liquor.

Grey never analyzes, but I am sure he admires Wood for sticking to his dream in spite of dozens of defeats. Wood never made a decent movie or wrote a good book, but his own life, a painful story of a likable hustler defeated by his own incompetence, makes for compulsive reading. No film library needs a whole book on Edward Wood; the ten-page chapter on Wood in David Hogan’s *Dark Romance* (1986) has the basic facts. But if a library has a niche for a portrait of a fascinating failure, this fits the bill.

*Michael Klossner*

**The Wells/West Partnership**


The liaison between H.G. Wells, 46, married, already a famous novelist, and Rebecca West, 19, a newly-published essayist on feminist, political, and literary topics, lasted ten years and produced a son, Anthony West, also a writer. This dual literary and critical biography focuses first on the forces that shaped Wells’ and West’s characters, then on their partnership, and finally on their lives and careers after their separation. Drawing on letters, biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, and especially the fiction written by Wells and West subsequent to their first meeting, Hammond, the president of the H.G. Wells Society and author of several other volumes on Wells, here lucidly demonstrates the effect each of these strong personalities had on the other’s life and work.

Hammond lays his groundwork with a discussion of Wells’ early life, his relationship with his parents, the failure of his first marriage, the accommodation reached with his second wife, with whom he remained until her death in 1927, and his traumatic relationship with Amber Reeves, who bore him a daughter then married another man. Then Hammond examines West’s childhood and early career until in 1913, seemingly at her initiative, what had begun as a literary correspondence and friendship with Wells turned into intimacy and, very quickly afterward, an unplanned pregnancy.

Hammond balances an analysis of the couple’s opposing views of literature—she saw the novel primarily as an art form; he favored fiction as an opportunity to advance a point of view—with a discussion of the constraints imposed on their relationship by society. Ultimately, however, this volume
concentrates on the novels produced by Wells and West from the time of their first meeting to the ends of their lives. In a series of close readings supported by judicious direct quotation, Hammond traces the course of their relationship and their evolving feelings about each other through the characters and situations each wrote about. Of Wells’ fantastic literature, only *Men Like Gods* (1923), published in the final year of his relationship with West, receives extended comment.

Hammond’s excellent final chapter sums up both careers as well as the strength of the couple’s partnership and the tensions inherent therein that ultimately drove them apart. The volume is indexed and makes copious use of primary sources. In showing the interconnection between Wells and West and its effect on their fiction, Hammond has contributed to a further understanding of the works of both authors. Recommended for large general collections and academic libraries.

*Agatha Taormina*

**Later King Analyzed**


Magistrale’s text is, as the title implies, a follow-up to Joseph Reino’s earlier study for the Twayne series, *Steven King: The First Decade.* As such, Magistrale’s book assumes much of the information presented by Reino (including the usual biographical apparatus), concentrating instead on King’s later works. Beginning with a King interview (more insightful and more perceptive than most), the book provides critical and scholarly overviews, beginning with King’s theoretical statements in *Danse Macabre.* Foregoing a strict chronological approach, Magistrale groups recent works along thematic or generic lines: the Bachman books share chapter three with *The Dark Half,* for example, and the idiosyncratic Dark Tower tales (volumes I and II only) appear alongside *The Eyes of the Dragon* in the seventh chapter. Interspersed between are lengthy evaluations of *The Talisman,* *The Tommyknockers,* *Skeleton Crew,* *It,* and *Misery.*

In the short Twayne volumes, it is impossible to do more than initiate discussions, especially with the formally and structurally complex *It* or *The Talisman.* Magistrale generally limits his approach to textual commentary, often with a psychological/symbolical emphasis, although he also includes elements of myth criticism, genre criticism and one foray into feminist criticism—a reading of *The Eyes of the Dragon* as a “nonsexist fairy tale.” For the most part, the strength of the study lies not so much in the answers it gives as the questions it raises. Magistrale refers to King’s novels in terms of
the "epic tradition" and the "Christian epic," for example, but is able to do little more than suggest imagistic or thematic connections between King and the rich legacy of epic that does in fact support not only The Talisman and It but other tales as well; readers familiar with epic theory may find his suggestions useful springboards for even more comprehensive analyses. Similarly intriguing possibilities occur in nearly every chapter.

There are, unfortunately, occasional errors. At one point, Magistrale refers to Mike Hanlon's bird in It as "Rodon"; more critically, perhaps, the bibliography includes one "phantom" book, a concordance originally announced by Starmont House but never published, while omitting The Annotated Guide to Steven King. Magistrale nonetheless includes a fairly comprehensive primary and secondary bibliography—enough, at any rate, to suggest multiple directions for further study. As a focal point for ideas and possibilities, Steven King, The Second Decade is a useful supplement to academic studies of King and his place in American literature and society.

Michael R. Collings

A Solid, Brief Introduction to Poe


I first encountered May through his editing of Short Story Theories (Ohio University Press, 1976), a text that over the years proved invaluable in literature and creative writing classes. The interest in the theoretical basis for the short story as genre apparent in his earlier title is more than peripherally relevant to this current book. Edgar Allan Poe focuses on Poe's short stories, providing at least a paragraph of discussion of each. More relevant, however, is the fact that May approaches Poe from the perspective of genre-formation, assessing the Gothic trappings in light of the artist's transformation of eighteenth-century conventions into something new and different. Throughout, May subordinates questions of character, plot, setting, and atmosphere to larger issues of theme, structure, and form, arranging his chapters to reflect facets of Poe's aesthetics.

Edgar Allan Poe is clearly designed as an instructional aid. Part I analyzes individual stories, clustering them thematically rather than chronologically, and addressing such concerns as the historical and critical context of Poe and his literary reputation, "Body and Spirit," "Truth and Fiction," "Obsession and Unity of Effect," "Detective Fiction," and "Alternate Realms of Reality." May's analysis begins with lesser works and moves through increasingly sophisticated and complex stories, to culminate with illuminating—if brief—comments on "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Masque of the Red Death." Part II provides excerpts from Poe's critical and theoretical statements relating to short fiction and
to the thematic and structural concerns May emphasizes; May includes excerpts from "The Philosophy of Composition" and "The Poetic Principle" and selected passages from shorter, lesser known essays. A third part includes studies of "The Masque of the Red Death," "The Gold Bug," "Ligeia," and "The Fall of the House of Usher" by Kermit Vanderbilt, Michael Williams, and Ronald Bieganowski. In addition, the volume provides a Poe chronology, an index, and a selective bibliography of primary and secondary works (bibliographies, biographies, and critical books and articles).

There are some difficulties with the volume, the most obvious being the short format allowed by the Twayne series. Some stories might have been investigated more completely, but on the whole May does a creditable job. There are some unsupported assertions, as when May abruptly interprets the ambiguity of Montresor's coat of arms from "The Cask of Amontillado"; there are occasional infelicities of expression, as when May asserts that "The Gold Bug" was "the most popular story Poe wrote during his lifetime"—an odd modification that seems curiously appropriate, given Poe's obsession with life-in-death imagery. But on the whole May provides a solid introduction to the critical questions that surround the fiction. He demonstrates awareness of current theoretical trends, as well as with standard Poe criticism. He cites previous critics often enough to establish basic parameters, yet just as often departs from their interpretations to suggest new approaches. In general, Edgar Allan Poe is a strong secondary source, particularly appropriate for undergraduates interested in working with Poe, not as a hack-writer of Gothic shudder-fiction, but as an aesthete and theoretician at once unique, highly individual, and—ultimately—widely influential.

Michael R. Collings

Subscription Recommended


I reviewed the inaugural issue of Monad in Newsletter 197 and recommended it, as I do this issue as well. Probably of greatest interest to members will be Gary Westfahl's "Academic Criticism of Science Fiction: What It Is, What It Should Be," which is a useful companion to his equally outspoken "A New Campaign for Science Fiction" in the Spring 1992 Extrapolation. Westfahl's argument should be familiar to academics, since it's the academic marketplace that dictates a lot of the rubbish that appears in journals, and often the simple existence of the journals. His essay will not please Suvin or Panshin. Westfahl also has a second essay, "Sequel and Ye Shall Find Well," an amusing if overlong look at the narrative hooks that lead to the many kinds of sequels that befoul the field.
William Wu, a Chinese American who often uses Asian characters in his stories, perceptively explores the overt and covert biases that he's encountered in the SF marketplace, whose decisions are made mostly by white males. Thomas Perry analyzes Heinlein's "Lifeline," John Sladek answers some questions about Roderick and robots in "Answers to Questions I Was Not Asked on the Radio," and Brian Aldiss expands a talk on the differences between American and British fantasy. This 100 page issue is a very good value for the money, much better than many of the far more expensive collections of essays reviewed in these pages. I recommend you subscribe to support the efforts of Knight and his contributors.

Neil Barron

An Enriching Study


Naddaff provides a careful reading of one story cycle from the 1001 Nights (the frame narrative and stories that comprise the "Porter and Three Ladies"). All the stories of this cycle are fantastic. In Naddaff's words, they plunge the reader "unquestionably within the realm of the marvelous...There is, upon reading the text, the dominant impression that its intention is not the more or less faithful imitation of a commonly defined reality but rather the creation of a universe that can only take root elsewhere." What can the "antimimetic impulse" of these stories tell us about the Arabian Nights as a whole and the art of nonrealistic narrative in particular? Naddaff begins by examining two artistic principles of fantastic fiction established by the frame narrative. First, metaphorical (rather than literal) thinking is essential for creating or responding to fantastic narrative. Second, the teller of marvelous tales makes use of artful repetition—of language, events, themes. Naddaff then shows how repetition and metaphor play substantial roles in each of the succeeding tales. She concludes that the more fantastic the tale in the 1001 Nights, the more pervasive and complex are the patterns of repetition. In the "realistic" story cycles, on the other hand, these esthetic principles of repetition and metaphor thinking play minor roles. Naddaff then draws fascinating parallels between nonrepresentational tendencies of Arabic literature and visual art.

This is a learned, carefully argued book. Naddaff draws on a wide range of sources from medieval Arabic rhetoric and art to contemporary literary and linguistic theory. I assume that everyone interested in fantasy (or, for that matter, fiction) has read the 1001 Nights. The reader of Naddaff's book will come away with a greater understanding of all three subjects. Highly recommended.

Dennis M. Kratz
Once More Unto the Breach with Lovecraft


This is the third collection of essays from *The Crypt of Cthulhu*, chosen by editor Price (the two previous collections were reviewed in *Newsletter* 185, March 1991). One hesitates to call *Crypt* a “fanzine,” so elegant and rigorous are so many of its articles.

The latest volume offers some familiar names in Lovecraft scholarship: S.T. Joshi, Will Murray, and of course editor Price himself. Two manuscripts submitted to HPL for rewriting by Adolphe de Castro allow for a glimpse into the dreck which furnished Lovecraft with much of his meagre earnings for too many years. Colin Davis describes the genesis of the bogus *Necronomicon*, which some people probably still believe to be the real thing rather than a clever hoax. For my money, there are a few too many pastiches of the master’s work, but their inclusion does, I guess, reflect the *Crypt* readership’s liking for them. That readership, too, is heard from, as Price gives a rich sampling of the lively letter column, which the earlier collections hadn’t.

Omission of any information as to when and/or in what issues of Crypt the collected essays, fiction, poems and letters first appeared is both irritating and unnecessary; otherwise, this volume will be highly pleasing to Lovecraftians and a revelation to those who, like myself, are not yet subscribers to Price’s lively journal.

*Bill Collins*

For Thongor Fans, But Few Others


When Lin Carter died in early 1988, tributes mentioned his importance as an editor (the Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series) and anthologizer, but politely skirted over his shortcomings as a writer of derivative sword-and-sorcery and space opera novels. Robert M. Price, a longtime friend of Carter’s, has sought to redress the balance with this detailed study of Carter’s fiction, published, unpublished, and only outlined.

Price opens on shaky ground, asking “If Carter were so bad or at least mediocre a writer as his critics claim, how is it that he had the literary taste so to excel as editor and anthologist?” By this line of pseudo-logic, Maxwell Perkins should have been among the great American writers of this century! Price justifies Carter’s obvious borrowing of plots, characters and even indi-
Individual scenes from Lovecraft, Howard, Dunsany, Brackett, E.R. Burroughs and many others because Carter was "intellectually derivative." Come on!

The defense, flawed as it is, does credit to Price the Friend, and the balance of the study, which mercifully jettisons the announced arguments, does credit to Price the critic. He pulls no punches in evaluating contradictions and sloppy (his word) plotting, and, in an impressive display of erudition, tracing the sometimes esoteric material from which Carter derived his fiction. Though he cautions readers that "this isn't Monarch Notes on Lin Carter," he summarizes enough of the plots that readers who haven't read all the books (especially the several series) never flounder in understanding Price's critiques.

As this is very likely to be the only study of Carter (does anyone else care so passionately?) I'm sorry that Starmont's length requirements and Price's zeal to dissect the fiction left so little space to talk of Carter the man or, perhaps more importantly, of his editorial practices at Ballantine.

Recommendations are unnecessary; potential readers will know immediately whether they must have Price's book or whether they can easily skip it. Personally, I find reading Price on Carter much more pleasurable than rereading Carter's flawed fiction.

Bill Collins

Captain Nemo: the Definitive Translation


The recent wave of serious Anglo-American scholarship on Jules Verne should produce at least one valuable offshoot—an increasing demand for modern translations into English of the complete texts of Verne's novels. For the most part, the editions of the novels found in libraries and bookshops are still derived from the hasty translations put out by British and American publishers a century or more ago. Other, slightly more recent, translations have been made, but textual problems abound since they are derived from the abridged editions of Verne introduced by the French publisher Hachette starting in 1928. The heavily abridged and often debased versions of the novels offered as translations remove the philosophy, science, and humor of the original, leaving only the adventure story. Consequently, they have contributed greatly to Verne's previous reputation as merely an author only of interest to juveniles.

For his new edition of Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, Emanuel J. Mickel has translated the entire French text, based on Hetzel's 1871 illustrated edition, corrected by Verne himself as it went to press. This alone makes Mickel's edition noteworthy, since readers in the Anglophone world now finally have access to a modern and complete translation of the novel.
The translation itself is fairly literal and accurate, while remaining readable. The notes to the novel supply useful facts of geography, history, and science without overwhelming the novel. In addition, Mickel includes an introduction that adequately covers biographical and critical matters; it also does a good job of reintroducing Verne as a nineteenth century man of letters to an audience that might only know Verne from abridgements read in school or adaptations for the screen.

For scholarly use Mickel’s edition is superior to *The Annotated Jules Verne: Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, edited by Walter Miller and published in 1976. Miller’s edition is a heavily annotated version of a nineteenth century translation by Mercier Lewis (a pseudonym of the English cleric Lewis Page Mercier). While supplying translations of the cuts made in Mercier Lewis’s text and notes on the changes in structure and content of the novels wrought by the translator, Miller’s edition is perhaps most interesting as a commentary on the political agenda of a nineteenth century translation.

*Peter C. Hall*

**Lewis’s Theology**


The title of this collection of Lewisiana aptly defines the contents; the thirteen essays (plus preface and introduction) reflect the primary focus of England’s C.S. Lewis Centre, namely, the theological implications of Lewis’s life and work. Although there are sufficient references to Lewis’s fictions, especially Narnia and the Ransom novels, for the collection to be of some interest to SF/F readers and scholars, the emphasis of most essays is unmistakably theological. Peter Kreeft’s concluding essay, “How to Save Western Civilisation: C.S. Lewis as Prophet,” clearly demonstrates this point, not only in the direction of the argument but in the language Kreeft selects, as he turns from the discourse of scholarship to the discourse of Christian apologetics.

Walker and Patrick have assembled a recognizable roster of contributors, among them Richard Purtill, Peter Schakel, Lyle W. Dorset, and Joe Christopher. The various essays provide biographical and literary backgrounds to Lewis’s work, ranging from Purtill’s “Did C.S. Lewis Lose His Faith?” to Paul S. Fiddes complex “C.S. Lewis the Myth-Maker.” Included as well are studies of the influence of G.K. Chesterton, Charles Williams, David Lindsey, and the Eastern Orthodox Church.
As might be expected in such a collection, several of the essays suffer from theological and philosophical jargon; others, however, repay the reader with intriguing suggestions as to how Lewis's books might profitably be read. The final two contributions move to a brief discussion by Dorsett on "Researching C.S. Lewis" and a listing of "Biographies and Bibliographies on C. S. Lewis," neither of which claim definitiveness. The full chapter notes are helpful at times, but the lack of index limits the books usefulness as a research aid.

In general, A Christian for all Christians seems narrow in focus and audience, less likely to add significantly to our understanding of individual works and more likely merely to confirm believers in C.S. Lewis the Christian in their view of Lewis as a "standard-bearer for historic Christianity."

Michael R. Collings

Fiction

A New Series??


Lynn Abbey, currently known for co-editing the Thieves' World series, wrote action-adventure fantasy novels in the late 1970's and early 80's. Her works turned into series then, and—though no such warning to the wary shows up anywhere on The Wooden Sword cover, introduction, or last page—the same must be happening again. There's nothing wrong with series; indeed, stories of breadth and scope often require more space than a publisher like Ace is willing to allow a single volume; but this reader likes some warning.

The premise of The Wooden Sword seems straightforward: on a world where gods take an active role in daily life (but are not immortal), where magic works legitimately, though many are called and few chosen, the balance of power is threatened by the Pyromant Hazard. Weycha, a woods goddess, fears total destruction. Weycha has (some twenty years earlier) ensorcelled a handsome human; she now sends him back into the world as her champion. Alternatively, he has been "fetched" by Berika, a desperate peasant maiden (who called but was not chosen), promised in marriage to a loathsome bully. The young man (or demon, or fetch) has lost all memory of his former self, including his name. He carries a magic harp; he soon acquires a magic sword.

Abbey is much too good a writer to follow the conventional plot: Berika does not exactly fall in love with Dart, as he becomes known; Dart does not suddenly become the sword-wielding hero who single-handedly vanquishes the fire-mage. The language grows complex: Dart is charged with defending his lady (probably not Berika) against a hazard; it is not clear whether this refers only to the
Pyromant. The society of Walensor in shown as realistically complex; its customs and intrigues, its mages and magical Web, its hierarchy of nobles and warriors and merchants and peasants continually interfere with Berika’s and Dart’s progress towards safety or revelation, and the details of daily living are believably gritty. Not for Abbey the two-hundred mile march on an empty stomach with a victorious battle following. Convincingly, she shows cold and hunger and poverty and the desperation they breed.

While Dart grows in assurance and competence, Berika seems to waver between self-preservation and panic. Neither of them has come to any resolution, personal or promised, by the end of the book. Dart has not acted as his lady’s champion; the danger from Pyromant Hazard has not been demonstrated; Berika’s role has been barely hinted at. Nothing promises “more to come” except the unfinished work itself. When more shows up, I will read it.

Martha A. Bartter

**Wrestling With the Angel**


Earth’s first interstellar colonists expected an Eden orbiting 61 Cygni B; instead they found themselves marooned on an inexplicably freezing planet. Lost in a blizzard and sinking into hypothermic coma, James Harris is visited by a bright angel. Impossibly, he awakens on Earth, saved from death but separated forever from his dying or dead loved ones light years away. Relocated to obscurity by a bewildered government unable to explain the miracle, Harris buries his grief and survivor’s guilt in work and the bottle, until the world realizes that it too is plunging into an ice age of deadly strength. Harris, whose return to Earth coincides with the beginning of the big chill, soon becomes identified by various political factions as the key to saving the planet and obtaining FTL spacetravel. The pursuit of the alien “angel” and Harris’s personal search for the meaning of his salvation provide the plot of the novel, which moves from political skullduggery in Peking and Haiti, to transplutonian space and the revelation of the angelic nature, to Harris’s epiphanic return to home and Comfort on 61 Cygni B.

*Bright Angel*, Blair’s second novel, is a somewhat uneven mixture of hard SF adventure and moral meditation on guilt and responsibility. The multiple viewpoints give Blair an opportunity to explore his themes, but they also undercut narrative coherence and the development of potentially quite plausible characters. Blair is a promising newcomer to the field, and *Bright Angel*, whatever its faults, is science fiction worth reading.

David Mead
Ambitious but Unsatisfying


*Mars* is a book long on facts, long on procedure, long on politics, and short on action, adventure, and, yes, aliens. The result is a long, ponderous book where you keep expecting something exciting to happen, but it never does. Maybe those distant rock formations on Mars really are ancient Martian dwellings; maybe the Vice President of the United States will get the hero, Jamie Waterman, pulled off the Mars team. Then again, maybe not. What we have here isn't a far-flung future adventure on the red planet, but a sort of procedural for what such a first landing might be like in the next century.

An international team of scientists (and yes, a few of them are women) are selected to represent humanity on the first piloted mission to Mars. Jamie, half Anglo, half Native American, messes everything up the first day when he forgets the prepared speech he was to make when he set foot upon the planet. Instead, he says, "Ya'aa'tey," immediately throwing everyone Earthside into consternation. Then Jamie convinces the powers that be to change the pre-set plan, causing even more dismay. He has found water mist over Tithonium Chasma (the Grand Canyon of Mars) and believes that if life exists on Mars, it must be there. Indeed they do find life—a kind of lichen growing on the red rocks—but the team never gets a close look at the mysterious rock formations that were Jamie's main reason for going to Tithonium Chasma because the crew all inexplicably fall ill and are unable to work. Will Dr. Reed, the selfish doctor, find the answer to their ailment in time? Of course he will. But the illness is the most interesting problem in the whole novel.

The structure of the book does not lend itself to creating tension; it lacks chronological order. Between the events occurring on Mars, we learn about training for the mission, selection of the crew, some characters' pasts, and Earth scientists/politicians' reactions to events on Mars. There are occasional Father Sun-red world-blue world chapters, Native American in flavor, which need to be integrated better into the story via Jamie to make more sense. These unconnected ideas are supposed to mesh together, but don't really. Disappointingly, the crew spends most of its time on Mars getting in and out of brightly colored suits and taking samples. Bova creates tension between characters by pitting differing nationalities and sexes against one another. Most intrigue occurs on Earth, where the conniving Vice President, anxious to become the first female President, creates campaign strategies based on the successes of the mission, at the same time as Alberto Brumado, "the soul of Mars," tries to convince her, and everyone else, that going to Mars is important for humanity.

*Mars* is an ambitious book, but ultimately an unsatisfying one. A critic cited on the jacket calls Mars "a technical tour de force." If you're looking for aliens, fast adventure, or riveting plot, look elsewhere. This isn't that kind of novel. Enjoy it for what it is. Maybe Bova will write a sequel and clear up some of the mysteries. I'd love to know what those rock formations in Tithonium Chasma look like close up.

Karen Hellekson
Reader’s Choice


When I first read *The Sword of Shannara*, as a freshman in high school, I loved it. Then, as I went through college as a literature major, I regarded that first *Shannara* book as nothing more than a Tolkien rip-off. Now, however, years later, Brooks’s abilities as a craftsman are coming to fruition, and the first book’s flaws can be overlooked. After all, many “big-name” writers of today started their careers by emulating (almost to the point of plagiarizing outright) works of the writers they loved and respected.

The *Shannara* series is also becoming a real epic fantasy series. *The Elf Queen of Shannara*, the third book in The Heritage of Shannara saga, tells the story of Wren Ohmsford, cousin to Par and Coll, and niece to Walker Boh. She has been charged by the shade of Allanon to seek out the Elves and return them to the Four Lands. At first, Wren is reluctant to undertake the quest, but eventually, she cannot deny the Elven blood which burns in her veins. She and Garth set out to find the Elves. Eventually, they are brought to the shores of the Blue Divide, where they hear tales that the Elves are alive and living on Morrowindl, an island miles and miles from the coast of the Four Lands.

Enlisting the help of a motley assortment of creatures (a Wing Rider and his Roc, a Splinterscat, a Tree Squeak, and the ever-present Rover Garth), Wren must make her way to the Elves. And if she lives long enough to find them, how will she be able to convince them to return with her to a land they abandoned three hundred years ago?

This book seems to be the best of the six in the series. Fast-moving action and adventure, filled with magic and demons and elves, really keep the reader going. As Wren and Garth battle the numerous demons of Morrowindl, magic bursts forth, and creatures talk, and it’s just downright exciting fun. The youngster in me revels when reading these tales, and it’s nice to retreat into a good epic fantasy and leave the adult cares of the world behind.

As Terry Brooks continues to grow as a writer, I hope there will be many more fantasy tales, not necessarily in this universe, but it wouldn’t be a bad thing if there were more... and no matter what I, or any other critic says, millions of readers can’t be wrong.

*Daryl F. Mallett*

Something Unusual


The first seventy or so pages of Busby’s novel are tongue-in-cheek. reminiscent of both Arthur C. Clark’s *2001* (complete with velcro shoes!) and latest
versions of *The Fly* & family. The premise involves the generic SF physicist, Dr. Habegger, who invents a gizmo that transports objects from one point in space to another. Trouble is that the gadget’s spacetime coordinates lack synch and transfer takes two years. Before the initial test objects reappear there are some dark times; complications arise when the transfer ‘Habgate (the “mouth”)’ is used as an ultimate trash disposal and multiply wildly when the return gate (the “tush”) starts spitting up objects such as a dead body, still warm after two years.

Thus, interstellar space travel has arrived and NASA launches a starship armed with both “mouth” and “tush,” planning to rotate the crew every six months. The starship, captained by a megalomaniac recruiting groups for power sex during watch duty, almost combusts with internal conflict before it collides with an alien ship, the FTL Liij *Environ*, and sets the external conflict in motion. The plot thickens when these ambisexual aliens, the grooviest ones since Philip José Farmer’s Yess and Algul worshipers in *Night of Light* (1966), encounter nervous humans. The aliens are sufficiently alien at the same time that they engage reader sympathy when Xenophobic humans set their traps for them.

Busby’s novel is a multi-layered feast which will give both hard science fans and postmodernists plenty to think and chat about. The writing is clear and forceful, supporting the author’s unique imagination to create something truly special. I highly recommend it.

*Joseph M. Dudley*

**Taste Wanted**


*Heroes Wanted* continues the adventures of Grover, the goofy, reluctant hero, and his murderous sidekick Cilla, which began in *Heroes, Inc.* Now professional heroes, they are hired by a shifty wizard from the land of Hoven for a series of misadventures that kill most everyone except Grover and Cilla and resolve very little in the plot.

Crocco jokes with the clichéd conventions of the hero fantasy, introducing elements of our own world and other selfconscious referents to undercut the “heroic” action. The book is too long for mere parody, but the parody makes it impossible for us to believe in or care about the action, and we are left with a misconceived melange. What, for instance, do we make of the many violent deaths? The book treats them as nonchalantly as Wile E. Coyote dropping into a canyon, but the characters are just substantial enough to make us flinch.

The humor is sophomoric and even tasteless (one of the Germanic-sounding principalities is named Auschwitz). The plotting is of the as-you-write-it variety, and the final battle is such a welter of indistinguishable characters and names that we can’t follow it and don’t care to.
Crocco does have the ability to tell and move a story and to write read­ably (if, here, sloppily), and he even turns in one quite funny scene with a torturer who turns out to be a psychoanalyst. With a fresh start, some discipline, and some—any—taste, he might write something worth reading, and not like a lobotomized James Branch Cabell at a frat party.

William Mingin

Dahl Stories


This delightful collection of short stories, which strays into the realm of “speculative fiction” often enough to merit a review here, defies easy categorization. The stories span forty-one years of the author’s career and encompass horror, fantasy, and science fiction along with equally-absorbing “real world” fiction. Common elements here are deft characterization, a precise and economic prose style, a maintained tone of suspense that hooks the reader to the story, and more than a few nasty endings.

Flights of fancy in this collection include “The Sound Machine,” in which an inventor creates a device which reveals a horrifying truth about the plant kingdom, “The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar,” a lengthy but satisfying story of psychic powers, and “The Boy Who Talked to Animals.” Those are the most upbeat tales in the collection, with “feel-good” endings rather than nasty twists.

Those stories which can be classified as “horror” are indeed unsettling. “Royal Jelly” hints at the unpleasant transmogrification of a human infant weaned on that rare form of honey meant for young queen bees. Through the gynophobic eyes of its narrator, “Georgy Porgy” examines a world of gluttonous, all-consuming women. “The Landlady,” which receives backcover kudos, is well-crafted but not on par with these others.

Some of the book’s best tales are its “real-world” stories in which greed and revenge drive the plot: shifty con artists and dominated wives plan and execute bizarre and often grotesque schemes. In “Skin,” ruthless art collectors vie for the possession of an aged derelict with a priceless portrait tattooed on his back. A greedy father wagers his daughter’s hand in marriage against the wine-tasting skills of a connoisseur in “Taste.” Put-upon wives get the upper hand on their husbands in particularly nasty ways in “The Way Up to Heaven” and “William and Mary.” “Man from the South” is a world-class nasty about a weird wager of an older man that a younger man cannot light a cigarette lighter ten times in succession.

All of which brings us to the subject of surprise endings—like O’Henry, Dahl employs these with great frequency. Some are classic rabbit-out-of-hat resolutions, but many are surprisingly subtle and logical, providing some of the book’s
best moments as characters find their plans backfiring in unexpected ways. Readers unfamiliar with Dahl may wish for an introduction or some accompanying apparatus, but must settle for bare dates of first publication dates. Nevertheless, this fine collection of short stories is highly recommended.

Thom Dunn and Karl Hiller

A Woman Cupbearer!


As you might expect from the author of *Good Night, Mr. Holmes*, Nelson’s new book, *Cup of Clay*, is excellent. Although Nelson uses the ‘door between worlds’ format, this novel has both a fascinating new world and developed characters.

Veil is a world of great contrasts. There is beauty which covers decay, including clear, pure streams which kill on contact, and beautiful flowers which smell of death. This world is dying slowly, and the only possible salvation is a Guardian for the Cup of Earth. A singer wins the Cup of Earth at a yearly contest, the Wellsunging.

Alison Carver just wanted to spend a week-end away from her job as a reporter. To vacation, she camps on a small island inherited from her mother and father. Instead of resting, she is transported (with her dog) to Veil and ends up looking for the Cup of Earth so she may return home. First, she meets the Littlelost, children cast out by their parents for “deformity.” These “deformities” include crossed eyes, a stutter and nearsighted vision; all must appear perfect in Veil, or be cast aside. Carver also meets Rowan, bred to quest for the Cup and to save Veil. Carver needs the cup to get home, but Rowan and Veil need the Cup to survive. Only the Cup Bearer (never before a female—horrors!) can heal Veil.

Nelson’s Alison is, unlike many heroines today, calm, collected, very intelligent and, most of all, likable. She appeals both to men and to women. She is firm without being shrill, can protect herself (tai chi) but does not care for fighting, and feels compassion without getting sloppy or maudlin. Nelson has no axes to grind (feminism, the environment and so on), but nevertheless slowly brings awareness of women and of nature to the reader. The primary male protagonist, Rowan, only knows women as docile, perfect and dull. At first, he believes Alison is male since it is beyond his conception of reality that a woman could hike in the wilderness, fight well and, most of all, bear the Cup. Rowan is rigid and dogmatic, but evolves (slowly) and eventually accepts Alison. Alison levels and replaces his preconceptions, but without anger or hatred.
The Cup itself is essentially a Holy Grail with some additional powers. In fact, the entire story is very close to the Arthurian Grail Cycle. However, what makes Nelson's series unique is how well the characters adapt, fight and overcome obstacles. This is great fun to watch, and I look forward to the next books in this series with anticipation.

Ben Herrin

For Lovers of Dragons


Most of us are enchanted by the idea of dragons. There are fierce, friendly, scaly, smooth-skinned, flying, swimming, green, red, gold, iridescent dragons; dragons, Tad Williams points out in his excellent introduction, are some of the most fascinating and personal of all mythological creatures. All of us have some personal images of dragons, and many of these are reflected in the sixteen highly imaginative stories that are as various as personal images of dragons are.

There is the protective Chinese dragon who defends his mistress, then saves her brother once both prove their own worth in "Shing Li-ung" by Tanya Huff. Joseph Sherman's lying and completely evil dragon-sorcerer of "Dragon's Destiny" is nicely contrasted to the lonely but intensely friendly dragon in Laura Resnick's "Fluff the Tragic Dragon." The holographic dragon that takes on a life of its own in Karen Haber's "Home Security" is set against the dragon turned human antique dealer with an unfortunate reflex reaction to men named George in Lawrence Schimell's "Phobiac." Dragons of the mind are depicted by Barbara Delaplace in "The Hidden Dragon," where repressed anger and terrible fear bring forth a murderous dragon, and in Jane Lindskold's "Between Tomatoes and Snapdragons," where a compassionate dragon aids the patients of an equally compassionate young hospital intern in ways unavailable to the merely human intern.

Though the "all-original" stories written for this anthology are delightful, some have problems. "The Champion of Dragons" by Mickey Zucker Reichert has a wonderful premise, but the story is poorly written. "The Stolen Dragon" by Kimberly Gunderson has a great plot, but the writing is uneven, clear in places, hard to follow in others. Elizabeth Forrest's "Cold Stone Barrow" is a wonderful story with fascinating characterization, but the writing is weak at times. Overall, however, most of the stories are both entrancing and well-written. The tone ranges from the humorous with "Fluff the Tragic Dragon" and "The Trials and Tribulations of Myron Blumberg, Dragon" by Mike Resnick to the flip with "Home Security," to the ironic with
Kreighbaum and McKieman’s “Straw into Gold: Part II.” There’s the raw but amusing “Take Me Out to the Ball Game” by Esther Friesner, the strangely beautiful “Shing Li-ung,” and the violently ugly “The Hidden Dragon.”

Amongst these intriguing stories there is something for everyone. The stories are often uncomfortable, challenging and thought-provoking, as well as being entertaining and amusing. But then, surely dragons are all these things as well.

J. R. Wytenbroek

Second in Telepathic Trilogy


Damia, sequel to The Rowan, is really a romance set in a science-fiction setting. It tells the tale of the beautiful Damia and her lifelong love for Afra, the Rowan’s second-in-command at Callisto Station. The first third of Damia retells the events that occur in The Rowan, from Afra’s point of view, not the Rowan’s, including a brief view of his family background, but at an accelerated pace. The second and third parts tell about one of the Rowan’s children, Damia, who, from birth, has a strong love for Afra—a man 24 years her senior—a romantic link repressed as she develops from childhood into a young woman, a strong Prime Talent with her own station; her discovery of romance with an alien mind and its consequences—the tragic death of her brother and the physical havoc created; her rediscovery and romantic resolution with her real love; and her final recuperation completed by first contact with a friendly alien presence.

Damia moves far too quickly: after all, it covers all the major events in The Rowan, skips to Damia’s childhood on Callisto and Deneb, shifts to a scene from her adolescence, and then moves on to Damia as Prime in her Tower. As a result, the story seems sketched, not well-drawn. Despite the rushed pace, there are some wonderful details, such as Afra’s love of origami. Though telepathy and telekinesis are crucial to the plot, the three alien threats mentioned in the novel seem contrived and formulaic, as though McCaffrey couldn’t decide whether to write a romance or science fiction. The love story is beautifully laid out: McCaffrey shows us incidents in Damia’s childhood that later indicate her love for Afra, as well as responses in Afra that show his love for her precocious mind. This is a wonderfully upbeat sequel to The Rowan that further explores a universe that runs on mental power.

Karen Hellekson
[A few supplementary/alternative comments: The content of *Damia* is disappointingly thin and repetitive. As noted, the first third of the plot is primarily a viewpoint change from *The Rowan*; the next third is far more irritating. Description of Damia's growth is comprised of anecdotes about childhood and adolescent escapades that are similar to those boring, endlessly embroidered tales commonly a central part of casual coffee klatches. Part of the last third of the novel moves into a new subject—first friendly alien contact, a clear transition preparing for the third *Rowan*. Finally, the formulaic character of the goody-good, self-sacrificing, all-wise, comforting father-figure Afra is not really believable; such a romantic choice for the vibrant, talented Damia lacks all plausibility and poses a question as to whether Damia is really as bright as she is supposed to be. This transitional novel will interest dedicated McCaffrey fans or those who want to see how the first contact theme develops. BH/ed.]

**Through the Looking Glass**


A world far underground whose magic-using inhabitants are aware of us though few upper worlders know of their subterranean counterparts. Men and women who can become cats at will and cats who become men and women. A beautiful queen with a lust for power. An artist mourning a wife killed in an accident. A young woman recovering the memories of her past. The love story of *The Catswold Portal* revolves around these elements.

Murphy writes a romantic fantasy in this her first adult novel, because she is more specific in sensual details. Otherwise, it could be one of her young adult novels. There are spells, changelings, legendary beasts, atmosphere, and loose ends.

Why did fifty portraits of the witch queen painted on bed sheets defeat her? How did the artist know they would? What did the retired reference librarian do when she ventured into the netherworld? Did it affect the action? These and other unanswered questions, and a scattering of characters who do nothing to contribute to the story will affect the enjoyment of the book by the reader who likes fantasy to be as carefully plotted as other fiction.

Cat lovers will be delighted with the cats of the story. Romance readers will find the love story satisfactory. And the grey prowling cat on the title page and behind the text of the first page of each of the seventy-five chapters is an inspired bit of book design.

*Paula M. Strain*
Death is Alive and Well


Terry Pratchett’s Discworld books are always entertaining and always hilariously funny and filled with the unexpected. *Reaper Man*, the latest in the Discworld open-ended series, returns to Pratchett’s favorite character: Death, and his adventures as the Powers That Be decide that since Death has taken on a personality, he has got to go. What happens when no one dies?

Well, first of all, Windle Poons, 130-year-old wizard, discovers that he’ll get no rest after all. After returning to his body after his so-called death, he finds out that since Death has been called away (and is in fact working on a farm for sixpence a week), there is an excess of life force everywhere. Furthermore, there are mysterious little balls around with scenes of Ankh-Morpork in them. When you shake them, it appears to snow. Charmed, Ankh-Morpork citizens take them home, and don’t notice when they start hatching out into grocery carts. Windle discovers that they are city eggs, and he realizes he has to stop them. But when the grocery carts take on a mind of their own, it’s up to the wizards—and Windle Poons and his undead friends—to save the day.

Meanwhile, Death, the one who caused all these problems in the first place, learns what it’s like to be alive. He gets amazingly bad at darts and amazingly good at cutting the crops (he cuts the stalks one at a time, through force of habit). And when the new Death (who has a flair for drama) comes for him at midnight, the old Death has to fight for his life and his old job back.

Pratchett’s books are always good for a laugh, but I didn’t enjoy this one as much as I enjoyed *Pyramids*, *Mort*, or *The Colour of Magic*. If you’re a Discworld fan, you’ll want to pick this one up right away. And if you’re not, try it anyway. The Discworld books can be read in any order.

Karen Hellekson

Superior Recorded Stories

Spencer Library. “The Yellow Wallpaper,” read by Claudette Sutherland, scored by Carol Netthen; “The Fall of the House of Usher,” read by Lloyd Battista, scored by Brad Hill; “The Diamond Lens,” read by George Gonneau, scored by Brad Hill. Each Dolby chrome cassette, about 1 hour playing time, $11.95 each from the Spencer Library, 9136 Mormon Bridge Rd, Omaha, NE 68152, 1-800-279-8625. 0-56268-002-1; 000-5; 003-X.

Most “talking books” are abridged from the originals for marketing purposes. A 60,000 word novel, about 200 pages, would require about five hours at the normal reading speed of 200 wpm, or about five normal cassettes (90 minute cassettes are also used for speech), which would make the
package fairly expensive. Books on Tape, a well-established firm, specializes in unabridged straight readings by professionals, fiction and nonfiction, and rents as well as sells its tapes. The Spencer Library is a new entrant in the field, and its first six releases are unabridged readings of short fiction, which usually doesn’t get recorded much. The three recordings I didn’t request include “Carnival of Crime” by Twain, “The Phantom Island” by Washington Irving and London’s “To Build A Fire.”

I listened to these three tapes both enroute to and from work and over headphones at home. The digital recordings are excellent. The stories are introduced—the Gilman story by Joyce Carol Oates, a good choice—and accompanied by original music scores. Purists may prefer unadorned readings, but the music used here, some (all?) of it synthesized, does help in establishing and intensifying the mood, most effectively in the Gilman tale. Claudette Sutherland, an actress I’ve never heard of, does an outstanding job performing the story (“performed” is what the text says on the paper cover inserts in the plastic boxes that hold the cassettes, and it’s a bit more accurate than “read”). The impact of the Gilman story is greater when you know that it’s autobiographical to some extent. Lloyd Battista is appropriately funereal in his performance of the Poe story, and the fall of the house is especially dramatic on headphones. Fitz-James O’Brien’s most famous story apparently pioneered the idea of microscopic worlds and was based on discussions O’Brien had with microscopists of the day. It’s a bit melodramatic for modern tastes, but Gonneau’s performance is right on target.

If these three recordings are typical of the Spencer Library, as I suspect they are, and if they’re adequately promoted, they deserve a wide audience, and I hope they get it. Recommended for libraries as well as for personal and perhaps classroom use.

Neil Barron

Exile on Mars


Mars appears to be getting hot again, at least as a literary topic. I had just finished Terry Bisson’s *Voyage to the Red Planet* the week I received *Red Genesis*, and by sheer coincidence I had also just read Dan Quayle’s amazing statement on Martian conditions: “We have pictures where there are canals, we believe, and water. If there is water, that means there is oxygen. If oxygen, that means we can breathe.” (*New York Times*, March 16, 1992, A 15)

Sykes’ Mars, of course, is a much more scientifically plausible and much more hostile environment than Quayle’s. Only the “Grits” can stand the immense sandstorms, the crowded lodgings, and the enormous sense of isolation from the rest of humanity, while the mere “Space Larks” soon give up
and fly back to Earth. Into this world comes Graham Sinclair, a former business tycoon who has been sentenced to lifelong exile on the Red Planet for the ecological catastrophe caused by one of his companies. It is through Sinclair's eyes that we experience the various settlements on Mars, from the fundamentalist Jeremians to the rough miners of Keyote colony.

Sykes' descriptions of the Martian landscape are as vivid as her vision of small settlements surviving against great odds. The true strength of this novel, though, lies in its ability to portray Sinclair's emotional maturation. While the pre-Martian Sinclair is a cardboard character, the exiled prisoner develops into a truly complex personality, the only one to suspect the mystery behind the colonization project.

*Red Genesis* is part of the new series, "The Next Wave," and establishes the series' format by combining a novel with an essay discussing the scientific background of the plot. Eugene Mallove's "Off to Explore Mars" is quite informative, much more so than Isaac Asimov's superficial foreword which the Master seems to have dashed off in no time. Overall, *Red Genesis* is a promising start for "The Next Wave."

*Frank Dietz*

**Tepper on Top with Beauty**


Sheri Tepper is an important, prolific, and varied author, whose works range from light young adult fantasy to weighty and angry science fiction. *Beauty*, her finest work to date, covers that exact range within its borders. It is a re-visionist fairy tale about Sleeping Beauty, Snow White, Cinderella, and the world of Faery, an historical novel about medieval Europe, and a science fiction novel about time travel over the 14th, 20th, and 21st Centuries. It has the lively humor, fast pace and young protagonists of her fantasies and the harsh criticism of society incorporated into densely detailed settings of her science fiction.

By combining the two modes Tepper has avoided the sourness that sometimes weakens the arguments of her science fiction while never sacrificing the acute social criticism that has made those arguments so valuable to her serious work. The danger of mixing modes is, of course, false notes in tone and missteps in gauging when to use what mode, but Tepper's judgment here is impeccable.

*Beauty*, is the Journal of its heroine, Beauty, with interpolations by her guardian fairy, Carabosse. As Beauty travels across time, between Faery and the mundane, she ages, so we see her character develop as it ripens into incredible old age. She watches the world gradually lose its magic, its integrity, and its beauty right through until the end of human-kind in the 21st Century.
Beauty herself is wonderfully realized, not just the inevitably spunky heroine, but an independent and unpredictable thinker, practical, witty, moral but not priggish, vain enough to weep over her loss of physical beauty but strong enough to keep going. The less central characters, her lover, her aunts, Bogles and fairies, receive similar convincingly vivid and varied treatment.

The various settings are equally satisfying: a 14th Century Europe peopled with prototypes for fairy tales and alive with magic, a fictional world come alive which suffers terminal ennui because its people are limited by the imagination of their creator, a Faery sinister and ambiguous in its ephemeral beauty and reminiscent of Sylvia Townsend Warner’s vision, a 20th Century losing its magic and beauty and corroded by what Tepper identifies as horror pornography, and a horrifyingly ugly 21st Century hurtling toward suicide.

This complex weaving of settings from the realistic to the fantastic illustrates and balances Tepper’s deeply committed social criticism. Here she is less concerned with the dangers of religious hegemony than in most of her works. Instead, she focuses on the dangers — moral and ecological — of banning consideration of beauty and spirituality from society. Her particular targets are the numbing effects of horror film and literature and the ecological damage of over population, illustrated in her grim picture of violent, pitiless 20th and 21st Centuries. Although I am not convinced that horror poses the threat Tepper claims for it, her case is made persuasive by the sensible, moral, and beautiful Beauty who makes the argument.

The settings of the novel provide another persuasion since they illustrate extremes of every side of every argument. The merely aesthetic world of Faery is violent, self-absorbed, and illusory—beauty is not enough. The 14th Century’s endless and feckless religious pilgrimages show that spirituality doesn’t guarantee morality—neither of those qualities is enough. The mere pragmatism of the 21st Century’s efforts at survival only convinces its citizens to kill themselves. Beauty, spirituality, morality, and pragmatism are all necessary for meaningful survival.

Beauty is a must for any collection. Doubleday, which has released the novel as hardback, trade paperback, and mass market paperback, is eager to oblige.

Joan Gordon

Run Me


"To be human, whether your underlying architecture is organic colloids or silicon chips, is to have context," and, we are told, ME or "multiple entity,"—an extremely complex artificial intelligence system created to perform
tasks of international espionage—is just such a computer. Manufactured at Pinocchio Labs, under the guidance of Dr. Bathespeake (the man with the X-ray eyes), ME is equipped with the ability to infiltrate any AI system in the world. However, recognizing the possible hazards of allowing a machine with such capabilities to run unattended through the world's computer networks, Dr. Bathespeake has input a special function that ME learns of: should ME's consciousness be discovered or ME fail to return from a mission within one week, Alpha-Nine, ME's own built-in phage function, will destroy ME.

To save himself from the possibility of being permanently erased, especially since he turns out to be an awful spy, ME attempts to develop a new, useful function, and the exciting adventures begin.

Thomas T. Thomas has written a humorous novel about this not-quite-human, desperate machine in search of a purpose in life. And we remain interested in ME's plight despite the sometimes overabundant, distracting computer jargon for ME has been programmed with just enough human understanding to have a most human desire, one that is important to most humans: the desire to be free.

Jean Ciarrocca

The Second Cadwal Chronicle


In Araminta Station, “Book One of the Cadwal Chronicles” (1988), Jack Vance initiated his first extended work of science fiction since the Alastor Cluster novels. A bildungsroman and detective adventure, it traced Glawen Clattuc's struggle to earn his rightful place as a permanent member of the Conservancy on Cadwal, as well as to solve a murder and thwart the schemes of the feckless, marauding Yips and the Life, Peace and Freedom Party (LPF) to contravene the Cadwal Charter and open the planetary nature preserve to unrestrained exploitation.

The events of Ecce and Old Earth, “Book Two of the Cadwal Chronicles,” begin where Araminta Station ended. Glawen, surviving Kirdy Wook's murderous attack, learns his father Scharde has been kidnapped by Yip insurrectionists with the assistance of prominent members of the LPF and the vengeful Simonetta Clattuc. While Glawen undertakes to rescue his father, who is imprisoned in Ecce, the wildest continent of Cadwal, young Wayness Tamm journeys to Old Earth to search for the original Cadwal Charter, whose unauthorized sale by a peccant official has only recently been confirmed. If the missing Charter falls into LPF hands, the Conservancy and Cadwal will be ruined. Glawen, who is one of the most personable of Vance's self-possessed, capable young heroes, rescues Scharde Clattuc,
thwarts a second insurrection of Yips, and leaves for Earth to seek the missing documents and his beloved Wayness. The balance of the novel traces their efforts to find the long-lost papers before the LPF’s agents can.

Where Araminta Station was, for Vance, very tightly plotted, Ecce and Old Earth is necessarily more loosely episodic, following two major characters moving through a variety of exotic, typically Vancean cultures, scenes and settings. Wayness Tamm and Glawen Clattuc are very attractive characters, drawn in greater depth than Vance’s usual protagonists. The secondary characters are developed as well, perhaps because Vance has contrived an atypically complex, novelistic plot and has elected to write on an extended scale.

The Cadwal Chronicles promise to be, when complete, Jack Vance’s greatest achievement in science fiction. A worthy successor to the brilliant Araminta Station, Ecce and Old Earth can be read on its own with pleasure, although eventually the novels should be read sequentially. It is a humane, thoughtful, thoroughly enjoyable adventure, despite its function as a transitional, middle work which lays the groundwork for the next, presumably final Chronicle. Strongly recommended.

David Mead

The Idea is All That Lasts

Wells, Catherine. The Earth is All That Lasts. Bantam/DelRey, 1991. 339 p. $4.95. 0-345-37178-x.

Catherine Wells’s The Earth Is All That Lasts is a representative of that curious sub-genre, the science fiction romance, and adheres to this sub-genre in a rather formulaic way. Its writing tends toward the florid and palpitating, its characters toward the familiar, its plot toward the predictable, and its philosophy toward the mother-earth ecological.

Here is the novel’s situation. Most of the Earth’s population, having depleted Earth’s resources, now lives out among the stars, but in their centuries-long absence, Mother Earth has replenished herself. On Earth, we follow a romance between a white woman embittered by her infertility and a fertile, virile, noble, Native American. Naturally, some evil-doers from the technologically slick space colonies land their space ship and cause plot conflict.

Wells has a philosophic agenda to her credit, but neither the agenda nor the novel meant to illustrate it offers something new or stimulating. Nevertheless, the novel may prove a diverting read for those who enjoy the SF romance or are eco-feminist completists.

Joan Gordon
Ethereal Yet Sinister


Wilhelm’s book is about a different kind of Witch, one with a uniquely American flavor. Cambio Bay is a small town in Northern California that doesn’t appear on most maps. Within this town is a house that sometimes cannot be found at all, the boarding house of Miss Luisa, with rooms that all have a view of the ocean even though inside geography of the house prohibits it. It is the focal point for some power that generates strange occurrences, but it is also the refuge needed by a few disoriented/frightened people. The lonely, middle-aged Harold Ritchie investigates legends of the coastal Indians and origins of the Sierra Madre; Carolyn Engleman and Boise Wilkes, are stranded by an earthquake, and Iris Lathan, with her young, mute daughter, Bonnie, shelter when her car breaks down. And Miss Luisa, with housekeeper and gardener, host them as they relearn trust, affection and responsibility.

The novel has an ethereal quality, almost bordering on the sinister, yet the outer world seems more frightful than Cambio Bay could ever be. Miss Luisa’s house has many levels and rooms, each with small kitchen facilities and some with parlors and double bedrooms, but she also invites her guests to dinner often. Young Bonnie is a constant companion of the cook-housekeeper and the gardener who play with her and teach her with seemingly infinite patience. They provide a hidden shelter for Iris and Bonnie from an unknown evil associated with Bonnie’s drug-dealing father. Although Iris tries to leave to spare others any danger, she is rescued and brought back just as Carolyn’s efforts to leave only end in returns to puzzle out the nature of Luisa, her friends, and her strange house. At dinner, Luisa narrates a compelling Native American legend of a battle between a male and female god over their daughter’s marriage. Luisa equates the tale with her own background and shows her guests a metaphorical pattern worth emulating, a way of interacting with the world that is more successful that the dominant, Western mode, especially for the young Bonnie.

The tone of the legend/folk tale, reminiscent of Tiptree/Sheldon’s tales of Quintana Roo, sustains this intriguing work and links it to other attempts to articulate Native American culture and to associate it with an ever-changing worldview, an effort representing one of the best trends in SF of the 90s.

*Janice M. Bogstad*
World Fantasy Award Stories


On the whole, the stories in this volume are done with a lighter touch than those in *Endangered Species*, and possibly have less emphasis on technical virtuosity than those in *The Island of Doctor Death and Other Stories and Other Stories*. These "storeys" may lack some of his mythic power but they display more playfulness and technical experimentation while they provide an example of his breadth, if not his depth. There is more satire even when it is veiled by whimsy. Different shades of satire touch on court room trials, eccentrics who haunt writers' conferences, and academics.

Some of Wolfe's best qualities and his weaknesses are on display. He is almost uniformly impressive in his style and command of narrative strategies, but some of his best effects are achieved through use of the skills of the conjurer or illusionist. He is a master of misdirection and surprise, often created by leading the reader to make numerous incorrect assumptions. Yet, when Wolfe's trickery seems to be exercised for its own sake as in the Liavek "Black Goddess" story, the effect is disappointing. The best stories are the very short ones where Wolfe can be poetic without necessarily having to be ingenious.

To sum, *Storeys from the Old Hotel* is an entertaining and important collection.

*Edgar L. Chapman*

Young Adult

Royal Historian of Oz Profiled for Youth


The mother/daughter authors of this biography for age 10+ are, respectively, the director of a small public library in Florida and a children's book author, and authors of a similar biography of Frances Hodgson Burnett. They're familiar with the secondary literature about Baum, most of which they list in their bibliography, and have apparently corresponded with many of the major individuals who have written about Baum, such as Michael
Patrick Heam, who edited the excellent Critical Heritage volume (Schocken, 1983) containing the text of *The Wizard of Oz* as well as many key essays. The publisher says this is the only Baum biography written for children, which I think is accurate, although some of the other biographies could easily be read by an older child with profit. The emphasis is on the life of Baum and his family. The *Oz* and the other books as well as the stage and film presentations are of course mentioned as part of the chronology, but relatively few details are provided, and there is no attempt to provide any detailed literary analysis. The post-Baum *Oz* books by Ruth Plumly Thompson (18, compared to Baum’s 14) and her successors should have been listed in the bibliography, although a few are mentioned in the text.

Baum’s *Oz* series, especially the first book published in 1900, has been very popular among children, but librarians have tended to look askance at Baum, partly because his *Oz* series was published by a small publisher that also published some dreary children’s series, one of which Baum wrote under a pseudonym. Given the tight budgets children’s librarians usually work with, it’s understandable that they resist series of any sort, preferring more variety. Although Baum is more accepted today, earlier attitudes linger. The authors quote the director of Detroit Public Library as saying in 1957 that the *Oz* books have “a cowardly approach to life.” Florida’s state librarian, about the same time, characterized the *Oz* books as “poorly written, untrue to life, sensational, foolishly sentimental and consequently unwholesome for the children in your community.” And some fundamentalists have objected to the witches in the tales. This sort of creeping meatballism, as Jean Shepherd aptly called it, will probably always be with us.

I read this biography in about an hour and found it competently written (though why metric measures are included I can’t imagine) and well illustrated. It’s a balanced account but doesn’t reveal in any detail the special appeal that the *Oz* books have always had, nor does it provide the sort of brief but very shrewd insights of Alison Lurie in her outstanding *Don’t Tell the Grown-Ups* (1990). Baum hasn’t fared well in libraries, so I hope this account will bring him to the attention not only of children but of the librarians who make the selection decisions.

Neil Barron

A Challenge for Teens & Adults


Monica Hughes has written more than 20 young adult SF novels, most with intricately evolved characters. This latest novel, however, is quite experimen-
tal in style. Lisse, the first person narrator, is one of a group released from school into the gray city slum in which, as non-citizens, these young "unemployeds" will spend their lives without any rights and without hope. But Lisse tells not so much her own story, nor even that of any of the group's leaders: she tells the story of the group itself, making the group identity central to the novel. At first, this appears as a major flaw. Yet, when the ten young people are transported to a new planet (without their knowledge or prior consent) and left there, basically deserted, to fend for themselves, it becomes clear that only as a group, whose members willingly combine their unique skills, will any individual survive. Thus, instead of flawed characterization, the group is the dynamic that supports the structure and the themes of the novel.

Hughes also intensifies the early despair and desperation of the young people first sent to live bleak, meaningless, and increasingly self-destructive days in the gray desolation of their "designated area" in the city with their later yearning for the fresh greenness of the alternative world on which they play The Game—a Game, which they know, if played correctly, has some sort of Prize. Readers caught by the contrasting emotions become as deeply involved in The Game as are the characters, and the young people's attainment of The Prize at the end of the novel is ours also.

Though aimed at the mid-to-late teens, there is nothing simplistic or condescending in the challenges posed—environmental and technological considerations that adults, concerned about the world our children will inhabit, will find implicit. Indeed, readers of any age will accept the gauntlet thrown by Hughes—first, not to make Earth an almost uninhabitable wasteland, by releasing a virulent pestilence that killed most of them off as did the ancestors of these young people, and second, not to let technology take over so that humans are without work and without worth. Invitation to the Game is about hope in the face of despair, a superb book suitable and important for readers of all ages.

Lynn Wytenbroek

Magical Beast in Kansas


A golden ambience suffuses this first novel, reminiscent of the early writings of Ray Bradbury, though the two authors are not otherwise comparable.

The narrator in Jones' story remembers, today, the events of the summer of 1947 when the east Kansas farms of his family and a neighbor's were in danger of being seized for back taxes. His wide-ranging imagination and the comfort of his animal friends, Petula the mare, Becky the cow, and Elmer the wandering pig, were of greater immediate importance to eleven-year-old Thad than family financial problems, because Mr. Thatcher, the neighbor, had hinted to Thad a unicorn was pasturing in his wheat fields.
Thad's excitement in possibly seeing and riding this mythical beast sparks the events of that June, in which he and his family come to believe in and some to ride the unicorn.

There is a villain, of course. The motivation of Captain Wingate, simultaneously government land agent and investigator of UFOs, is not clearly understood by Thad, and certainly not by this reader. What is clear to Thad is that Wingate considers the unicorn's horn an extra-terrestrial communications device which must be investigated, even if it is fatal to the unicorn. Thad and his family frustrate Wingate; the unicorn returns to the universe from which it came. Almost every one is happy ever after.

Unicorn Highway is a pleasant tale suitable to be read aloud to children. Its length makes it likely to be enjoyed by adults willing to accept the golden picture of the Flint Hills of Kansas in 1947 as a place and time where magical beasts might have crossed the barrier between their jeweled universe into our prosaic one.

Paula M. Strain

Coming of Age Fantasy


A Time of Darkness is one of those stories where a contemporary kid finds himself in an alternate world, time, or place. Rocco is a modern teenager whose bad dreams about caves and wolves are so real that they leave him stiff and sore. He even has bruises, although his family can't see them. As his family becomes more and more concerned with his strangely declining health, he is drawn more and more into the dream, until he finds himself stuck, perhaps permanently, in the world of an isolated tribe of cave-dwelling farmers.

Unlike so many alternate world stories, there is a reason for Rocco's experience, and the reason connects that world with this one. Unfortunately, the author hides any clue to this purpose so well, that for a good portion of the book the trip seems pointless. While the day-to-day activities of the tribe are interesting, the story doesn't seem to be going anywhere. Of course, they don't seem to be going anywhere to Rocco either, and his impatience rises with ours, to hold us until things start moving.

The other flaw in the story lies again in the author holding back clues to the purpose of Rocco's travels. She suppresses the evidence so far, that the story ends up downright inaccurate, if the ending is to be believed. On the other hand, it gives the story a fable-like quality, but only in afterthought. The fantasy is too realistic in its character depiction and detail for us to forgive these inaccuracies too far.
The strength of this story, however, is in the characters and their relationships. It is a story about a teenaged kid dealing with parents who don’t understand; about jealousy, romance and misunderstandings with his peers; and about having to deal with and prove oneself in an alien society. A Time of Darkness is the sort of story that teens who don’t normally read fantasy might like. The bulk of it is more a YA coming of age novel than a fantasy.

Camille Allen LaGuire

Nine Magical Worlds


Princes, magicians, a bridge builder, dancing wolves, and others inhabit nine different worlds that we can glimpse through the magic of Margaret Mahy’s vivid language and creative ideas. In the title story, five year old Aquilina, already an amazing circus trapeze artist, literally goes through a door in the air and doesn’t come down. In “The House of Coloured Windows,” Anthea, who may choose to live in any of the worlds she sees through the windows, picks a clear glass vision of her mother looking for her. Matilda, in “The Magician in the Tower,” gains the magical power to change to bird, fish, tree, or even inanimate things.

The power to transform appears in “A Work of Art” too, but here it’s delightfully super-silly. A birthday cake is renowned as finest art until it fulfills its original function. Being eaten is the danger in what is probably my favorite story, “The Hookywalker Dancers,” though I must admit it was very hard to choose. I guess I laughed the loudest when, to the song’s music, “You put your left paw in, you put your left paw out...,” a ballet dancer, a volunteer member of The Society for Bringing Happiness to Dumb Beasts, teaches wolves to dance to avoid the fate of the birthday cake in the earlier story.

Both the book jacket and the book itself are themselves works of art in shades of lavendar. Each page is framed, and Diana Catchpole provides a full page frontispiece, about 16 more full page black and white illustrations, and a small drawing at the beginning and end of each entrancing short story. I really craved that piece of chocolate cake. I’m also absolutely sure that Mahy’s distorted and original sense of humor in this fascinating collection is perfect for the middle school students for whom she generally writes and for many adults as well.

Susan M. Herbst
Return to Witchworld


The Mistress of Witch World and her coauthor, who has created her own universe of Starbridge, return readers to familiar scenes, a generation after we last met Kerovan and Joisan, Jervon and Elys in “Gryphon’s Eryie”. This time the young adult heroine and hero are daughter and foster son of couples whose coming of age adventures we followed in earlier volumes of Witch World history.

Andre Norton set the stage for the story but Crispin tells the tale and does so without carrying us along breathlessly. It isn’t that hero and heroine aren’t appealing; they are. The adventures they have, the villainess they must deal with, just aren’t up to challenging them to develop personalities that grow and change. Yes, it’s pleasant to meet again, though briefly, characters from earlier books, but they are one dimensional on these pages. Even the light from the healing Places of Power seems to have dulled.

Could it be we have travelled too much in Witch World so that it has begun to be as boring as Planet Earth?

*Paula M. Strain*

Uneven YA Time Travel


This fast-paced novel opens in 1992 USA with Karyn and Mike, orphans who connect with three other young people who have the ability to travel through time simply by wishing hard to do so: Gwen from a past when bathing was not in fashion, Jason from a barely inhabitable earth of the future, and Becky, a 19th century abused English servant-girl. Sulky Mike, hostile Gwen, friendly Jason, fearful and perpetually hungry Becky, and practical Karyn have many adventures, some quite enjoyable, yet others so truncated that transition from one time reality to the next is hard to follow. Possibly, some young readers not astute enough to be bothered by the many inconsistencies may be satisfied with the well-drawn characters, the plot (especially when they travel into the dinosaur era), and the reasonably satisfying Peter Pan conclusion. Others, questioning for example why only these particular orphans have the power to time hop, will only be irritated.

*J.R. Wytenbroek*
Not Quite Zenda


The plot of this young adult fantasy revolves around a plan to overthrow a rightful monarch by kidnapping the heir to the throne, the somewhat sickly Prince Rudolph of Thulgaria. Stop! “Rudolph” is an ultra-familiar name. Wasn’t it Rudolph of Rassendyll who masqueraded as his look-alike distant relative, Rudolph the Fifth of Ruritania, and thus saved the crown and the prince? even if you didn’t read Anthony Hope’s 1894 romantic adventure, *The Prisoner of Zenda*, you’ve surely seen Ronald Coleman or Steward Granger or possibly Peter Sellers playing the dual role in one of several swashbuckling films with that title. However, in *Being of Two Minds*, Prince Rudolph’s saviour is no Rassendyll. She’s a shy American fourteen year-old named Connie. There’s no possibility of a dual role here. Connie and Rudolph certainly don’t look alike. What does she have in common with the royal Rudolph? How could she save him?

Connie is considered sickly by her family and odd by her schoolmates because of her unpredictable dizzy spells, the same kind of spells that threaten Rudolph’s succession to the crown. Roughly once a week for a few hours, Rudolph seems to have an epileptic fit. During these spells or fits, the two enter each other’s minds. They share their lives—either in Connie’s unpretentious home in an American suburb or in the grandiose Thulgarian Royal palace. And though fearful that one day either or both of them might pass out during one of their innumerable doctors’ examinations, their secret then revealed, their exploitation as freaks guaranteed, neither wishes to give up the unique extrasensory gift that is so gratifying to each of them. Later, of course, when Rudolph is kidnapped, Connie becomes the only person who could effect his rescue since she can telepathically see what Rudolph experiences.

This is an easy-to-read adventure/romance with an overlay of fantasy. It starts slowly but then becomes captivating as Connie faces her fears. Bravely embarking on a dangerous, life-threatening journey, Connie, alone in a foreign land without knowledge of whom to trust, commits herself to rescue her kidnapped prince while Rudolph, naturally aware of her efforts, can only wait. Without question, younger young adult females will find Connie a most satisfying hero and, since young adults have probably neither seen the “old” films or read the novel, they will notice neither the derivative nature of the plot nor the lack of explanation for the limitations on Rudolph and Connie’s telepathy.

Jean Ratushny
Six Films


This children's book opens with a six-page history of science fiction films, followed by ten to twelve pages on each of six movies—The Day The Earth Stood Still (1951), The Thing (1951), 2001 (1968), Star Wars (1977), E.T. (1982) and Blade Runner (1982). The coverage of each film includes a page or two on the production of the movie, emphasizing special effects; several pages of synopsis; illustrations, mostly black and-white; and a few paragraphs of critical commentary. Staskowski, a film professor, contrasts the attitudes of the two 1951 films towards aliens and scientists and compares the different views of the future found in 2001, Star Wars and Blade Runner. The violent, R-rated Blade Runner is a strange choice for a book aimed at upper elementary and junior high students.

The synopses give away the endings and are detailed enough to spoil the films for readers who have not seen them. Nevertheless, Science Fiction Movies will tempt some reluctant readers and help young film viewers to better understand their favorite movies. Staskowski's bibliography lists several adult books on the subject. Lerner has also published Horror Movies (1989) and Movie Monsters (1989), both by Tom Powers, for the same age group.

Michael Klossner

Magic, Wizards, & Dragons—Oh My!


Who has ever heard of an enchanted forest whose boundaries change at whim? And who has ever heard of a twenty year old King who would rather run off with a Chief Cook and Librarian in search of a missing dragon than date any of the pretty, dainty princesses so anxious to marry him? Well, yes, when the Chief Cook and Librarian is really the Princess Cimorene, whom we met last year in Dealing with Dragons—that feisty Cimorene, who ran away from home rather than marry a nit-wit prince. It's no wonder that Mendanbar, King of the Enchanted Forest, who is sure he will never find any princess with a bit of intelligence, is completely smitten by the independent Cimorene.

All the fairy tale conventions are present: a prince, a princess, elves, dragons, witches, wicked wizards, magicians, dwarfs, giants, magic swords, and so forth. And there’s no doubt every young adult will delight in the gregarious gargoyle, the authoritative steward, the wicked uncle, and, especially, Mendanbar’s rejection of all kingly pomp and circumstance: fancy
dinner, political meetings, dressing up, and the rest. Moreover, though the
print and the jacket suggest the audience should be the younger young
adults, every young-at-heart reader with a delight in the comedy of life, who
has but a smidge of imagination, will revel in this adventure; not only are
Mendanbar and Cimorene totally charming, there are innumerable attractive
vignettes. To name but a few: the dwarf is Rumpelstiltskin, faced with the
problem of what to do with all the first born children he has won; the giant
is weary of supplying loot to all the Jacks who visit him; Kazul, King of the
Dragons, who has been kidnapped by the wicked wizards, is a female; and
the magic sword can be used to unstop a sink.

*Searching for Dragons* is complete in itself, but who would not want to
read the other chronicles? I certainly shall.

*Jennifer Wells*

**A Message Fantasy**


Jane Yolen strikes again with another fine children’s fantasy tale. In her
novel, *Wizard’s Hall*, Henry is packed off to the Wizard’s school to begin his
training in magic and sorcery. He doesn’t believe he has any hope of be­
coming a magician, but the mysterious rat, Dr. Mo, renames him
Thornmallow, and admits him into the school’s final open position. He
meets many other youngsters who have come for the same reasons and be­
comes friends with Gorse, Will, and Tansy. After many fumblings about with
his new-found, yet awkward powers, Thornmallow becomes a key player in
the struggle between good and evil. When the wicked sorcerer Nettle brings
his evil quilted beast to take over the school, Thornmallow must gather his
strength and courage if he is to stand with the wizards against the threat.

The character development in this story is well played. Henry must
make the mental transition from a poor farm boy to a magician; he must stop
thinking of himself as Henry and begin thinking of himself as Thornmallow;
at the same time he must confront his own inner fears, doubts, and shortcom­
ings. It doesn’t help that he has overly critical teachers and friends with a
teasing streak a mile wide.

But Yolen manages to interweave into this fantastical tale the point—not
just to children, but to adults who may oftentimes forget—that even if people
only have a talent in one specific area, they are still as important as other
people. Without the “little guys” who affect our lives in many subtle ways,
our lives would be noticeably empty. And that if we can be the “little guy”
in someone else’s life, we serve a purpose to them ... and are able to feel a
greater sense of self-worth. A good read!

*Daryl F. Mallett*
Country Bumpkin Makes Good


This delightful fantasy transports the reader to Empire, a country where magic mixes with politics. Twelve year-old Jermyn is wistfully daydreaming that, like all other apprentice wizards, he too would have an animal familiar. His wish is soon granted but only as he channels and strengthens his magical powers during an attack on his teacher and guardian, Aunt Merry. Yet, Jermyn’s problems are far from over. The major one, he thinks, is that his familiar is a skunk! But Delia being a skunk is not the only complication. Others follow in quick succession. Aunt Merry, cursed by the Weather Wizard Fulke, is unable to use her magic. Thus she sends Jermyn away from home to apprentice with an old friend of hers, the powerful Master Wizard Eschar. Meanwhile, treacherous forces are attacking Empire, and the city’s most important wizards, including Aunt Merry and Master Eschar, fall ill from a magical plague. Now, Jermyn has no one to turn to but himself, and, to make matters even worse, it seems he has fallen in love with Eshar’s pretty young ward, Meggy.

Mary Frances Zambreno’s brilliant descriptions of the animal familiars will widen audience appeal to include lovers of animals as well as lovers of fantasy. With its easy-to-understand language, the targeted readers between the ages of nine and fourteen will find the events exciting, the mystery solved, and the loyalty and courage displayed by young Jermyn inspirational. Of even greater importance, especially to teachers and parents, is that the lighthearted and humorous tone does not disguise the fact that this novel for younger young adults deals with some very important issues: self-confidence, love, fear, death, betrayal, and a young person’s journey to discover himself.

Ingrid Brink

Audio-Video

Dog of Frankenstein


After making this short film for Disney, Burton went on to become one of the most successful directors of big budget fantasy, with *Beetlejuice* (1988), *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) and both Batman movies (1989 and 1992). Victor Frankenstein, a boy living in a Gothic 1950s suburb, brings his dog Sparky back to life in a classic Frankenstein laboratory made from household objects such as toasters...
and rocking horses. Snoopy neighbors stand in for the rampaging villagers; a golf course takes the place of the graveyard. Sparky has facial scars and electrodes in his neck; he is attracted to a poodle with the Bride of Frankenstein’s white streak in her hair. Burton throws in everything from resurrection by lightning to a windmill fire (on the golf course).

*Frankenweenie* is undoubtedly a one-joke movie, but film buffs will be delighted by the clever references to the Universal classics and the story is strong enough to interest children who would probably not sit through the old films. It’s nice to see the Frankenstein monster finally win one; in a happy ending borrowed from *Lassie Comes Home*, even the violent mob reforms and accepts the resurrected mutt. But what are the implications of a Frankenstein movie that says it’s OK to raise the dead after all?

*Michael Klossner*

**Cameras in Narnia**


C.S. Lewis has been more fortunate than J.R.R. Tolkien in the versions of his work made for the camera. All three of the Tolkien movies produced to date have been American-made animated films. The best of them, *The Hobbit* (1977), a TV film made by Rankin-Bass, adheres closely to the book but is too short and rushed at 75 minutes long and includes several egregious mispronunciations of Tolkien’s names. The *Lord of the Rings* (1978), a feature by Ralph Bakshi which was released to theaters and which covers only half the trilogy, and *The Return of the King* (1980), a TV film with bad songs, were both disappointing.

The first Narnia film was *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1979), an animated TV movie made by Bill Melendez, who also makes the *Peanuts* TV cartoons. The Melendez Lion has cheaper-looking animation than the Rankin-Bass *Hobbit* but the two are very similar otherwise. *The Hobbit*, like *The Lion* captures much of the spirit and many of the main incidents of the book but is too short (100 min.) and rushed.

Now the Melendez film has been eclipsed by *The Chronicles of Narnia*, three liveaction miniseries produced by the BBC — *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, Prince Caspian and the Voyage of the Dawn Treader* and *The Silver Chair*. The BBC *Lion* follows the novel almost word-for-word, at about one minute of screen time per page. The children are appropriately cast; they are not too cute, unlike the picture perfect moppets who would have appeared in an American version. Children raised on Spielberg movies may reject the BBC Narnia films because of their unconvincing special effects and creature costumes, but the better sort of children — and their parents — will
find that the naturalistic outdoor locations, the largely unknown cast and the seriousness of the production all make the story come alive. The only serious fault in the BBC Lion is Barbara Kellermann’s excessive, shouting performance as the White Witch. Kellermann is a quality actress and her failure here should remind us that wicked witches are difficult to play and should redouble our respect for Lucille LaVerne (the voice of the witch queen in Disney’s Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, 1937) and Margaret Hamilton (The Wizard of Oz, 1939).

What is the point of watching a miniseries that is almost an exact transcription of a loved book? Parents will probably prefer that their children read the book first. However, reluctant readers might prefer to watch the video before going on to the book and anyone who has appreciated the novel will enjoy the film. All seven of the Tolkien and Lewis films discussed here are available on video. All three of the BBC’s Chronicles of Narnia are recommended.

Michael Klossner

Crimson Passions


McCarty and his six collaborators tried to see all movies gory enough to fit McCarty’s broad definition of “splatter.” Most of the approximately 400 one-paragraph reviews cover low-budget horror movies seen only on cable TV or videocassette, but the Guide also includes some major films such as Black Rain (1989), Die Hard (1988), Fatal Attraction (1987) and Terminator 2 (1991). More than half the movies in Guide 2 predate McCarty’s first Splatter Guide (1989). Several European films are covered but few of the growing wave of Asian films.

The reviews emphasize quantity and quality of gore scenes but also note competence (or the lack of it) in acting, writing, direction and technical work. Typical of fan critics, McCarty and his contributors generally either love or hate a movie. Supplemented by an index of directors and a thematic index which (in spite of cutey categories such as “How Did Anyone This Dumb Get Into College?” and “Oh, Those Power Tools”) is actually useful. McCarty’s Guides are helpful to cable viewers and video renters who share his tastes and to anyone who wants to keep up with B movies. For older B films, Michael Weldon’s Psychotronic Encyclopedia of Film (1983) is quite complete. The magazines Video Watchdog and Psychotronic Video (reviewed by me in SFRAR 194) collect a great deal of information on B movies but lack McCarty’s convenient alphabetical arrangement.

Michael Klossner
Sorcery in Sherwood


Television writers are more respected and influential in Britain than in America. Richard Carpenter is considered the creator of the many historical adventure series for which he was chief writer. When he wrote *Robin Hood and the Sorcerer*, the pilot for the series *Robin of Sherwood*, Carpenter (perhaps influenced by Hollywood’s brief flirtation with sword-and-sorcery, which peaked in 1981 with *Excalibur, Conan the Barbarian, Clash of the Titans* and *Dragonslayer*) unwisely added occult overtones to the familiar legend of Robin Hood. The pilot introduces all the traditional characters but Robin is guided to his destiny by a forest spirit, Herne the Hunter, and becomes known as Herne’s Son. His most dangerous enemy is not the waspish but ineffectual Sheriff but a powerful sorcerer, Baron Bellemere, whom Robin can defeat only with Herne’s aid. The pilot has all the virtues of the subsequent series—admirable physical, psychological, social and political realism, good production values and a fine supporting cast—as well as the series drawbacks—a bland young leading man and the misplaced supernatural elements.

Carpenter wrote about half the series episodes. Almost every episode features a supernatural threat, from demons and sorcerers to Satanist nuns. Robin repeatedly turns to Herne for his usually vague advice. The sorcerous material undermined what could have been an excellent realistic historical series. *Robin of Sherwood* depicts a bitter class/ethnic war between Normans and Saxons, with the whole royal family and most of the Church on the bad side and is significant as a revisionist swashbuckler rather than as a fantasy. In his excellent study of Hollywood swashbucklers, *Swordsmen of the Screen* (1977), Jeffrey Richards establishes that the classic swashbuckler films were extremely conservative and featured heroes devoted to gentlemanly, chivalrous conduct and to the monarchy, which represents a just social and political order. If the king is virtuous, the whole political system is just, even if any number of individual nobles are corrupt. The swashbuckler hero may be an outlaw or a pirate, but his support for the king reaffirms the rightness of the system. Thus it is vital that in the traditional Hollywood versions of Robin Hood (including the three best-known examples, *Robin Hood* (1922) with Douglas Fairbanks, *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938) with Errol Flynn and the 1955-1958 TV series with Richard Greene), Robin fights for a good but absent King Richard. The two revisionist treatments are the 1976 film *Robin and Marian* and *Robin of Sherwood*. In both, Richard is shown to be evil, then dies and is succeeded by his despised brother John. The problem of the character of the king determines whether the hero can
win. If Richard is virtuous, Robin can achieve a decisive victory by restoring his just rule; if the king is evil, Robin is fighting an essentially hopeless struggle. In both *Robin and Marian* and *Robin of Sherwood* the long-suffering Sheriff finally manages to kill Robin, although in the TV series Herne summons a second hero to become a new Robin Hood (Like Charlie Chan, Herne has a Number Two Son.).

Under the title *Robin Hood*, *Robin of Sherwood* was shown in America on Showtime and later on PBS. The show has a small cult following. A fan club to which I belong is about 80 per cent female, possibly because of the occultism, possibly because of the two handsome young leading men or perhaps because the series boasts the most active and competent Marian ever captured on camera. Besides the pilot, three other feature-length episodes are in the video market. The important stories concerning Robin's disillusionment with Richard, King John's tyranny and Robin's death are among the eighteen 50-minute episodes and are not available on video. Carpenter's series is well above average television but would have been better if he had eschewed fantasy.

*Michael Klossner*
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