Review

Number 201, November, 1992
The SFRA Review
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Send non-fiction books for review to Neil Barron, 1149 Lime Place, Vista, CA 92083.
Juvenile-Young Adult books for review to Muriel Becker, 60 Crane Street, Caldwell, NJ 07006.
Audio-Video materials for review to Michael Klossner, 410 E. 7th St, Apt 3, Little Rock, AR 72202
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President's Message:

That’s One Small Step for [a] Man...

Have you ever noticed that Neil Armstrong’s famous first words from the moon make no sense? “That’s one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.” Huh? (My reaction then and now.) No one at NASA has ever fessed up, of course. But then, at least half my acquaintances at NASA had the gravest difficulty in their English composition classes, so it could be that no one there has yet realized that the first human act on another world was a blunder. But what serendipity! For surely a blunder is preferable to the stodgy, lifeless (and gender-biased) phrase the technocrats at NASA had wanted to give posterity. When a statue is raised to Neil Armstrong in the Mare Tranquillitatis, I suggest that upon it’s base this be inscribed: “That’s one small step for [a] man...” What better under the immensity of that airless, starry sky than a stony koan compassing human competence and frailty, inducing in those who reflect upon it both humility and pride?

And speaking of blunders: the EC regrets giving the membership the wrong impression about the recent changes in the editorial policy of the SFRA Review. It was never the intent of the EC to eliminate negative reviews. Faced with a need to reduce the size of the Review somewhat, the EC asked that the editor eliminate reviews of the kind of fourth rate fiction that generally elicits negative reviews. If our space is limited, we reasoned, we should focus on that fiction the reviewing membership feels for various reasons to be important, be it good or bad. I’m not even sure this is a policy change rather than simply a reaffirmation of good editorial practice. This “policy change,” in any case, did not alter coverage of SF scholarship in any way, which will continue to receive both positive and negative reviews in our pages, be it first rate or fourth. Several of us on the EC have received carefully argued considerations of Review editorial policy from some among our senior membership. Those I’ve read, I find fully persuasive and of great value. The EC will take up again its own consideration of Review editorial policy at its midterm meeting, and guided by the wise counsel of our members, it hopes to represent that policy in the February issue.

Daryl Mallett will take over shortly as editor of the Review. He and Betsy are even now working out the details of the rather complex handover of editorial duties, with January’s issue projected to be Daryl’s first. Keep an eye on the Editor’s Blurb for more (and probably more accurate) information on the progress of the transition.

Brooks Landon will be joining Joan Gordon and Chair Veronica Hollinger on the Pioneer Committee this year. Mack Hassler (Convening Chair), Bill Hardesty and Carolyn Wendell are this year’s Pilgrim Committee. I know they will welcome your assistance and suggestions.

Pete Lowentrout
News & Information

Sci-Fi (Not SF) Channel

The Sci-Fi Channel made its long-delayed debut on many cable systems Sept. 24 and seems eager to live down to its name. The Channel shows such execrable old TV shows as Lost in Space, Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea, Space 1999, Battlestar Galactica, Buck Rogers and Time Tunnel, the visual equivalent of what disc jockeys call moldy oldies. At a somewhat higher level are Tales from the Darkside, Night Gallery, the 1930s Flash Gordon serials, Amazing Stories, Dr. Who, Dark Shadows, Alfred Hitchcock Presents (the 1980s revival, not the original series), The Prisoner and the animated Star Trek. Conspicuous by their absence are the liveaction Star Trek, The Outer Limits, The Twilight Zone and The Avengers. SFC also carries theatrical films, original made-for cable films and science fact programs such as NASA Watch. If you have a professional and/or emotional need for this material, contact your local cable company.—Michael Klossner

New Speculative Fiction Magazine

Pulphouse Publishing announces a new speculative fiction magazine, Tomorrow, edited by Algis Budrys. The January issue, now available, features top professional writers and new talents in science fiction, fantasy, and horror. Stories by Gene Wolfe, Lionel Fenn, M. Shayne Bell, Rob Chilson are included in this initial issue plus the first of a series of articles on writing by Algis Budrys. Special charter subscriptions—6 issue (one year) subscriptions are $18.00. First class, Canada, or overseas, add $1.00 per issue. Visa or Mastercard accepted. Send to: Pulphouse Publishing, Inc. Box 1227, Eugene, OR 97440; (503) 344-6742; FAX (503) 683-3412. —BH

Corrections

"Two items from SFRA Review 199 should be corrected. On p. 27, the Minutes note that SFRA Archives exist at Texas A&M. That is no longer the case. The Special Collections Department at A&M experienced space problems, and all archival material of the SFRA was transferred to the University of Kansas. On page 28, New Business, item 2, on the Pilgrim Book: Not quite true. I had mentioned...that I needed a volunteer to pick up the Pilgrim Booklet project and complete it, not that it was abandoned." H. Hall
SFRA 1993 Conference

The 1993 SFRA yearly conference will be held in Reno, Nevada, June 17-20. Topics suggested included CyberPunk or CyberBunk? Speculative Fiction & G. B. Shaw; Science Fiction Art; Future Information Access; SF Bibliographers: Quiche or Kitsch? Sf: Market-Driven? Postmodern Genre? Artificial Intelligence, Artificial Man? Recent Trends in SF? Conference hotel is Reno Flamingo Hilton ($80 per room); specify to operator; UNR’s SFRA Conference, Rates valid for one week: June 15-21, 1993. Contact Milton T. Wolf, Getchell Library, UNR, Reno, Nevada 89557-0044, Phone 702-784-4577 for more information, registration, to volunteer as panel chair, panelist, or to propose topics. — M. Wolf

Popular Fiction Magazine

A relatively new magazine, Million, published by David Pringle, editor of Interzone, one of the most prestigious British SF and Fantasy journals, is about popular fiction. Issue 10, July-August 1992, featured interviews with crime writers Jonathan Kellerman, Carl Hiaasen, Andrew Vachss, and others. Also, articles on Leslie Charteris and the Saint, the images of Elvis Presley in fiction, Rex Stout’s Nero Wolfe, and much more. Issue 11, September-October 1992 includes articles on the writing of animal fantasy, on Hollywood Novels, and Yesterday’s Bestsellers, among others. Single copies of all issues are available at £2.50 each, postage inclusive (£2.80 overseas; $5 USA). For a six-issue subscription send £13 (inland) or £16 (overseas; $26 USA).

Please make cheques or postal orders payable to “Popular Fictions,” 217 Preston Drove, Brighton BN1 6FL, England.

Blade Runner on Video - Buyer Beware

The Director’s Cut of Ridley Scott’s Blade Runner (1982) was shown in limited theatrical release in September 1992. A Variety review concluded that “what was once a significantly flawed major film now fully deserves to be called a classic of its kind”. Unfortunately, at the same time the Director’s Cut was in theaters, Columbia TriStar Home Video released the “10th Anniversary Edition” of Blade Runner (labeled not rated) on videocassette. Buyers should not confuse the two versions. The Anniversary Edition is little changed from the original theatrical release. It retains the two most disliked aspects of the film—Harrison Ford’s mumbled, Sam Spadeish voiceover narration and the abrupt happy ending—both of which are gone from the Director’s Cut. There is nothing in the Anniversary Edition which would
warrant an NC17 rating instead of the R rating assigned the 1982 version. Columbia evidently did not submit the Anniversary Edition to the MPAA, thus justifying the not rated label, probably in hopes of fooling some gullible customers. Scholars and fans will want either the original film or the Director’s Cut (not yet on video), rather than the Anniversary Edition.

M. Klossner

Argento on Video

Italian art-horror director Dario Argento has attracted growing attention in America for several years. The first English-language study of Argento, Maitland McDonagh’s Broken Mirrors, Broken Minds, was reviewed in SFRAR 195. Many of Argento’s films are unavailable on videocassette in this country. However Dario Argento’s World of Horror (1985, 76 min.), directed by Michele Soavi, is available on videocassette for $59.95 and on videodisc for $39.95 from Vidmark Entertainment. In addition to scenes from most of Argento’s films through 1985, the documentary includes an interview with the director.

M. Klossner

A Lost Vampire Returns

At the same time that they produced Tod Browning’s Dracula (1931) with Bela Lugosi, Universal also made a Spanish-language version on the same sets, directed by George Melford and starring Carlos Villarias. David Skal in Holywood Gothic (reviewed in SFRA Newsletter 187) and George E. Turner in The Cinema of Adventure, Romance and Terror (SF RAN 185) both reported that the Spanish version was superior in many ways to the famous Lugosi film. For decades the Melford Dracula was virtually a lost film, available only in film archives. Now an apparently complete version of the Spanish Dracula has been released by MCA Universal Home Video. The video sells for $14.95 and is available from Movies Unlimited (800-523-0823).

M. Klossner

ICFA Call for Papers

The 14th International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts will be held Wednesday-Sunday, 17-21 March 1993, at the Ft. Lauderdale Airport Hilton. Ursula Le Guin is the guest of honor, Devendra Varma the guest scholar, with Michael Bishop and Brian Aldiss as special guests. You must join the IAFA to attend the conference, $45/year; conference registration is
$70 through 31 December 1992, $80 thereafter; luncheon & banquet extra. Mail membership & registration fees to Mary Pharr, IAFA Treasurer, English Dept., Florida Southern College, Lakeland, FL 33801. If you wish to present a paper you'll need to write directly to a division head listed in a brochure available from IAFA, 500 NW 20th St, HU-50 B-9, Florida Atlantic Univ., Boca Raton, FL 33431-6498. Paper 250 word abstracts must be received by 15 October 1992, but this may not be a rigid deadline. NB.

Recent & Forthcoming Books [6 Sep 92]

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

Reference


History & Criticism


Cox, Jeffrey N., ed. *Seven Gothic Dramas, 1789-1825*. Ohio Univ. Press (P).


Kamenetsky, Christa. The Brothers Grimm and Their Critics: Folktales and the Quest for Meaning. Ohio Univ. Press (P).


Author Studies


[Dahl]. West, Mark I. Roald Dahl. Twayne (P).


**Film & TV**


**ILLUSTRATION**


Berry, Rick & Phil Hale. *Double Memory*. Donald M. Grant (P).


*Neil Barron*
September 10, 1992

Dear Editor:

Gary Westfahl’s letter. I would disagree with him. While Extrapolation, Science Fiction Studies, and Foundation (which I see less often) do a good job in their reviews of scholarly literature, their coverage is very small, and another journal is needed to pick up the books they do not review. So far SFRAR has done a good job on this. It is true that not all the reviews are top flight, but that is true of any publication, and SFRAR hits a good level. There is room for improvement, of course. But, to repeat, that’s true everywhere. As for Westfahl’s other comments, I suppose a lot depends on what one wants from SFRAR. To your new policies. I think that omitting horror is a good move, as is curtailing length of fiction reviews. But I think that your decision to reject negative reviews of scholarly books is disastrous, one of the worst things you could do. Those of us working in the field appreciate some warning about bad quality. And in an indirect way publishers need bad reviews, if only to make them check books a little farther or to be aware of glib fakers. If the magazine is to become a cheering section, I would have to agree with Westfahl (though not all the way) and think SFRAR has lost much value. My own feeling, which not everyone might share, is to cut down on fiction (which does get some coverage elsewhere) and concentrate more on scholarly books and encourage more critical reviews. Something I wonder about. Are you short of reviews? Or do you have backlogs. If you are short, I would suggest setting up a mechanism for reviewers to get copies. So far as I know, you do not have any such system.

Yours very truly, Everett F. Bleiler

[Rejecting negative reviews was a policy decision made by the voting members of the Executive Committee, a policy which has been reconsidered (see President’s Message) in view of several senior members’ logical arguments. Presently, fiction reviews are forwarded from Bob Collins; he distributes desk copies to reviewers who write reviews for the Annual he edits. Many of those reviews appear in his edition as well as in SFRAR. Spontaneous fiction reviews also are sent to our fiction editor, Muriel Becker, or to me by members who desire to share their reactions to current books. The non-fiction editor, Neil Barron, obtains publisher desk copies and distributes them to regular reviewers. Currently, I have enough reviews to complete the November and December issues. As the president announced, the new editor, Daryl Mallett will take over the Review beginning with the January issue. BH/ed.]
26 September
Folkestone, Kent

Dear Editor:

I read, with great interest, Gary Westfahl's letter in the most recent issue of the SFRA Review. He expresses precisely the bewilderment I felt on receiving my first issue of the Review when I joined the SFRA earlier this year. True, I find the reviews of non-fiction works useful in that they draw my attention to material that I otherwise wouldn't see over here. However, like Mr. Westfahl, I am not sure I need more fiction reviews, I must also agree with him that the quality of the reviews is extremely variable, some being little more than a summary of the plot, which is certainly not what I regard as an adequate review. My intention in joining the SFRA was perhaps not as overtly cynical as Mr Westfahl's for, quite apart from being able to receive two critical journals at a more competitive price and save having several cheques written for me, I had fondly imagined that the Review would in some way reproduce the more informal discussions which I like to imagine take place between those involved in the study of SF. In this it has disappointed me a great deal, to the extent that I'm not entirely sure why the SFRA exists, except to provide a cheap way of subscribing to Extrapolation and SF Studies. I don't feel qualified, as a recent member, and an overseas member at that, removed from the centre of activities, to comment in great detail on what the SFRA should be but for an organisation which is supposedly promoting the study of science fiction, comparatively little seems to be published in this reviewzine on, for example, trends in criticism and study or to actually encourage people to explore new avenues of interest. I spotted one example in this very issue of the Review, in Joan Gordon's summary of the panel on Present Trends in Feminist SF. She notes that Veronica Hollinger listed many other women writers worthy of study. What a pity that Ms Gordon didn't list some of those authors for those of us unable to attend that panel. More discussion of research preoccupations and less space devoted to redundant fiction reviews would certainly encourage me to believe that the SFRA Review has a valid reason for existence.

Yours sincerely,
Maureen Speller

I want to answer several of your comments. Let me describe the publication parameters for the SFRA Review. Probably the most important aspect is that everything associated with the Review (except for commercial printing) is accomplished on a voluntary, unpaid basis. All reviews are voluntary and are drawn from SFRA members as well as from nonmembers who are interested in sf or fantasy. All special interest editors—non-fiction, fiction,
young adult, and audio/video—as well as the general editor, are completely voluntary. Reviews come from several sources. Editors provide our regular contributors with publishers’ desk copies (when available) or solicit spontaneous reviews of books that reviewers themselves have read. Another supplier is the former Newsletter editor, Bob Collins, who publishes an SF and Fantasy Book Review Annual. He shares fiction reviews with SFRAR (appearing in our publication prior to his own annual). At times, the number of reviews available for any issue varies. There may be a surplus or an almost bare file (worst case: May and June 1990 with 27 reviews divided between two issues). The quality of the reviews and the variety of interests represented in the reviews are partly related to these facts: our voluntary member/non-member reviewers come from diverse occupations and educational/experiential levels. Academics (at all levels), engineers, scientists, business women, authors, librarians, students, and readers suggest just some of the contributors. While reviewers may be academics with years of writing experience, some may be from occupations demanding little writing skill, or some may be college seniors/graduate students practicing their critical/writing skills. The key is the unifying interest in learning more about sf/fantasy that brings these people together. Actually, assisting in fostering growth among those young people is a source of pride. For example, recently, one of the few novices to find a teaching position this year informed our Fiction editor, Muriel Becker, that her new job was gained partly because the superintendent of schools was impressed with the review article that she had published in the Review. Variable quality relates not only to the volunteer status of reviewers but also to the time constraints of the volunteer editor. Probably, I could have edited more rigorously. However, the minimal time involved in the mechanics—entering, proofreading, correcting, and editing all the reviews on the computer—a task taking a minimum of two full weeks (mostly eight hour days) of donated time per month leaves little free time for more thorough pruning or recombing words/editing (some of those days my husband and I were both working). Handling large quantities of material to meet monthly deadlines also forces some economies in order to complete the tasks. Thus, you are quite right, Ms Speller, in saying that quality varies; these are some reasons for this variability. The SFRA Review itself has experienced a five year period of rapid growth. Until 1987, when Bob Collins assumed the editorial role, SFRA primarily published a small news/information bulletin with some short reviews, called the SFRA Newsletter. When Collins became editor, he brought with him a group of reviewers formerly associated with Fantasy Review, a publication which he had edited and which had ceased publication. With this nucleus of trained writers and editorial expertise, the Newsletter expanded the review sections and in-
creased in size to an average of 40-44 pages, some less/some more. Then, in 1989 I took on the role of editor. No growth occurred during my caretaker year while I learned what I was supposed to be doing. In summer of 1990, Neil Barron began as non-fiction editor and growth resumed with an expanded non-fiction section. The Newsletter soon doubled in size, averaging 80 pages an issue; we added other editors and longer review/articles to meet the desires expressed at the June 30, 1991 business meeting in Denton, Texas—the need to provide more opportunity for members to publish. To more accurately reflect the quantity of reviews in the Newsletter, the name changed to the SFRA Review in January 1992. Now that the growth has slowed, the philosophical reason for the existence of SFRA Review is an excellent topic of discussion. I suspect that the six prior editors of the Newsletter (since 1971), all volunteers with academic responsibilities similar to those I had my first year as editor, also had constant time demands to meet in completing the issues for publication. There was little time for reflection on theoretical reasons. I have no way of knowing, but my sometime-comment, “Let’s get this job done!”, might possibly have echoed other editorial wishes. Perhaps the time has now arrived to carefully develop a new mission statement tailored to the present needs of SFRA members. Any revisions could probably begin with consideration of the statement on the SFRA application which has served as the framework for the Review journal. The description reads: extensive book reviews, both fiction and non-fiction; review articles; listings of new and forthcoming fiction and secondary literature; letters, organizational news, calls for papers, work in progress, annual index, etc. The SFRA itself was organized to improve classroom teaching, encourage and assist scholarship, and evaluate and publicize new books and magazines dealing with fantastic literature and film. Besides these elements, one area that I have personally encouraged as a way to create and expand interests is the international coverage.

Discussion of the research preoccupations that you seek has been partly developed. A listing of current research projects appears in the monthly issues when those project information blanks are completed on the annual subscription forms, or when members send “calls for information” on particular topics. Perhaps that area could be expanded in future issues; researchers could be encouraged to write a descriptive summary—perhaps 200-300 words—not just the brief phrases that space allows on the application. I think the “trends in criticism” topic you suggest as well as your “sharing research projects” might both be good ones for the annual conference. Formal, as well as the informal discussions that you mention, Ms Speller, are indeed a part of the annual conferences. Perhaps many people, when faced with the task of putting thoughts on paper where people can read/reread the
words and subject every word to any possible nuance, hesitate to write as informally as we would speak. Additionally, many people have been trained to save informality for more personal writing. One final point, Ms. Speller, is that with membership in SFRA you not only become part of a group with similar interests, but in a sense, you become part of the SF and fantasy family. Therefore, I urge you to plan on attending our annual conference in Reno, Nevada next June. If not that one, join us as soon as you can. Remember the commercial, “Try us, you’ll like us.” I look forward to meeting you at one of our conferences. BH: ed.]

**Editorial Matters**

In the July/August/September Review, I reported on Executive committee decisions to reduce budgetary costs. Item 7, the measure to exclude reviews with negative conclusions was reported at the Sunday business meeting in Montreal, exactly as printed in the summer issue. All members of the Executive committee attended that session and had opportunity to correct any misunderstandings, incorrectly explained policies, or blunders in reporting on their directions. During the last three years, I have said mea culpa several times for flaws in the Newsletter or Review. To use a current tag phrase, mea culpa. Not. Beginning with the January/February issue, the Review will have a new editor, Daryl Mallett. Daryl is an editor for Borgo Press so he brings expertise as well as interest to the task. At present, we are exchanging information and the transition period is going smoothly. I think Daryl will be a fine editor; I wish him every success. The December issue will be the final one from Gilbert, Arizona. Next month, I’ll share some joys of editorship, perhaps even a few tears, as I relinquish this role in my life.

*Betsy Harfst*
Non-Fiction:

Critiquing the Unthinkable


Some readers may think, wrongly, that recent history has diminished the importance of nuclear studies. Quite enough bombs remain to devastate the planet many times over. And the mind-set that exploited the physics of nightmare and nihilism to create that terrible arsenal still lurks in corridors of power here and abroad—and, in various incarnations, in each of us. As Jim Schley notes in his essay on “nuclear news,” one of nineteen in *The Nightmare Considered*, “[u]nless people can face the weirdness and hugeness of our predicament and our own circuitous part in its genesis and sustenance—no treaty, no visionary leader, no technological breakthrough can possibly save us.”

Anisfield divides this collection of essays into two groups. Those in Part I, “Issues and Overviews,” consider the various elements of the nuclear canon: novels, films, poetry, various news media, a play, and the 1973-1989 print run of the activist journal *Samisdat*. In Part II, “Specific Texts,” critics focus mainly on the expected works: among novels, Russell Hoban’s *Ridley Walker* (1980), Denis Johnson’s *Fiskodoro*, (1986) Kurt Vonnegut’s catastrophe-laden _oeuvre_, and among films, Lynne Littman’s *Testament* (1983) and Nicholas Meyer’s *The Day After* (1983). [As a whole, the book’s coverage of film is inadequate; short shrift is given, for example, to such important features as Peter Watkins’ _The War Game*_ (1965), Sidney Lumet’s *Fail Safe* (1964), and Stanley Kubrick’s _Dr. Strangelove*_ (1963).] But there are a few surprises, such as Jim Schley’s close reading of four nuclear texts (an encyclopedia entry, a _Newsweek_ article, remarks by a Brazilian presidential candidate, and a poem) which variously convey news about nuclear weapons, and Richard H. Minear’s meticulous overview of nuclear haiku by the Japanese writer Hara Tamiki, author of the classic literary account of the Hiroshima holocaust *Summer Flowers* (*Natsu no hana*, 1949).

The best of these essays rise to the major critical challenge posed by nuclear fictions: that, as H. Bruce Franklin has remarked, critics must “view nuclear literature as vitally connected to the actions and attitudes of the nuclear age.” Perhaps more than any other form, nuclear fictions demand a critical sensitivity to context: because nuclear war is a real possibility, the fictional elements of these novels, poems, stories, and so forth cannot be divorced from their political, social, psychological, and ideological dimensions. Precisely this breadth of perspective informs such considerations of nuclear nightmares as Franklin’s *War Stars: The Superweapon and the American Imagination* (Oxford, 1988) and the
book I consider the best on the subject, Spencer R. Weart's *Nuclear Fear: A History of Images* (Harvard, 1988). Like these books, the finest contributions to *The Nightmare Considered* range beyond the immediate literary concerns of their target texts. Thus when Daniel L. Zins examines the play *The End of the World* (1984), in which American dramatist Arthur Kopit neatly solved the problem of how to construct a compelling drama about nuclear proliferation by telling the story of a playwright trying to write a play about nuclear war, Zins does so via wide-ranging political and philosophical observations about the inherent absurdity of the "strategic theory" of nuclear deterrence. And Helen Jaskoski illuminates two recent novels, Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977) and Martin Cruz Smith's *Stallion's Gate* (1986), by contrasting the epistemological differences between Western empiricism and Native American beliefs and philosophies. One can, of course, range a bit too far: one of the best novels to address the problem of everyday life under the nuclear sword of Damocles, Tim O'Brien's *The Nuclear Age* (1985), is the subject of this volume's weakest essay, a disjointed, strained, wholly unpersuasive effort to show that "an ecofeminist approach to nuclearism might provide a heuristics by which readers can enter both the actual nuclear tests such as plutonium waste and arms buildup and the fictional texts such as the one presented in O'Brien's novel."

Happily, most of these essays are free of such critical cant, offering instead well-written, well-argued examinations of a variety of issues raised by nuclear fictions: time, ethics, language, epistemology, mythography and paradigms, and the use of metaphor to render the landscapes and mindscapes of a post-holocaust world. Yet, for all the stimulation they offer individually, collectively these essays do not cohere. Readers new to this branch of eschatological inquiry might prefer book length studies such as Paul Brians' *Nuclear Holocausts* (Kent State, 1987), David Dowling's *Fictions of Nuclear Disaster* (Iowa, 1987), or Martha A. Bartter's *The Way to Ground Zero: The Atomic Bomb in American Science Fiction* (Greenwood, 1988). All others, though, will find the accessible, provocative essays in Anisfield's book well worth the investment.

*Michae1 A. Morrison*

**Excellent Scholarship for the Specialist**


This is a readable, thoroughly documented, scholarly study of a significant development in the culture of Russia, attractive to those readers of the *SFRA Review* whose chief interest is in either utopian studies or the development of national myths. The common ground is that such materials sometimes have a close association with science fiction and fantasy.
Eighteenth-century Russia was dominated by three great rulers, Peter the Great, Elizabeth, and Catherine II, and under them Russia leaned toward the West and scientific progress, centralized power in the Tsar, and expanded its frontiers east, west and south. As had been the case earlier, the central myth of Russian culture was a profound belief in Russia as the third Rome, the final phase of civilization, the political restoration of the ideal society, of Eden, of Paradise on earth. The symbol of this new heaven on earth, celebrated in poetry, prose, and spectacle, was the Tsar—or Tsarina—as father of his country and inspiration of all mankind.

This paradise myth was an overpowering source of much of the writing of the eighteenth century, drawing on classical and Biblical sources alike for its image, on Roman, Byzantine, and Church doctrine for its rules, on Slavophilic pride and love of the god-like ruler for its overwhelmingly favorable reception. The first five chapters of the book discuss numerous literary—mostly poetic—and political writings that make use of conventions drawn from these sources, and Appendix A, “Definitional Details of the Paradise Myth,” lists the major characteristics of such works. The new golden age as described in A. P. Sumarokov’s praise of Elizabeth in the Birthday Ode of 1775, the happy garden state as in M. M. Kherazkov’s The Temple of Russian Prosperity, 1775, the paradise within through recovery of incorruptible man, as through the Masonic path of Ivan Lopukhin’s The Spiritual Knight, 1791, were all statements of belief in Russia as the soon-to-be, if not already, perfect state.

In Chapter Six, “The Rise of the Russian Utopia,” rejecting “Works that simply propose projects for a better Russian future,” Baehr examines ten utopian pieces that “depict an idea society or use the paradisal or utopian conventions,” most of them only a part of a longer work. The panegyric utopia praises some eutopian good place, frequently in allegorical terms, generally equating that good place with contemporary Russia. Others support the Slavophilic belief that a return to nature is better than education—especially scientific—as a means to a better society, and still others, often based on Greek or Roman sources transplanted to contemporary Russia, treat a search for utopia through law. Satiric utopias, though better from a literary standpoint, were subject to heavy censorship and seldom published until much later; e.g., the first full-length Russian utopia, Mikhail Shcherbatov’s unfinished A Journey to the Land of Ophur, 1783-84, was not published until 1896.

Baehr has researched his subject thoroughly and defends his conclusions well. His documentation is extensive: 168 pages of text are almost balanced by 140 pages of appendices, footnotes, bibliography, and index. For specialist and larger university libraries.

Arthur O. Lewis

Every Burroughs collector would like to see an updated edition of the essential bibliographical tool, Henry Hardy Heins' *A Golden Anniversary Bibliography of Edgar Rice Burroughs*, published in hardcover and in dustjacket by Don Grant in 1964 at the unbelievably low price of $10. It no longer seems likely that Heins will revise his superb work, and Bergen's *Price and Reference Guide* is, indeed, "the only book of its kind" in print, although his sparse notations are no substitute for Heins' definitive work.

Still, it is good to have the listings of paperback and hardback reprints of the post-Heins period, as well as information on House of Greystoke publications and ERB-Dom, a fan magazine published by Camille Cazedessus, Jr. in the '60s and early '70s. There is also a "biographical" section in which Bergen includes books on all aspects of Burroughsiana. The novice collector will find a wealth of information on Burroughs, although there are inevitably some errors or omissions. For example, the captions are reversed for reproductions of the dust jackets for *Tarzan the Magnificent* and *Land of Terror* so that the reprint is identified as the first edition, while the jacket of *Synthetic Men of Mars* is identified as a "first edition title page," and the first Dell printing of Philip Jose Farmer's *The Adventure of the Peerless Peer*, originally published by Aspen Press, is, by implication, described as the first edition. There are also typographical errors such as *Erbania* for *Erbanta*, and *The Gridley Wave* for *The Gridley Wave*. The work should thus be consulted with caution, but it is not irreparably compromised for the casual user. It is not, however, a reference work that can be recommended for libraries or to anyone for whom a high degree of bibliographical accuracy is important.

The guide to prices may well be the most controversial aspect of the book. An estimated range from low to high is given for each item, and Bergen has based this on ads in fanzines, and book store and auction catalogs. However, the list of sources consulted is rather short, and prices, even for reprints, often seem to be high. Bookstore owners will be heartened, but collectors who have little experience with the field will be generally disheartened. The Burroughs market has been appreciating over the last decade, but the prices should be approached with the same caution brought to the bibliographic information. Bergen does claim that some of the prices represent prices he has paid, but if that is so, he has certainly paid more for several of the books than I have paid fairly recently.

The guide is profusely illustrated with reproductions of jacket and interior illustrations, and of original professional and fan art of varying quality. The volume has been nicely produced and, considering the amount of information provided, is not exorbitantly priced. It can, then, be recommended for its modest virtues until such time as a modern equivalent of Heins' *Bibliography* is published.

Walter Albert
Low Calorie Bradbury


*Yestermorrow* is a miscellaneous collection of essays, columns, and poems by Ray Bradbury, who has developed an interest in architecture and city planning since he stopped writing science fiction. Many appeared in the publication *Designers West*, where he seems to have been a columnist, and focus on that most unplanned and undesigned of American cities, Los Angeles. They deal with a variety of subjects from science fiction to film, comic books, hardware stores, technology and art. His heroes include both Walt Disney and Bernard Berenson, the subject of a long, slavishly adulatory appreciation. Except for the well-known “The Day after Tomorrow,” published in *The Nation* in 1953, in which he points out with remarkable prescience the ways in which the world of *Fahrenheit 451* had already come about, the pieces were written between 1970 and 1990. There’s not much difference between the early and the late material: Bradbury obviously believes in recycling—the same ideas and even the same sentences show up several times.

Ray Bradbury’s heart is certainly in the right place (meaning that he likes a lot of the same things that I do: comic books and great old movies like “Things to Come” and “Metropolis,” European cities, figurative art, and even walking—in L.A!). He writes poignantly of the SF art of the twenties and thirties, of Buck Rogers and Frank Paul, of Melie’s and Walt Disney. He envisions a city in which friends can chat at little coffee houses and kids hang out at book stores and young men and women scope each other out without hassle.

He likes to dream of pleasant ideas for the future—films projected through the floor, elegant architecture, livable cities. But he has no concrete proposals for putting these pretty ideas into action. His writing projects a kind of fuzzy utopianism with no substance behind it. What he says is impressionistic, shallow, unconsciously sexist, and sometimes inaccurate (he could get the name of Emily Bronte’s heroine right at least). He is hopelessly sentimental and nostalgic, addicted to one word sentences and one sentence paragraphs that read like those ‘60s greeting cards with fields of waving grain on the cover. Of his poetry, the less said the better. It was particularly unfortunate that he used a line from Yeats in one—the contrast is painful.

*Yestermorrow* provides a nostalgic journey into a past when science fiction still retained its sense of wonder and “gosh-wow” excitement. Those of us who grew up on Bradbury and still admire the clarity of his style and prescience of his vision will find some pleasure in these essays but we will not find anything new.

*Lynn F. Williams*
Barker Potpourris


These two eclectic and in some ways eccentric collections provide insight into the multiplicity of Clive Barker's talents. Both books are potpourris of assorted Barker materials: essays by Barker, interviews, articles by/interviews of friends and colleagues, critical reviews of his short stories, novels, films, plays, comics, color and black/white visuals—photographs, film stills, posters, book/magazine covers, cast lists/playbills, and, pictures/sketches by Barker himself. Indeed, both books are not only about Barker, but also seem, to a considerable extent, to have been shaped by him.

Clive Barker's Shadows in Eden is the longer, more comprehensive of the two, with more “name” contributors and more thorough discussions of Barker's short fiction, novels, and screen work. It consists of 48 numbered items, a few written for this volume, but most culled from a wide variety of sources, grouped in eight sections.

About half of the book is fragmentary, uneven, but high level discussion of works by writers in different styles—informal reflections by fellow writers like King, Campbell, and Lisa Tuttle, first hand accounts by friends and/or colleagues on various projects, formal analyses of specific books and films, and general assessments of Barker's accomplishments in different areas.

The other half of the book is made up of items either written by Barker or are interviews of him by such as Dennis Etchison, Sidney Wiater, and Douglas Winter. In addition to his own works and aesthetics, Barker’s personal commentaries cover such topics as other writers (King, Campbell), critics, Marlowe's Dr. Faustus, personal movie favorites, taboos and censorship, The Swamp Thing, and sex in art. The interviews are even more wide ranging, covering a childhood that was relatively “normal” and without notable trauma (Egads!), education, training and first efforts in art and writing, struggles with poverty, early experiments in theater, then Books of Blood and “overnight success.”

What emerges from all of this is a survey, not only of Barker's considerable accomplishments, but also a rounded portrait of the man himself: articulate, sensitive, intelligent, good humored, with a touch of irony about the world and his place in it, an aesthetic that embraces the limits of artistic expression and experiment, but is at the same time controlled and balanced, even conservative, and a philosophy that is, despite his novels, essentially positive and optimistic.
Pandemonium is yet more eccentric both in layout and subject matter, focusing largely on Barker's theatrical and comic book ventures. Pandemonium looks more like a graphic novel than a critical work, but squeezed in around the photographs and artwork are a number of short writings that offer insights into several aspects of Barker's works, plus a full length Barker stage play that introduces the reader to the one important aspect of Barker's career previously unavailable to readers in the states.

Pandemonium is divided into seven parts. Barker talks about himself, his work, his plans and aesthetics in the first part. In the second, old friend Peter Atkins and art teacher Alan Plent discuss Barker before the unexpected success. Parts 3-6 look at the works from several angles: films, live theater, fiction, horror literature, and comics. Part 7, an unedited, unexpurgated Clive Barker stage play “History of the Devil,” is the high point of the volume. Clearly intended more for the stage than the page, “The History of the Devil” is not an easy read. Part Grand Guignol, part Artaud's Theater of Cruelty, and part Ludlum's Theater of the Ridiculous, “The History of the Devil” dramatizes the trial of the Devil as he tries to get his sentence lifted and be allowed back into Heaven, arguing that it was not he, but man himself, who was responsible for the world’s evil. His case is dramatized in a series of confrontations between the Devil and his accusers from the beginning time to the present, some well known figures like Christ and Dante, but most obscure and grotesque. The approach is theatricalist, rather than realistic, with the audience actively participating in the dramatic action.

Even after reading “The History of the Devil” it is difficult to say whether or not Barker's plays rank with his fictions and films—that probably requires an enterprising, committed, talented theater company—but the editors of Pandemonium have done the American reader a real favor by putting it in print.

Keith Neilson

Cinefantastique Meets Playboy

George, Bill, ed. Femme Fatales. Vol. 1, No. 1 (Summer 1992) Quarterly. Subscriptions: P.O. Box 270, Oak Park, IL 60303. Editorial address: 5023 Frankford Ave., Baltimore, MD 21206. $18.00/yr. ISSN 1062-3906.

After twenty-two years of dignified, serious coverage of fantasy films, Cinefantastique is now turning out a pinup magazine as a sideline. Femme Fatales [properly Femmes Fatales, but readers won't care. NB/ed.] shares its publisher (Frederick S. Clarke) and its subscription address with CFQ. Femme will be devoted solely to actresses prominent in fantasy films. George claims that Femme intends to celebrate “actresses associated with strength as well as sex appeal; they no longer function solely as screamers”. Be that as it may, almost half the space in the first issue is taken up by pictures, mostly of actresses in beachwear.
George got interviews with three stars of A films—Jamie Lee Curtis, Rachel Ward and Kim Cattrall. Curtis gives the most entertaining interview. Ward, far from sharing George's enthusiasm for "action heroines" such as Sigourney Weaver, Linda Hamilton and several B-movie stars, expresses her dislike for films in which women ape macho male heroes. The first issue also interviews two TV stars and four B-film actresses including Linnea Quigley, who has made more than a dozen films in the last few years. Quigley is the centerfold. George promises a good lineup in future issues—Sharon Stone, Raquel Welch, Karen Black, Alice Krige, Ingrid Pitt and (finest of all) Barbara Steele, and from the B-films, Sybil Danning, Brigitte Nielsen, Caroline Munro and Elvira. He apparently struck out with Weaver, Hamilton and Jodie Foster. I'm sure it wouldn't occur to George to do a retrospective on granite dame Maria Ouspenskaya or to interview child star Christina Ricci (The Addams Family) since neither would look interesting in beachwear.

Most of the ladies interviewed are smart and well-spoken. An interview with Hammer starlet Veronica Carlson (the only actress covered who is not currently active) is much shorter and more perfunctory than a Carlson interview in Fangoria a few years ago. Except for Cinefantastique most fantasy film magazines are, like Femme, mainly interviews and pictures. Femme isn't really more trivial than Starlog or Fangoria, just more narrowly focused. Anyone who collects such magazines should consider Femme Fatales. If you get it, guard it against the vandals who will be attracted by the pictures; libraries can skip.

Under-Produced, Over-Priced, Amateurish


This under-produced, over-priced, and strangely conceived volume is devoted to critically analyzing 151 films in 30 horror film series, from the seven-film Tod Browning-Lon Chaney collaboration at MGM in the'20s (The Unholy Three, London After Midnight, etc.) to Stuart Gordon's two Lovecraft pastiches (The Re-Animator, From Beyond) produced for Empire Pictures in the 80s. Though the chronological range is broad, the geographic scope encompasses only Anglo-American cinema, omitting, for instance, Lucio Fulci's series of zombie films (7 Doors to Death, Gates of Hell, etc.) and Dario Argento's films about the "three mothers" (Inferno, Suspiria). An international focus would have more value than chronicling homespun dross. The book's coverage is far from exhaustive; the prefatory material provides no clue about the criteria for selection; and Hanke offers no theoretical perspective, merely arresting but more often tedious impressionistic criticism.
The impression it creates isn’t helped by Hanke’s awkward style. It is usually possible to puzzle meaning out of Hanke’s fumbled sentences, but not often worth the trouble. His critical analyses might be viewed as idiosyncratic if he gave any evidence of having read other critics (the scholarly apparatus includes only truncated chapter filmographies copied from other sources; there is no secondary bibliography.)

Hanke is clearly an autodidact who has never studied film; he doesn’t even deploy a coherent technical vocabulary. Considering its fannish provenance, the book offers meticulous research into trivia side by side with astonishing ignorance. For example, in his discussion of Roger Corman’s filmic adaptations of Poe in the ’60s, Hanke remarks *The Masque of the Red Death*’s aesthetic superiority to its five predecessors without ever mentioning the fact that Corman was working, for the first and only time, with cinematographer Nicolas Roeg, who went on to direct stylish gems like *Don’t Look Now* and *The Man Who Fell to Earth*. At other times, Hanke’s fannish predispositions lead him to hilarious misjudgments, such as his conclusion that Britain’s 1936 cut-rate clunker *Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street* excels Stephen Sondheim’s brilliant musical play on the same subject. To be fair, Hanke occasionally produces intriguing and original readings, such as his defense of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre II* as “a nightmare vision of the 1980s...a blistering indictment of Reaganism” with its satirical depiction of pathologically reactionary “family” values.

But these moments of insight are rare, and considering that one is paying $1.70 per series and $.33 per film in order to get to them, they’re hardly worth the price. One is better off perusing *Filmfax* magazine, which is just as informationally useful, cheaper, more appealingly produced, and considerably less pretentious than this embarrassing addition to Garland’s “Reference Library of the Humanities” (!).

Rob Latham

**Folklore in Toni Morrison**


Trudier Harris, Professor of English and Chair of the Curriculum in African and Afro-American Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, has written extensively on Black American literature. Her previous work pays special attention to the problems of Black Women. In *From Mammies to Militants*, she discussed Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*; now she deals with the whole of Morrison’s work to date. While she places her emphasis upon Black folklore, a way of reading Morrison requiring inside
knowledge—Harris expands her focus to a pattern analysis of each novel. The movement from folklore to structural and psychological analysis and back with very heavy doses of analysis, especially in the early chapters) is well handled, but seems to fragment the discussion of folklore. This movement helps her useful cross-referencing, however, Harris shows how Morrison has revised and extended her treatment of various themes from one novel to the next. Since Morrison repeats her themes in various novels, Harris usefully traces them in each; since Morrison never uses these themes in the same way, Harris finds plenty to say about the differentiation and development shown from novel to novel. But readers looking for insight into just one of Morrison's novels will find it less helpful to read just the section of *Fiction and Folklore* than is often true of a segmented work of criticism.

Folklore is primal storytelling, and has many uses: passing on information or tradition; regulating conduct (through fear or through example); defusing or redirecting anger; creating the "in-group" that recognizes these stories and each other through that recognition. Harris identifies these uses in Morrison's novels, and connects them to the wider discourse that Morrison has developed. "Storytelling ... is about power," Harris claims, and proves it as she discusses the actions of characters viewed as folk-mythic constructs.

Harris demonstrates the limitations of classical mythology and the power of folklore to enhance interpretation, as she shows the alterations that occur when oral tradition becomes gentrified. We should not expect exact parallels "between her usages and folklore as it exists in historical black communities"; Morrison transforms folk materials into "literary folklore." While Morrison uses much the same materials as did Chesnutt, Hurston, and Ellison, "she has gone far beyond the mere grafting of traditional items onto her fiction. She allows no dichotomy between form and substance, theme and character." Having made this clear, Harris has given herself permission to discuss the novels in a wide and thorough way.

Harris works her way through Morrison's *oeuvre*, one novel at a time, in chronological order. But each chapter interlocks with the previous chapters, and some of her more extensive references to folklore require an understanding of the previous argument. The first two chapters seem weighted with explanation, but by the time she gets to *Song of Solomon*, she is rolling, and from that point on, her explication becomes less labored and far more extensive. Clearly, Harris knows her folklore thoroughly; she gives enough details of each tale to clue in those of us who are not familiar with them as she connects each tale to the overall action in the novel. Some terms, however, she expects readers to know. "Stagolee" and "the dozens," mentioned rather frequently, are not well explained, and are not listed in the index, either.

Harris discloses socially oriented, sympathetic-empathetic roles for Blacks (especially women, in Morrison's works, rather than individualistic ones. She seems particularly interested in these novels because Morrison looks squarely at
the roots of contemporary Black treatment of Blacks. *Fiction and Folklore* adds new vistas on Morrison novels to a substantial list of Morrison studies, including those by Wilfred D. Samuels, and Clenora Hudson Weems, Terry Otten, Barbara Rigney, and Mari Evans; for me, the proof will come as I use these new insights to read Morrison’s new novel, *Jazz*.

Readers of *SFRA Review* should be aware that although some of Morrison’s novels use magic realism, they cannot be considered either science fiction or fantasy. However, Harris’s methods of critical analysis give a useful model for criticism of any folk-based fiction. Also, they may encourage people to read Morrison’s novels—always a worthy enterprise.

*Martha A. Bartter*

**Heinlein Cured of One-Worldism**


In the early 1950s Robert Heinlein’s writing had produced enough money to permit him and his wife, Virginia, the luxury of a six-month (November 1953-April 1954) trip around the world. Leaving from New Orleans via freighter, they visited South America, South Africa, Mauritius, Singapore, Djarkata, Australia, New Zealand, and Hawaii.

Heinlein had not planned a book recounting his journey but, as Virginia Heinlein reports in *Grumbles from the Grave* (1989), he spent some months working on it after she suggested that he write one; no one would buy the half-finished MS sent to his agent, Lurton Blasingame, so Heinlein finished it but still to no avail. Unsold, the MS was filed and then deposited with his other papers in the University of California, Santa Cruz, library. It remained there until an editor inquired after Heinlein’s death if there were any unpublished manuscripts. This first edition lacks an index.

Though *Tramp Royale* would never have been published as a travel book in its own time, it has considerable interest now because, in spite of its frankly commercial construction for a general audience of travel readers, it is the longest chunk of Heinlein’s writing that might be called autobiographical. Like much of his fiction, it is sometimes also outspokenly ideological and polemical.

Heinlein writes under his own identity but limits his persona to a folksy, hard-drinking, American fiction (but not specifically science fiction) writer, a vacationing ex-naval officer interested in politics and engineering whose touristic expertise is somewhere between that of an innocent abroad and a sophisticated traveler. It fails as descriptive travel writing because it too often depends
upon generic representations of sites visited; there are not enough colorfully told personal experiences that illuminate the differences in foreign places and people. Rather than attract readers to identify with the pleasures of his travels, Heinlein often writes grumpily about delays clearing customs and other bureaucratic restrictions and defensively about being scorned as an American.

He includes a series of domestic comedy incidents featuring Virginia Heinlein as “Ticky,” the ten-suitcase, demon-for-shopping Lucy Ricardo figure whose petulant whims and stubborn insistences require sitcom instruction and infantalizing rebukes delivered in Heinlein’s long-suffering-husband, masculine know-it-all voice: “I started giving her what-for, explaining in short, bitter words that we were strangers in a strange land and that we had to conform to the local rules whether we liked them or not.” More Fred Mertz than Michael Valentine Smith, by current standards he’s a patronizing sexist boor, a self-proclaimed “nasty old man” who gets off on strip shows in New Orleans, likes looking at soft-voiced Brazilian senoritas and South African stewardesses, but is afraid of “grim, firm-bosomed females in our own department stores.” In his comic narrative, “Ticky’s” instincts as “anarchist-individualist” usually turn out to be morally correct even if they’re politically naive and punishable with imprisonment under local law. Here are anticipations of many tiresome scenes in later fiction, for example, from The Number of the Beast, which itself might be considered a travel novel.

Heinlein can occasionally be an acute sociological observer as when he asks to see the slums everywhere he goes in order to juxtapose the extremes of wealth and poverty. However, he more often takes a viewpoint congenial to white, middle-aged, American males of the 1950’s. For example, visiting the “police state” of Argentina he apologizes for Perónist dictatorship because it has popular and middle-class support and allows criticism. He is impressed by social conditions in Uruguay and industriousness in Singapore but disappointed by the “dreary utopia” of New Zealand.

In South Africa (“The Country with a Problem”) he condemns apartheid as a legal system to enslave an entire race but blindly and proudly asserts that Americans are the “only dominant people on earth who do know how to deal” with natives (e.g. the Filipinos) because we see and treat them as individuals and have the “horse sense” to learn their names the way the Heinleins did with their shipboard Chinese steward, “the incomparable Kwai Yau.” Heinlein’s sadly common but ill-informed view of U.S. racial relations in 1953 appears in his remark that “the ambition of every literate black man in South Africa is to emigrate to Birmingham, Alabama, or some place else in our Deep South, where he can be among his own kind and still enjoy freedom.” As with many of Heinlein’s incorrect social predictions, it’s ironic in the light of recent developments in South Africa that he sees no possibility of evolution into a “better and more humane civilization” and forecasts bloodshed on the day when “the houseboy from next door will be waiting to cut throats.”
His touristic point of view reveals little that is deeply personal but, Heinlein being Heinlein, he cannot resist opining on many subjects, from practical advice on packing and getting visas to punditry on atomic war, the Communist menace, the McCarthy hearings, and the "prime problem facing the human race," the world population explosion: "The only place left for the billion people in China and the Indian subcontinent to spill over is into areas already occupied by the white Western nations" [Heinlein's italics].

Heinlein forcefully expresses his allegiance to Western culture and peoples ("that minority of the human race called loosely the Western democratic peoples and consisting mostly of Caucasians even though not identical with the Caucasian race") and makes clear the serious impact of world travel on his own global politics: "this trip around the world cured me of one Worldism." He confirms his new conviction succinctly in language reminiscent of "Yellow Peril" paranoid racist hysteria: "I'll fight before I'll let the spawning millions of Asia roll over Colorado and turn it into the sort of horizontal slum that Java is. Maybe this decision damns my soul; if so, so it must be."

Philip E. Smith II

Around the Universe in Eighty Pages


Nigel Henbest here lays before us the whole vast panoply of space and time in 89 oversized pages dominated by the most stunning astronomical art I have ever seen. Henbest organizes Universe along a time-line from the beginning (the Big Bang) to the end of the universe. Then, turning the speed of light into a structural principle, he arranges topics within this scheme by moving closer to Earth as he comes nearer to now. Each short chapter contains awesome computer-enhanced or -generated pictures complemented by well-written, accessible mini-essays. Remarkably, this very short book embraces nearly every major topic in modern cosmology: the inflationary universe, dark matter, quasars, pulsars, black holes, star birth and star death, and much more.

None of these essays are in any serious way objectionable but they are a little thin, so you will likely want to flesh out the story with, say, Dennis Overbye’s splendid narrative of cosmological exploration Lonely Hearts of the Cosmos (HarperCollins 1991). Of course, nobody is likely to buy Universe for its prose. You’re going to want those pictures! A few are based on (digitally enhanced) photographs, but most were created out of whole cloth by computer graphics wizard Philip Chudy (who surely deserves co-authorship) based on detailed current astronomical data and theories. Thus Chudy and Henbest actually show you, amongst other wonders, the Earth-like land-
scape of Mars circa 3,000 million years ago, the collision of star relics at the end of time, the 22-million year gestation of the Sun, and (my favorite) a gigantic "cannibal galaxy" (a supergiant elliptical) chowing down on hapless companion galaxy. I can't imagine anyone with a functioning sense of wonder not being overwhelmed by these beautifully reproduced images.

There is, however, a problem with Henbest's book. It's all a little too pat. While he designates a few topics as controversial (e.g., Andy Fabian's notions about galactic expansion within clusters) and others as ill-understood (why some galaxies become spirals), he presents the super-structure of cosmological thought as though it were all proved, accepted fact. It's not. Cosmology probes ultimate mysteries—the origin of the universe, no less—using whatever sparse, often contradictory data happens to be available and a generous helping of speculation. As Overbye's book hints, the result is anything but the fully coherent theoretical edifice one finds in Universe.

I don't really intend this as a criticism of Henbest's book—it's hard to imagine anyone doing more in the limited space his format provides. Still, readers interested in digging further should seek out John Boslough's Masters of Time: Cosmology at the End of Innocence (Addison-Wesley 1992). Boslough offers useful, well-reasoned correctives to the pat surety of much popular writing about cosmology: he concludes that the Big Bang, for example, "remains a scientific paradigm wrapped inside a metaphor for biblical genesis, a compelling although simplistic pseudoscientific creation myth." Myth it may be, but it certainly has spawned some gorgeous art!

Michael A. Morrison

Portrait of a Gentle Man


The title is somewhat misleading; there are letters relating to all of Carroll's major works, as well as some from various periods of his life, and unrelated to his stories.

The reader should not expect this to be a major reference book; rather it should be regarded as a tantalizing sampler of a much larger volume of correspondence. Although the compiler made extensive use of earlier compilations of Carroll/Dodgson's letters and diaries, the items reprinted here are only a small fraction of the whole. The letters in this book are well chosen for the points they were selected to illustrate, but all are fairly short; there are none of any significant length. Interspersed with them are fragments taken from Carroll's diary, intended to fill in gaps where there were no letters available.
The book is heavily illustrated with photos, sketches, and paintings, selected to match the text and illuminate the points being discussed. A narrative, in which the letters and diary fragments are embedded, serves to connect the otherwise disjointed material and provide further illumination.

This is an attractive book, but the serious scholar will find it of little use. Those who know Carroll only through his stories may find it slightly interesting. However, there are a great many readers between these two extremes, and they are likely to welcome the book.

The treatment is a caring one, in contrast to other recent books which use Carroll's penchant for photographing young girls in the nude as a means to make other, harsher, claims. Although there was obviously some incident which caused the Liddells to alter their relationship with Carroll, the letters make it clear that he maintained some status with them, and even continued a friendly, if more distant, relationship with Alice. The letters and accompanying illustrations also make it clear that not all parents objected to their daughters being photographed, and some actively cooperated. Altogether, the material here presents a portrait of a gentle man. Side excursions, such as Carroll's pursuit of Tennyson as a photography subject, and a picture of the grotesque woman who was the model for the Duchess, provide interesting illuminations.

In summary, this is an interesting, attractive, book at a moderate price.

W. D. Stevens

Movies as Dreams


This personal magazine is far different from the usual inane film fanzines. Johnson wrote every word of Delirious no. 1—essays on Carrie (1976), Rumble Fish (1983), Night of the Living Dead (1968) and Tormented (1960) and short "abstractions" of about two dozen other films. In his introduction, Johnson states that "Delirious is dedicated to the premise that all films are like dreams ... a message to society from the collective unconscious" and promises to "examine the mythological, psychological and ... political worlds within ... favorite fantasy films."

Johnson's work is serious, erudite and reasonably free of jargon, but I am doubtful of the usefulness of psychological studies of popular culture. To help you decide for yourself, here are two excerpts, the first from the article on Carrie. "Carrie's retreat with her mother into the maternal closet suggests a return to the womb and the unconscious itself, the closet's downstairs lo-
cation a reminder that this is where the horror all began in the body, down below. DePalma’s intricate vertical camera movements throughout the film reinforce this association, implying a tracking up and down both the physical and psychological planes as well as from heaven to hell.” And from Johnson’s “abstraction” of Sisters (1973). “Killer sis Danielle French-Canadian (implying dual nature) living in NY (implying separation—on Staten Island, to boot), divorced. Journalist/murder witness (voyeur) Grace contrasts D’s position as actress/model (exhibitionist), has written story on Staten Islanders’ identity problems (similar to Canada’s w/US); can’t disconnect from mother’s non-involved middle-class values; screen splits during murder, indicating Danielle’s split personality + transference of identification from victim to Grace.” If this intrigues, risk the $3.50.

Michael Klossner

Plot Summaries of the Dystopian Future


This thematized survey of modern plays fills a small gap because, as Dragan Klaic’ points out, “utopian aspects of drama, both classical and contemporary, rarely attract critical attention. Most of the plays discussed dramatize dystopian themes and many come from Eastern Europe. He observes, unsurprisingly, that dramatic form has specific difficulties in accommodating utopian and dystopian visions. The plays he has chosen represent the theatre of ideas and an “understanding of drama as a vehicle of public debate, and of the theatre as a medium in which issues of great importance, concerning the collective destiny of humanity, are discussed. Indeed, issues are discussed but Klaic’, like many critics who claim vast power for the subversive and critical work done by literary texts, rarely mentions the public effects of dramatic productions or any resulting changes of public policy. Critical reception by audiences and readers, and even by governments, of the plays he includes seems of less concern than identifying the presence of utopian/dystopian issues and settings within the plays.

Klaic’ concerns himself with temporal, not spatial, utopias and dystopias, that is, predictive plays that dramatize the future. He opens with four chapters in seventy pages summarizing utopian and eschatological notions of the future in Western political, social, and religious thought as well as in fictional and dramatic forms of literary expression. Little in this reprise will be news to most academic readers, and scholars of SF will find that Klaic’ has only done a halfway thorough job of looking at the relevant criticism. Modern literary, artistic, and dramatic
movements like naturalism, surrealism, dada, symbolism, and expressionism receive only brief or glancing recognition; postmodernist performance pieces receive cursory attention in the last chapter; futurism and absurdism are not discussed and influential modern plays like Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* are omitted. A briefer essay focused explicitly on utopias and dystopias in relation to modern drama would have been more to the point.

Klaic' finds only two twentieth-century playwrights who qualify fully as utopian creators of "euphoric predictions": Bernard Shaw (Back to Methuselah (1920) and The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles (1934)) and Vladimir Mayakovsky (Mystery Bouffe [1918-21]). Otherwise the century's dramatic productions reveal unremittingly dystopian speculations. Adapting Karl Mannheim's theory (Ideology and Utopia), Klaic' contends that modern dystopian drama critically "invokes ideology in its dual capacity—as a system of collective notions about reality... and as a false consciousness. He asserts that dystopian plays are, paradoxically, utopian because they imply unfulfilled utopian ambitions or "utopia as a subverted or suppressed desire... dystopia has become in our times a via negativa to express utopian strivings" (3-4).

In the balance of the book (Chapters 5-12) Klaic' assembles and discusses critically the plots and ideas of 44 plays, by my count, with mentions of several more. The chapter titles adequately convey the thematic groupings: "The Menace of Science," "Dystopian Politics," "Decay, Catastrophe, and Survival," "Apocalyptic Sentiments," "Eternal Truths and Cautionary Gestures," "Predictive Satire," "The Foreclosure of the Future," and "Back to the Future." The chapter on "Decay, Catastrophe, and Survival," for example, interestingly juxtaposes Tadeusz Rozewicz's The Old Woman Broods (1968), Jean-Claude Grumberg's Tomorrow, from any Window (1968), Mikhail Bulgakov's Adam and Eve (1931), John Bowen's After the Rain (1966), and Harald Maller's The Raft of the Dead (1985) as "bang" and "whimper" variants on doomsday. Typically, Klaic' summaries dwell on the ideas and give no notion as to whether the plays work as dramatic achievements.

All in all, The Plot of the Future is mid-list scholarship; it competently groups and briefly describes, according to typological template, the utopian/dystopian aspects of the exemplary plays but, on the whole, the book lacks a compellingly developed argument or illuminating critical or theoretical insights about the plays and the utopian/dystopian issues. His summaries almost never quote dialogue or stage directions and too often omit consideration of the advantages and problems associated with dramatic form and production. The summaries of plays may be useful to academics interested in comparative modern European and American drama, science fiction, utopian studies, and perhaps to a few general readers or theater professionals. Scholars and readers of SF who might think of only one or two plays (like
R.U.R. or Back to Methuselah) will be surprised and enlightened to discover or remember interesting plays among the many titles Klaic' has collected.

The University of Michigan Press copy editors should have saved The Plot of the Future from several errors such as the use of "subterfuge" as a verb (three times) and misspellings like "Katterer" for "Ketterer" and "Methusalem" for "Methuselah." The mistaken "he" instead of "be" on page 52 turns Klaic'’s sentence about Shaw as a Fabian socialist into nonsense. Finally the reprehensible practice of failing to index scholarly notes occludes much of Klaic'’s extensive and valuable research. A great many names and titles of interest are hidden to researchers who ought to be able to depend on indexes while searching through academic works.

Philip E. Smith II

Superior Collection of King Criticism


Amidst the myriad flotsam and jetsam books dealing with Stephen King, at last there comes one solid, concise book of critical essays which will hopefully set the tone for future King scholarship. Too often King’s works have been bashed by his critics, and just as often his self-proclaimed proponents go overboard in their praise, and neither group does King nor his works justice. Magistrale has collected 15 original essays that are open-minded in their approach, and in-depth in their examination of King as a valued member of the American literature canon.

Bernadette Bosky examines the role of food, eating disorders, and fat/skinny imagery in King’s works, focusing primarily on It, The Stand, and Misery. She makes us examine things that are often overlooked in literature, but things which drive all of us in our everyday lives—eating, sleeping, defecating...the base functions which sustain life.

Douglas Keesey takes a detailed look at homophobia and how King's works reflect what society is fearing. King mentions something to the effect that "society should not kill the messenger for the message" and that he is merely reporting what we...society...fears. Both King and Keesey tell the reader to look into their own hearts and take care of themselves and their attitudes, not those of the writer.

Other essays include Mary Pharr’s examination of King’s female characters, Ron Curran’s look at myth and fairy tales, and Michael Stanton’s look at politics in King. Several other essays do more to convince the reader of King’s viability as a "legitimate" writer: Mary Jane Dickerson compares King
and Faulkner, showing how Faulkner influenced his writings; Len Mustazza calls *Pet Semetary* a “classical tragedy”; and Ed Casebeer shows us how King transcends more than one genre and moves freely within many.

Much more detailed than Zahorski’s pioneering foray into King, and presented much better than the torrent of perhaps well-written but poorly-packaged books on King that Starmont House continues to produce, this book is a must have for any critical library, collector, critic, or Stephen King reader. You’ll look at King in a whole new light after this.

*Daryl F. Mallett*

### A Superfluous Study


The problem with this monograph is the problem with the whole Modern Novelists series. According to the general editor’s preface, the series is devoted to novelists who created, continued, extended, reacted against, or rejected the modern novel, not to mention nineteenth-century novelists whose contribution to the art of fiction “makes them impossible to ignore.” Moreover, each volume is intended not only for those approaching the novelist for the first time but also for those “already familiar with some parts of the achievement in question” and want more context. Given this tired and desperate eclecticism, one can only conclude that the subtext here is that a slender hardback critical monograph on a major novelist will be purchased by most academic libraries on a no-questions-asked basis.

The only excuse for another slim introductory monograph on Orwell is when something new is offered: a new critical perspective, new biographical insights, or even a new effective synthesis of recent studies in the Orwell industry. This work offers none of these things. There are competent summaries of the six novels, but the introductory contextual chapters are weary and the bibliography, supposedly inviting further reading, is woefully inadequate.

Meyers’s strength is in her grasp of the Orwellian intertext. But even this tends to result in banality. Is it useful to note that “Like Charles Dickens and D. H. Lawrence, Orwell’s desire to be a writer originated in his sense of self in conflict with environment”? She is very shaky on the socio-historical background. It is hardly likely that Orwell’s “obsession with telling the truth . . . might well have originated in the public-school emphasis on ‘owning up,’” when Orwell’s clear and lifelong desire was to reject public school values. What is the point of quoting Orwell’s friends’ view that “he was not a naturally gifted writer,” then failing to counterbalance it with the commonplace that, in his essays, he is the finest plain stylist in English since Addison?
Meyers's concluding remark about Nineteen-Eighty Four is typical of the vague assertions that weaken her study. The novel "added a new and serious element to science fiction" by warning about the dangers of totalitarianism and providing a language to describe them. Was science fiction until this time merely flippant? What, indeed, was Orwell's relation to science fiction? Why did he begin as a realistic novelist but produce two concluding masterpieces of fantastic literature, while H. G. Wells, one of Orwell's important influences, had moved in precisely the opposite direction? Did the world somehow miss the point about the dangers of totalitarianism between 1939 and 1945?

Though Meyers' point about language is true, it needs the correct emphasis. Orwell's greatest achievement—why Nineteen Eighty-Four is a masterpiece—is in exposing with terrifying clarity the vulnerability of language, and hence thought, to ideological manipulation. That is why current Pentagonese terms like "friendly fire" and "collateral damage" no longer produce the intended emollient effect. But Meyers seems more apologetic about Orwell's failure to write a good realistic novel than enthusiastic about Orwell's achievement, dismissing him right at the beginning as "primarily a journalist and essayist." Having not even sheer enthusiasm for its subject to commend it, this study is in my view superfluous and not to be recommended.

Nicholas Ruddick

A Pilgrim Interviewed

Moskowitz, Sam. After All These Years...Sam Moskowitz on His Science Fiction Career. Niekas Publications, RFD 2, Box 63, Center Harbor, NH 03226-9729, 1991. 96 p. $5.95 + $1.50 postage.

If any SFRA members still have newsletters from 1981, when the SFRA belatedly recognized Moskowitz's contributions with a Pilgrim, they'll have some of the information from this mail interview conducted by Jeffrey Elliot and edited by Fred Lerner. And some of the other information has appeared piecemeal in other publications, most of them cited in the bibliography that concludes this 4x11 inch stapled booklet.

Moskowitz (1920- ), the son of Russian emigrant Jews, was born and grew up during the depression in the Newark area, an environment that he notes has strongly shaped his later development. His exposure to, and immediate infatuation with, SF began in 1932 and continues to this day. Fan activity began soon after, beginning with membership in Gemsback's Science Fiction League, continuing with the planning and organizing of the first worldcon in 1939, editing with James Taurasi Fantasy Times, an important source of information about the field for the 1946-1966 period, a predecessor of Locus that has unfortunately never been reprinted. His books began in 1947, an edited collection of David
H. Keller's stories with a biography and bibliography, followed in 1963 and 1966 with two collections of biographies of proto-SF and SF writers, many of them the first detailed treatment of their subjects, and with two important historical anthologies from the early popular/pulp magazines in 1968 and 1970, enriched with his knowledgeable commentary. Many other edited/authored books are listed in the bibliography.

The mail interview format does not serve Sam well, who too often sounds pompous or as if he's still fighting battles, and sometimes sounds resentful for not being recognized more ("Many of the writers, fans and academics in science fiction remember me as an enthusiastic active fan in the thirties and early forties. They found it difficult to accept that the teenager they knew was capable of critical prestige performance"). The questions don't permit the normal give and take of a live interview, and many key questions aren't even raised, even allowing for the narrow focus of the interview. For example, many collectors like Sam have had their invaluable collections dispersed or simply sold upon their death. Has he made any provisions for disposing of his collection, probably the most important one now in private hands? Does his physician wife share his interests in SF?

Some scholars may find this interview of interest, but the physical format of the publication and its extremely specialized topic will cause most libraries to pass it by.

Neil Barron

A Provocative Gloss


The elusive ideal, we suppose, is that a work of literature and its reader occupy a spot of space and span of time in which the work displays itself and the reader observes, absorbs, considers, reacts—and what ensues is resistance, epiphany, delight, change. But when that work of literature enters the classroom, it becomes a responsibility—the dreaded Assignment. The reader now frets, anguishes, and searches desperately for some right response, right defined as "successful" in the judgment of the authority doing the assigning. The reader now asks "What should I think? What do I say about this? How can I sound knowledgeable?" Or perhaps simply, "How can I sound like I actually read this book? Enter the *Guide to Understanding the Classics*: Monarch Notes.

Rebecca Rass's guide to *The Left Hand of Darkness* takes on this task of enlightening the student reader. This guide discusses the novel chiefly as a departure from what she sees as standard fare in the science fiction of its
time: the young-male-adolescent-escapist fantasies that, Rass says, dominated the genre until the 1970s. Rass presents TLHD as the classic consideration of the problems of gender identity and sex bias. The reader of this guide is, from the outset, given these problems as the foundation of the novel and is told quite firmly that the questions of space politics and the aspect of adventure and journey to self-discovery are secondary.

That established, this guide to TLHD becomes a challenge to the reader, an exercise in examining and developing an understanding of the practice of literary criticism on a higher level than usually found in this sort of aid to reading. The book begins with an interview with Le Guin and ends with a compilation of critical thought on the novel. Neither of these would provide an easy way of avoiding the novel itself; in fact, the student must have read the novel carefully to appreciate either of these sections. In between, Rass's guide presents the more conventional literary analysis—chapter-by-chapter—examining theme, characterization, structure, and so on.

The goal of these study guides is, or should be, to give enough to the student without giving much. Rass manages this task admirably, and does it without losing Le Guin's voice as novelist or her own as critic and as admirer of the text. At times, Rass seems to be struggling with the Monarch format. So the student who hopes to see the book laid out like a simple diagram may be disappointed. The confused reader who needs strict parallels marked by regular, organized headings may be a bit lost. But the student who wants a context in which to read the book and the assistance of a carefully examined critical point of view will find Rass's study guide provocative in itself as well as informative about Le Guin's novel. Such a student may even find the dreaded Assignment approaching that elusive ideal.

M. Parish

Heroes in Tights


Roy Kinnard's *The Comics Come Alive* (reviewed in SFRAR 198) covers all life action films and TV productions based on comic books and strips, including nonfantastic humor and adventure strips such as *Dennis the Menace* and *Prince Valiant*. Schoell is interested only in fantastic superheroes. Kinnard provides much more detailed filmographic information than Schoell, but no synopses and only terse, often hostile criticism. Schoell offers detailed synopses of films and loquacious, erudite, fannish, often nitpicking appraisals. Schoell spends almost as much space discussing the original comics as the movies. He generally prefers the comics, the pulps, B-movies and serial films to big-budget productions.
This reverse snobbery is sometimes carried to extremes; he calls the Doc Savage pulps "fast, vivid, colorful and exciting" but considers Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior (1981) "mediocre and rather stupid". Comic Book Heroes has many more and larger film stills than The Comics Come Alive, but Schoell's reproductions of comic book covers are too small.

Schoell has one chapter each on Superman, Batman, Captain America and Captain Marvel, shorter sections on several other heroes such as Wonder Woman and Swamp Thing, a chapter on serial heroes, one on TV heroes and one on film heroes who were "inspired by the comics but who did not originate in comics. The latter two chapters range as far afield as The Avengers, The Man from U.N.C.L.E., James Bond, Indiana Jones, Robocop, Mad Max, Star Trek and Star Wars—all mere padding.

Libraries will prefer Kinnard over Schoell for coverage of the films. There are several books about comics much more rigorous and complete than Schoell, including Mike Benton's books reviewed in SFRAN 193 and SFRAR 198. Comic Book Heroes of the Screen is for comics fans who want one more unindexed, opinionated fan publication on their favorite subject. (A third 1991 book on comics-derived movies, David Hofstede's Hollywood and the Comics, was reviewed unfavorably in SFRAR 196.)

Michael Klossner

Ghost Hosts and Cool Ghouls


In 1957 Screen Gems released the Shock! package, fifty-two Universal horror films made from 1931 to 1948, to television. Students of genre films have long been aware that the Shock! package helped revive U.S. horror film production after a decade of decline. Less well remembered is the fact that the package caused dozens of local TV stations to inaugurate "creature feature" shows presented by outrageously-costumed horror hosts. Most of these zanies disappeared by the early 1960s but several became local cult figures and survived for as long as twenty years. New hosts appeared during periodic revivals. Watson estimates these have been at least 200 "ghost hosts" and "cool ghouls" with names like Macabra (Omaha), Sir Graves Ghastley (Detroit), Dr. Paul Bearer (St. Petersburg) and Sir Cecil Creapes (Nashville). She interviewed about one-third of them.

A few hosts such as Vampira (Los Angeles), Gorgon (Dallas) and Dr. Madblood (Virginia Beach) provided largely serious introductions to the movies.
John Stanley (Oakland) hosted without costume, makeup or character name, offered informative commentary and interviewed guest stars. Most hosts, however, mercilessly lampooned the movies and performed skits. Chily Billy (Pittsburgh) held a Miss Transylvania beauty contest for hags; Ghoulardi's (Cleveland) trademark was blowing up plastic frogs. Campy, voluptuous Stella (Philadelphia)—a far cry from emaciated, somber Vampira—had a sentient bed, named Bed, that murmured happily when she got into it.

The hosts' skits were often more entertaining than the movies, which were ignored, pilloried or even altered. Zacherley (New York), whom Watson considers the most inventive host, added funny music, wisecracks and even his own image (via quick cuts or electronic imposition) to the movies. Sven (Chicago) combined the silliest parts of two movies into one feature. Elvira (Los Angeles), the most famous host, imposed a happy ending on a film. Unfortunately, some good movies, such as *The Black Cat* (1934), suffered these indignities. The comic hosts implied that almost all old-fashioned or low-budget horror films are ridiculous.

Watson does not analyze the relationship among films, audiences and commercial intermediaries such as TV hosts or speculate on the effects the hosts may have had on the development of horror comedy or bad-movie cults. She provides an abundance of raw data, including dozens of pictures of the hosts in all their tacky glory. Her entertaining survey of an odd corner of popular culture is recommended for good-sized television collections and those interested in the marketing and reception of genre films.

*Michael Klossner*

## Fiction Reviews:

### Hooray! Yawn... & Boo Hiss!


As Darkover books go, *Renunciates* is nothing to draw your sword over. It has its good moments, but it lacks consistency in pace and energy. The subject of Renunciates with Laran is excellent, one that MZB says she believed to be "mutually exclusive" until she began to receive viable story after story from her "Friends." For some of the stories, it works. (Incidentally, "Renunciates" are women who have chosen a life independent of the rules of men/society, and "laran" is a unique psi power.)
In addition to her introductions (some of which repeat anecdotes contained in several earlier “Friends” anthologies), MZB herself offers the short, memorable “Amazon Fragment.” Diane Paxton, a frequent contributor, introduces a new non-Darkovan sapient race in a tall-tale that poses a moral dilemma, one necessitating more of a suspension of disbelief than I am willing to give to such an uninteresting story. Then, as always, there are the several pieces which present previously untold segments of the lives of already known characters. Varzil (hoo-ray!) and Cleindori (yawn) make yet another entrance, but thank goodness, Dyan Ardais (boo hiss!) is nowhere to be found. One story, “To Touch a Comyn” by Andrew Rey, is particularly refreshing. In this unusual tale, the heroine is not a Reununciate, but an independent-thinking off-worlder assigned to Cottman IV who falls in love with a Comyn Lord.

I find it interesting that the just mentioned story was my favorite, and it is written by a man. In truth, I’ve always felt some disquiet with the renunciate stories in any Darkovan novel or edited anthology. In the “Friends” anthologies particularly, MZB, in great tracts of pedantic ramblings, disavows any feminist label. Yet the stories she writes and edits are about women seeking to determine their own destiny. Thus, she writes and edits feminist stories, then rejects the attempts of feminists to make her into a feminist symbol. Perhaps, it is sad to say, her seeming misinterpretation of the goals of feminism is reflected in the many single (and narrow)-minded characters in this below average anthology.

Margoleath Berman & Daniel F. Mullen II

Pleasurable Distraction


The Genesis Web is C. M. Brennan’s first novel ... and unfortunately it shows. While the story is well-constructed and flows nicely, the characterization tends to be a bit weak and several items are left hanging.

Set in the world of The 25th Century, these are the chronicles of characters surrounding Buck Rogers and his fight against RAM. While Rogers himself never appears in the book, there are many references to him and Col. Wilma Deering.

As an example of hanging items, we never really find out what happens to super-genius Dr. Remus Wydlin after RAM takes over his scientific base. RAM reports him destroyed, and we must assume he is dead, since at the end of the book, twenty-some odd years have gone by.

The story jumps around from character to character. First we are following Vince Pirelli, then Jovanna Trask, then Remus and Noah Wydlin, then Black Barney. It is very disjointed and the reader has to concentrate on the characters. The time lapse within the story also is confusing to the reader.
If you're a Buck Rogers completist, or if you're stuck in an airport or plane for hours, this book will at least provide some distraction...and if you travel a lot, it's part of a series.

Daryl F. Mallett

Shapeshifting Psychologist


How I became a werewolf in San Francisco is told by the leading character, who, though a practicing psychologist, never seems to think, only to react. Of course, had he thought in any of the dozen problem situations he faced, there would have been no story for the federal "men in gray," those local police who believe only in feral dogs, who are clearly stupid and quite evil, though relentless.

Cadnum has given an interesting twist to the shape-shifting theme and expanded the werewolf's attitudes and behavior to a level above the common legend.

Paula M. Strain

Alternate Universe Novel


*Dragon Season* is Michael Cassutt's first novel in a long while... *The Star Country* being released in 1986. And he's certainly outdone himself with this novel. Set in present-day Tucson, Arizona, the novel centers on Air Force Lt. Rick Walsh who returns from duty on Guam, only to find his girlfriend missing, their son he didn't know about, and a whole bunch of unanswerable questions.

Soon, his investigation of Maia’s disappearance leads him into an alternate universe where dragons exist and smart bombs are being stolen from Rick's world in order to wage war in the alternate universe.

Cassutt's descriptions of Arizona are accurate and vivid, which make his alternate world view more believable. Rick Walsh and Maia are three-d characters who come to life throughout the story... we can empathize with Walsh and his difficulties. Even the technical jargon is accurate (yes, Shemya really is a rock about the size of a football field in the middle of the Aleutians). The story and the people come alive under Cassutt’s skilled pen. Hopefully he won't take quite so long to write another book!

Daryl F. Mallett
Star Trek Followers Must Read


Imzadi has to be the best *Star Trek* book to date. If you thought Peter David wrote a great story with *Star Trek: The Next Generation: Vendetta*, this new one far exceeds his previous efforts.

It is the future; William T. Riker is an elderly Admiral stationed on a remote starbase; Wesley Crusher is Captain of the *Hood*; Data is a Commodore; Data is commanding officer of the *Enterprise* 1701-F studying the Guardian of Forever; Deanna Troi is dead. Riker is called to Betazed to be with Lwaxana as she dies ... he thinks she is going to forgive him ... she does not ... because she feels he is responsible for Deanna’s death forty years ago, something which Riker has never forgiven himself for either. Now, suddenly, Riker has an opportunity to change it all, to change the way things happened, and he must make one of the most difficult decisions of his life. Interfere with the natural flow of things, or leave them alone?

This novel examines in depth the relationship between Riker and Troi, going back to their first meeting, their difficult courtship, Deanna’s meddling mother, Riker saving Deanna’s life ...

David does a good job interweaving the events of the past with the events of the “present” and the events which we, the viewing audience know as the “here and now” of the tv/book series.

Peter David’s book will wrench at your heart, make you laugh, make you cry, and give you one hell of a great reading experience ... one you won’t soon forget. A must-read for *Star Trek* followers!

*Daryl F. Mallett*

Machine-ists versus Gene-ists


Like *Sparrowhawk* (Ace, 1990) and *Greenhouse* (Ace, 1991), *Woodsman* is set in Easton’s “organic future,” where imaginative but thinly-regulated genetic engineering has saved Earth from resources depletion, mass starvation, and the greenhouse effect. Here modified insects (“Roachsters”) and armadillos (“Armadons”) replace gas-guzzling automobiles; plants, given human genes and human intelligence, become botanical citizens (“bots”); and a pig-derived ex-garbage disposal unit is transformed into protagonist Frederick Suida, Bioform Regulatory Administrator.

However, despite the saving benefits of genengineering, human perversity endures. Machine-worshipping Engineers, who “yearn for the Good Old Days”
of hydrocarbon smog and dung-free streets, rebel violently against all manifes-
tations of genetic engineering, murdering and destroying with impunity the ge-
etically modified and their makers. A few bots and gengineers survive the
planet-wide pogrom, escaping to progressive orbital habitats where organic and
hard technologies collaborate, while the triumphant nazi-like Engineers destroy
temselves and the Earth with old stocks of nuclear missiles.

Although this story offers an occasional authentic moment, the charac-
ters of Woodsman are insufficiently developed. The motivations of both
Engineers and gengineers are simplistic and implausible, while the society
which frames these folk seems unbelievably passive in response to anti-
social violence. And the agon isn't consistent with the organic culture in which
it occurs. Despite many interesting ideas, the details of this fiction simply
do not cohere. Not recommended.

David Mead

An Author to Watch

0-671-78068-9.

This mission takes Captain Kirk and the crew of the Enterprise to the icy
planet of Nordstral to help Nordstral scientists discover the reason behind a
mysterious outbreak of insanity. Kirk and McCoy investigate under the ice
pack while Uhura and Chekov set out across the frozen tundra with their
native guides.

Soon, both teams find themselves fighting for their lives as crazed sci-
entists, devious natives, electromagnetic changes, and incredible earth-
quakes rock the planet, and the lives on the planet. Eventually, the crew
must face serious choices in order to save themselves and the planet itself.

This book is much more "real" than the television show ... perhaps it is
because you never know if Kirk or McCoy might really die (of course they'd
have to be brought back, but you still never know). Plus, the issues dealt
with here are of conservation, of environmental awareness, of exploiting
natural resources, and that hits close to home in our present day situation.
In any case, the reader really gets a chance to find out what McCoy is think-
ing, how paranoid Chekov really is, or the depth between the relationships
of the characters are something you don't get to see in the tv show.

This is a very well done book, and L. A. Graf is a name to watch, cer-
tainly in the Star Trek universe.

Daryl F. Mallett
Rhion’s Adventures Continue


*The Rainbow Abyss* and its sequel, *The Magicians of Night*, tell the story of mediocre, near-sighted wizard Rhion and his adventures. Though each book shares a common protagonist, they are very different novels; it is to Hambly’s credit that they hang together as well as they do.

The second book, *The Magicians of Night*, picks up right where the first one left off. Rhion awakens in a magicless world—the world of Nazi Germany in 1940. Jaldis is unaccountably missing; Rhion is alone, and it quickly becomes apparent that he is not a guest but a prisoner. He is a magical advisor to the evil von Rath, who is determined to find out how to use magic to win the war. Rhion can feel magic deep within the earth, but it is asleep. As a result, the Nazis can only raise magic by that most tricky of magical practices—human sacrifice. The problem: they can’t turn the potential magic thus released into action. Rhion finds out how to tap into it, but keeps his information confidential, instead secretly making a magic Spiracle and managing to power it in the hidden Dark Well, deep in the basement of his prison, Schloss Torweg. With the help of Sara, a local prostitute and secret Jew (who is always exclaiming in Yiddish, even though she is supposedly hiding her heritage), he frees her father from a concentration camp, thus gaining himself an ally. Rebbe leibnitz is the only one who believes that Rhion can do magic. In a confusing muddle of escapes and recaptures, von Rath gets the Spiracle and thus gains access to the potential power the wizards have been generating. Yet further adventures are in store for Rhion before he is able to return to his own world to accomplish his mission: to band together all the wizards and keep magic from disappearing from his world.

*The Magicians of Night* has what *Rainbow* lacks: plot. *Rainbow* lacks clear focus because the hero isn’t really searching for anything or doing anything concrete. Instead, Jaldis and Rhion have various adventures while Jaldis tries to build a new Dark Well. *Magicians*, on the other hand, tells of Rhion’s struggle to return to his own world, with the terrifying backdrop of Nazi Germany. *Magicians* is sometimes hard to follow—what escape-capture are we on now?—but the novel ties together more coherently than *Rainbow* since there is a clear good vs. evil struggle going on. At times, dialogue is also hard to follow because interleaved with speech are long asides or evocative descriptions. What saves this book as well as *Rainbow* is Hambly’s beautiful writing: she constantly evokes sight, touch, smell, and hearing to weave a wonderfully complex world. Her characters are interesting, too: Hambly draws Rhion not as an invincible wizard, but as a not very strong magician-in-training with bad eyesight, scared in a much different world but always ready to spring into action.
Ultimately, in the Sun-Cross books, Hambly comments on human nature: in any world, magical or not, there is the desire to control others, to tell others what to do or what's important, regardless of their wishes and regardless of basic human rights. Wizards and Jews have much in common: both are killed with impunity in their world; neither are considered human; neither have rights. It is no coincidence that Rhion is thought to be a Jew while in Germany. Hambly deals well with the important topics of freedom and human rights.

Karen Hellekson

[See Issue 197 for Daryl Mallet's review of The Rainbow Abyss.]

Sequel or Transition Novel


Dean James continues to develop her voice as a writer of fantasy. Kingslayer takes up the story of Gaylon Reysson where Sorcerer's Stone left off. Gaylon has reclaimed his throne from the usurper, Lucien D'Sulang, and is married to Jessmyn. It is years later, and Gaylon is in his twenties. Unfortunately, he has let his kingdom go to waste and it is all the chancellor and the queen can do to keep it running. The king would rather be off riding and carousing in a life of hell-raising than managing his kingdom.

When the second member of his band of friends dies, Gaylon invokes powers to bring the young man back, thus earning himself the fear of his subjects as they call him necromancer. And it turns out he hasn't touched Jessmyn since that first night many years ago. There's definitely trouble going on in Wynnamyr. Additionally, there's Sezran, the starfaring wizard who wants "his" sword, Kingslayer, back.

Finally, Gaylon is forced into confrontation by his Xenaran enemies, and must take up Kingslayer again. In the process, he loses a great many things dear to him, including friends, and is forced to examine his own values and his life.

In this second fantasy book, James builds a complex story of friendships, lives gone awry, and true loyalty. Again, she manages to subtly interweave science fiction and fantasy, with a spaceship, longevity of life, and star travel. Again she paces Moorcock's Stormbringer/Elric books, yet in a distinct voice all her own. L. Dean James is definitely a writer to continue watching in the fantasy field as she makes her way to the top. Rumor control has it that James has another trilogy ready for publication, and a third book in this series. Whatever her next publication, like this book ... it's a most certainly a must read!

Daryl F. Mallett
Excellent...Mostly


Again, another excellent Mercedes Lackey book ... mostly. In *Bardic Voices*, we are introduced to Rune, a young girl who is very unappreciated at her home. After almost being raped by the village boys, she stakes her life on her ability to play the fiddle ... she will please the Ghost of Skull Hill with her playing ... or die.

She obviously doesn’t die, since the cover says “Book I of The Lark and the Wren.” Perhaps the book would be more concise and believable if she had, though. The book carries along through her adventures, but as it nears the end, Lackey gets too ambitious, trying to cram in the saving of a kingdom, resolution of someone else’s true love gone awry, discovering her own relationship, and a whole truckload of other stuff.

If there’s going to be more than one book, Lackey should have used those other books and spread this one out a bit.

This is not to say the writing isn’t good ... because it is. Lackey’s prosaic melody is well played, as usual, the writing capturing the reader and drawing him/her along until the (convoluted) end. A good read.

Daryl F. Mallett

Lackey Strikes Again


Mercedes Lackey strikes again with another excellent book. It’s amazing that she manages to turn out good books... her schedule allows for no mistakes. She turns out a book every three months... that’s four books a year, and all of them have been wonderful so far, and *Knight of Ghosts and Shadows*, a collaboration with Ellen Guon, is no exception.

Set in Southern California of modern times, Renaissance Faire musician and general guy-with-no-life Eric Banyon, together with other musicians, must overcome the evil elves in Los Angeles. Sound weird? It is.

But not as weird as real life. The premise of the novel is intriguing ... why couldn’t there be elves in L.A.? Would the general public even notice them ... probably not. Lackey and Guon describe a Los Angeles with citizens completely real in scope and depth. The characters are all people you or I know, regardless of the situations, thus making them very believable. Look around at people after reading the book. Could someone you know really be an elf?

Lackey and Guon also manage to address such issues as bisexuality, corporate management, and social structure in this novel. But the main thrust of the book, besides entertainment value (high), is the development of
human Bard, Eric Banyon; Elf warrior & lord, Korendil; and human musician, Beth Kentraine ... evolutions which are not cut-and-dried, but convoluted, and very realistic. A great read!

Daryl F. Mallett

Celtic Society Recreated


Because all the action occurs in Albion, The Silver Hand is a more interesting book than its predecessor, The Paradise War. The shift in narrator to the Albion bard Tegid also strengthens the telling.

The earlier book closed with the murder of Meldryn Mawr, king of Prydain. The Silver Hand opens with his funeral and the immediate appointment of a successor to avert a right-by-might claim being presented by his son Meldrun with the support of Siawn Hy, one of two transferees to Albion from our world. Llew, the other transferee known to us as Lewis Gillies, who was King’s Champion, is selected. Civil war follows. The book closes with Llew confirmed as king in Albion, Meldrun dead, and Siawn Hy (who is also Simon), transfixed by a spear, fading back to Britain as he dies.

The book can stand on its own. Siawn’s apparent death, the one day visit from Britain of members of the Society of Metaphysical Archaeologists, and the loss of the dog Twrch at a nexus are the few short or loose, story ends that remain to challenge Lawhead’s creativity in producing a third volume.

Readers who want things to happen will enjoy the almost continuous action of this story, while those who like the imaginative creation of a society will revel in Lawhead’s picture of a prewritten historic Celtic society. The poems, of which there are several long ones, thanks to a bard narrator, have the roll and vocabulary of poetry translated from manuscripts of long past centuries.

Paula M. Strain

Putting the Pieces Together


Rehashing the action of Wulfyarn would be unfair to the book. What happens is simple enough: A gigantic hospital starship is destroyed, partly by bad luck and partly by its captain’s hubris. Rather than getting the action firsthand, though, readers must wait while the autoscribe Wulf pieces together what happened out of the insane captain’s ravings, and while Wulf ponders which parts are raving and which are glimpses of a profounder truth than surface reality, and while Wulf stops chronological movement to ex-
plain at length the background of the action... This is Wulf's story. More to the point, it's an attempt at reasonably ordering human experience. The captain is a member of the Gentle Order of St. Francis Dionysos, a sect that attempts to see humanity whole, body and spirit united. But the events on the starship Nightingale, as we learn of them and as we watch Wulf laboriously assembling them, raise the question whether any stable, comprehensible union is possible.

I can't say that I read Wulf's yarn from cover to cover at one sitting; it is not that kind of book. But I kept coming back to it, and it occupied a lot of my thinking in the meantime. Mann's approach gives his violent, sometimes ramshackle tale a sad dignity. If the point finally is ambiguous, the telling is memorable. Recommended.

Joe Sanders

Must-Read Novel


This lyrical, tripartite novel shows the world of myth converging on the "real" world, science-fiction converging on fantasy and vice-versa. The movers and shakers of this adventure are women of pre-patriarchal power. Caught against the strictures of contemporary reality, one engages, one denies, and one reconfigures the mythic pattern to operate in (but not entirely with) the world as we now recognize it.

This is a very Irish novel. Divisions between Catholic and Protestant, male and female, wealth and poverty, youth and age symbolize the juncture of the "everyday" and a world-reshaping mythos. McDonald evokes Yeats' lyric past and the passionate always-present of Joyce's Ulysses, classical and contemporary music, drugs and Japanese martial arts, other disciplines I recognize but cannot name and those I can see only as wonderful window dressing. This is a rich book, a book packed full of strange device, a book that, while presenting an apparently simple and well-worked plot, shifts in style to match subject without apparent strain, that teases and ignites the imagination, that demands and rewards re-reading. (Good heavens, I'm catching one of McDonald's styles as I write. He's creatively infectious.)

The plot seems overtly sensible. Imaginative Emily Desmond, daughter of an Irish poetess and a mad scientist, adorer of the early Yeats, still treated as a child after menarche, gets herself raped and impregnated, and succumbs to an apparently Freudian hysteria. Before her child is born, she apparently runs away. Hannibal Rooke, the hypnotist whose attempt to examine Emily is blocked by Dr. Desmond's Victorian prudery, later treats Emily's daughter Jessica, adopted
and "acting out" abandonment and anger. She recovers her connection to Irish violence as well as to her birth mother. Two generations later, Jessica's granddaughter Enye, advertising writer and martial arts adept, uses Rooke's notes to come to terms with her inheritance and her experience, and must finally choose between pattern and chaos, love and hate.

Read in this fashion, King of Morning, Queen of Day may seem an odd psychological thriller, with each section organized around the assumptions and limitations of its historical period. That this reading is quite insufficient is made clear by McDonald in his patterned restructuring of the contemporary world and its relationship to the world of imagination. Explanations fail utterly to account for "reality"; the beauty that is born here is more terrible than we imagine.

This is the women's story, and the King of Morning and his Wild Hunt must yield to the Queen of Day and her daughters. But this is not a gentle book, nor a kind book. It avoids the usual fantasy themes, the bildungsroman of the magical apprentice, the quest for the world-saving talisman. It also refuses both the cold, withdrawn faerie land of Keats and the innocent Victorian flower sprites of Alcott et al. Today's Mygmus, created and connected to the world of the present by the "mytho-creative individual," boils with womanliness twisted and belittled, emotion betrayed, generation denied. If not redirected, it can overwhelm a present expecting sanitized, safe, corporate-economically directed archetypes and quite literally uncreate the world. "We're talking about the collapse of consensus reality, of our comprehension of space and directed time. Cause and effect would cease to exist; present time, past time, and future time would cease to be discrete entities; everything would exist simultaneously and eternally."

But the world of the present does not operate unconnected (as yet) to the past. Powers can redeem as well as condemn. As so often happens, our choices, or the choices of those who stand for us before the Powers, connect us with eternal chaos and old night — or with joyful, problematic, ongoing life.

Auden said of Yeats, "Mad Ireland hurt you into poetry." McDonald's hurt includes "starvation in the Horn of Africa, child slavery in Filipino sweatshops, Colombian drug squirarchs, unbridled free market forces, secret police, the destruction of the ozone layer, child pornography, snuff videos, the death of the whales, and the desecration of the rain forests." He asks why we invoke the old, simplistic heroes of fantasy when they no longer speak to a world of ecological catastrophe and credit card debt. Out of this question comes a wonderful book, a book of wonder. Already a prize-winner, King of Morning, Queen of Day should stand high on the list of "must-read."

Martha A. Bartter
Well Worth Reading


This is the first English translation of *Der Engel vom westlichen Fenster* (1927). The last novel of the great Austro-German satirist and fantasist Gustav Meyrink; it is an extremely complex work in which time, place, and character are shattered in a mystical view of existence. A historical fantasy in form, it is set mostly in Elizabethan England and modern Styria, two milieus that are ultimately equivalent, and indeed at times merge. Among the personalities that appear are the historical scholar and magician John Dee, the martyr Bartlett Greene, and Queen Elizabeth I, although they are deliberately refocused and estranged from history. The story is one of supernatural fulfillment and recurring fate patterns, as a modern Austrian who is and is not John Dee fights to escape Dee’s tragedy in a struggle against das ewige Weibliche, a facet of himself, and the forces of evil.

Mitchell’s translation is smooth and on the whole accurate. But Mitchell has disrupted the text at times: Where Meyrink repeatedly involves the Saxon St. Dunstan of Glastonbury and Canterbury, Mitchell has changed this to St. Deniol, a minor Welsh saint, a needless, bewildering change. And instead of translating Meyrink’s occasional verse, Mitchell inserts poems of his own that usually miss the point of the originals and are irrelevant and inappropriate.

Equally incomprehensible is the attribution of the book. It is no secret that Engel is a collaboration. Meyrink, who was old, ill, and suffering from writer’s block, accepted the assistance of a friend, Professor Friedrich Albert Schmid-Noerr, who wrote the Elizabethan sections of the book, or about half the text. There is no mention of this situation by either the publisher or the translator, a silence that does not seem entirely ethical.

Since Meyrink is important as a pioneer Expressionist and as one of the finest fantasists of the century, even a collaboration is well worth reading. In any case, this is only the second of Meyrink’s novels to be translated, the first being *The Golem*. Not an ideal edition, but still recommended for large library German literature and fantastic fiction collections.

*Everett F. Bleiler*

Another Star Trek Novel


It’s a good thing that Pocket Books is publishing Star Trek books. There are so many good stories which will never be told on the screen because a). there are only about 28 episodes a year for six years, and b). 46 minutes isn’t enough time to develop the stories being told in the books.
V.E. Mitchell’s book, *Imbalance* deals with a strange insectoid race called the Jarada, who finally open up diplomatic relations with the Federation. The *Enterprise* is sent to conduct the mission, and the crew find themselves the subject of strange attacks by members of the Jarada race. Fleeing for their lives, they do not know whether to trust their friendly “guides” who have not attacked them. When members of the team become trapped on the planet’s surface with more and more crazed Jarada attacks, Picard must make some quick decisions.

This book also examines the relationship between Chief O’Brien and his wife, as Keiko is one of the members of the crew trapped on the planet, with the Ensign who has been flirting with her for so long. Jealousy makes for a great subplot, and Mitchell develops the plot and subplots very well.

No. 22 in the *Star Trek: TNG* series, hopefully it is only one of the books Mitchell will write in her career.

*Daryl F. Mallett*

**Farcical Comedy of Pleasant Horrors**


These characters open the book: a drug-selling stud eaten by the demon Catch. A policeman running a sting operation. The youthful-but-90-years-old man who has Catch under limited control arrives in Pine Cove, Calif., the same day the djinn—Gian Hen Gian—who has hated Catch since the two of them built King Solomon’s temple, also comes to town. Half a dozen unsuspecting residents of the tourist town become involved with policeman, demon, and djinn in what the book jacket calls a “comedy of horrors” before the demon goes back to Hell and all ends happily.

It’s more a farce than a comedy, and the horrors are just pleasantly gruesome. Need a reviewer say more than that the book jacket also boasts that the story has been sold to the Disney Studios?

*Paula M. Strain*

**The Human Condition**


Pat Murphy’s stories often remind me of early SF favorites, like the story of the brilliant boy whose mother had to teach him to take care of himself for college—he couldn’t remember the basics but he had a way of tying his tie so that the upper part twisted into another dimension. Murphy’s virtuosity emerges in just such twists played upon our expectations, not of everyday life - for of course that is what all science fiction does, but of the SF narra-
tive itself. The nineteen stories of this collection are excellent examples of that technique. The bite of disorientation which characterizes her short stories is totally different than her novels. A careful blend of truth and fancy are responsible for this effectiveness. The anthology’s title is taken from the author’s “Afterword” entitled, “Why I Write”, rather than from the title of any story represented there.

Two longer pieces, “Rachel In Love” and “Bones” rely heavily on the ‘truth’ factor. Both are based on scientifically verifiable facts, the first about non-human primates and their use of American Sign Language to communicate and the second about a well-known Irish giant who died in London in the 19th century. Murphy grafts legends about the giant kings of Ireland onto this historical tale. Then there are the psychological tales like “Women in the Trees”, “Dead Men on TV” and “Clay Devils”. Three women find their way out of oppressive relationships with men, and one into a better man’s arms, in these three tales of gradual self-healing.

It is a tribute to Murphy’s style that this collection, which includes pieces that are recognizably fantasy, science fiction and a skillful blending of these sets of generic conventions, also has a thematic center, recognizable in the one thoughtful protagonist who dominates each. Readers can trust themselves to this character for a dark but delightful look at the human condition. The collection is well worth reading and rereading.

Janice M. Bogstad

Forever Growing Up


Since, as the flapcopy notes, Pohl has done so many different things in SF, it shouldn’t be a surprise that he’s trying something new here—not satire, not primarily social extrapolation, as much as a moderately hard-science novel that looks for all the world like a Winston SF juvenile from the 1950’s. The central character, Dekker DeWoe, is a young Martian who’s fixated on joining the team that steers comets from the Oort Cloud to give Mars a breathable atmosphere. For one motive, his father was a failed Oort miner; for another, Dekker wants to do his best for humanity. He really believes doing good for others is more important than satisfying yourself. He has a lot to learn. The novel takes him through his training and through a crisis in space.

Actually, it’s more complicated than that. The point of most juvenile fiction is to reassure young people that they can find a place in the world as
adults, even if there are serious defects in the world the present adults have made. Pohl is going farther than that, to show that they can make better worlds. In its understated way, Mining the Oort replies to the basic theme of military SF ("There Will Be Wars") that violence - is unavoidable and even healthy. To do that, he must show a character who has been trained in "docility" without becoming a wimp; he must show that Dekker's naivete doesn't keep him from keep him from understanding the situation and acting heroically.

In fact, Pohl must show that Dekker's outlook let him see the situation more realistically than most of the other characters do—and most readers would too. If one person can learn to see and act with more genuine maturity, maybe there's hope for the rest of humanity as well. That Pohl gets this across without preaching, in a book that works as an exciting story, is a considerable achievement, a work of skill and reflection. Like his hero, Pohl keeps on observing, learning, growing.

Highly recommended.

Joe Sanders

A Tale of the CoDominium


A "novel of Falkenberg's Legion," Go Tell the Spartans develops a transitional episode in Pournelle's future history of the CoDominium and the Empire of Sparta. While John Christian Falkenberg and the bulk of his Mercenary Legion are engaged on New Washington, after defeating the nefarious machinations of Grand Senator Bronson on Tanith, Major Peter Owensford and the Legion's Fifth Battalion are sent to train the Royal Army of Sparta and to establish a permanent home for the Legion on Sparta. Instead of a quiet training command, Owensford soon finds himself enmeshed in a large-scale guerilla war, fomented by well-equipped terrorists supported by the machiavellian Senator Bronson and his Meijian allies and designed to destroy both the Legion and the Spartan monarchy. In the course of this "Helot War," both Owensford and Crown Prince Lysander distinguish themselves as military leaders as they thwart their brutal, corrupt enemy in an engagement likened to the ancient battle of Thermopylae.

Pournelle fans will want to read this, as will devotees of well-crafted military-oriented SF. It is unlikely to interest other readers.

David Mead
Space Cops Series Starts


When a robot guard goes berserk in a hotel owned by Dennis Profitt, the richest human in the universe, the Star Cops of the 107th Precinct—a star-travelling space-city dedicated to law enforcement—are summoned to assist the planetary police. By the time Lt. Richard Brackett and his team arrive, Profitt's wife has been found dead in a locked room; soon after, Profitt's mistress is murdered.

What follows in *Star Precinct* is a fairly predictable, moderately enjoyable police procedural mystery set in a thinly sketched sf context. Since this is the first story in a series, it isn't surprising that Randle and Driscoll just lay the groundwork for the character development to come in later novels, but the science is quite weak (e.g. iridium is called a compound) and the narrative texture very attenuated.

*Star Precinct* is tolerable lightweight entertainment; the series promises to repeat the formula.

David Mead

Study War No More


The fifth and sixth episodes in the "Jefferson's War" series, these stories are amazingly lacking in almost everything that might appeal to a reader, except perhaps violent but inconclusive combat scenes which seem to kill almost everyone involved except the shallowly characterized principals, David Steven Jefferson and his executive officer Victoria Torrence. In *Death of a Regiment*, Col. Jefferson loses over 80% of his space infantry in barely thwarting an invasion of vicious gray aliens who seem bent on attacking Earth. Promoted to General in *Chain of Command*, the last book of the series, Jefferson leads his troops in an airborne attack on the invaders' home planet to liberate kidnapped humans prior to the space fleet's grand assault. The hostages are rescued, dozens of soldiers are killed by the alien rear guard, and the bulk of the enemy critters retreat at lightspeed from further fight, anticlimactically removing the *casus belli* and ending the series.

There is little of interest to anyone in these books. Not recommended.

David Mead
The King is Dead; Long Live the King


This second book in the Dragon Star series deals on the psychological level with the impact of High Prince Rohan’s death on everyone of note in the Sunrunner world but particularly on Prince Pol, his son and heir. As Sioned, Rohan’s wife and Sunrunner companion, withdraws in grief, Prince Pol struggles with what he perceives as his inability to meet his father’s standards. At the same time, though less showcased here than in the earlier Dragon Prince Trilogy or the 1990 Stronghold: Dragon Star #1, Andry, Rohan’s brother and the Sunrunner Lord of Goddess Keep, has a part to play. His own somewhat nefarious agenda includes a search for the mysterious Star Scroll introduced in the 1989 collateral novel, The Star Scroll.

The primary action revolves around an invasion of a barbarian force bent on total annihilation of any magic; yet, at the same time, from the political machinations of princes desiring power, sub-plot after sub-plot accrete—normal in any novel by Melanie Rawn. Mysteries are revealed; friendships are cemented; and enemies, both foreign and domestic, are routed. Interestingly, Rawn uses several chapters (not too hard to do in a book of 560 pages) to reveal the viewpoints, culture, and behavior of the invaders, a device that deepens a reader’s involvement: as the barbarians appear more human, some of Pol’s vengeful actions become harder to justify.

Yet again, Rawn leaves enough loose ends to justify another book in the series. Her integration of theme, plot, and characters combined with the fantastic elements of a mystical religion, barbarians, and dragons (who did come alive and affect events) ensure her continued success in attracting readers hungry for involved high fantasy.

Jennifer Wells

Shared Family Series


The Crafters introduces a projected shared-world (or perhaps more accurately shared-family) series. Nine original stories and a poem, framed by a prologue and epilogue, trace the Crafter family from 1682 through the mid-nineteenth century. Amer Crafter, the patriarch of the family, intensifies his inborn talent for sorcery by practicing alchemy. His wife, Samona, is a witch. Their progeny inherit, in varying degrees, his scientific ability as well as both parents’ capacities for magic.
Most of the stories in this initial volume concern Amer, Samona and their five children. The tales offer variations of a familiar formula: the family confronts and defeats an evil (or at least unsavory) adversary. The best of the stories build on the concept of cooperation—of science with magic, of one person with another. In Robert Sheckley’s “The Seal of Solomon,” Amer and Samona combine their powers to thwart a local warlock and his evil use of an “elemental” whom he has learned to control. Sheckley provides a more sympathetic and appealing portrayal of Samona, I might add, than that given by Christopher Stasheff in the opening tale. A second strong contribution is Ru Emerson’s account of the marriage of Lucinda Crafter (daughter of Amer and Samona). First she must overcome a coven and a wicked stepmother with the aid of the boyhood friend turned scientist who will become her husband. Surprisingly, the weakest of the stories is by Katherine Kurtz. In “The Summoning” a later Crafter, aided by his virgin daughter, bestows upon George Washington his sacred calling (as well as making him promise not to seek excessive power for himself) as “Champion and Deliverer of a people.”

An introductory volume such as this faces difficult problems. The need for exposition can overwhelm the narratives. Even so, I had trouble discerning the focus of The Crafters. Amer and his immediate family are an interesting group, but the stories seemed to rush through them to get to the contemporary adventure promised by Bill Fawcett’s prologue/epilogue: Jeffrey, a Crafter descendent, is in Russia, obviously on a crucial mission. Will later volumes fill out the sketches of the original family? Continue the historical progression? Center on the exploits of Jeffrey Ambrose Crafter? The series has possibilities, but the first volume did not leave me waiting with particular excitement for the second.

Dennis M. Kratz

Twelve is Too Many


The twelfth volume in Christopher Stasheff’s Warlock series shifts the focus from Roderick Gallowglass to his eldest, rebellious son, Magnus who leaves home in search of adventure and maturity. What he encounters are mostly large-breasted women (some real, others illusory) who try to ensnare him through sex. Fortunately Magnus’ father and his high-tech “horse” Fess follow along to assist and occasionally rescue him. The novel concludes with Magnus and Fess leaving Gramarye in a space ship, no doubt preparing readers for future off-world adventures.

Warlock and Son is a disappointment. The characters are flat, the plotting predictable, the writing (particularly conversations) not up to the stan-
dards of the earlier novels. The quasi-medieval nature of the home planet Gramarye presents interesting narrative possibilities. Unfortunately, Stasheff's decision to have almost everyone except Rod Gallowglass speak a kind of faux-medieval English also leads the characters into some extremely awkward language ("Must thou needs ever be suspicious of the clergy, Dad?"). Stasheff does blend themes of marital and political harmony, giving some intellectual dimension. All in all, however, Warlock and Son has little to offer since it never recaptures the energy and wit of the initial volumes.

Dennis M. Kratz

An Incomplete Assessment of William Morris


Paul Thompson has written one of the most readable biographical studies of William Morris, and this new edition updates his useful book, first published in 1967 and last revised in 1977. Thompson has been able to include new insights from feminist scholarship and additional biographical details from the correspondence between Morris's wife, Jane, and the artist-poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti (not published until 1976) as well as the revealing exchange of letters between Jane Morris and the minor poet and wealthy seer-styled ladies' man, William Scawen Blunt (published in 1981). He also benefits from a fuller understanding of the Morris household developed in Jan Marsh's Jane and May Morris (1986). The strength of Thompson's book remains the fact that he devotes individual chapters to each area of Morris's work: architecture; furniture and furnishing; tiles and wallpaper; patterns in textiles; stained glass; book design; literary criticism; prose writing; poetry; and politics.

Unfortunately, Thompson's good revisions did not include a clearer view of what he discusses under the general heading of "prose writing." It's the weakest section of the book. In a scant eight pages Thompson wraps up Morris's letters (about 1400 pages of them have appeared so far in Norman Kelvin's brilliantly edited edition of the Collected Letters, Princeton University Press), lectures on arts, crafts, printing and politics, Icelandic journals, short stories, longer fiction, and prose translations.

Thompson's brief assessment of the two utopian works, A Dream of John Ball [Thompson inaccurately calls it The Dream of John Ball and News from Nowhere, as being "among the most successful pieces which Morris wrote" is not inaccurate, but it does not adequately place Morris in a context of utopian thought and fails to indicate his influence or current evaluation in terms of 20th century utopian studies.
More disturbing is Thompson’s approach to the prose romances, which are now generally acknowledged to be among the most important and influential works in shaping and defining the modern fantasy tradition. In fact, “fantasy” is not in Thompson’s vocabulary, and he typically faults all of the books because “shallowness of characterization, the frequent use of magic, and the general obscurity of purpose makes the longer stories to many almost unreadable.”

Thompson’s evaluation seems completely uninformed regarding generic qualities of fantasy. None of the basic critical studies of fantasy are included in the bibliography, and Thompson stubbornly refers to the books only as “romances.” On the other hand, there is no discussion of Morris’s versions of Old French Romances, and the entire romance tradition is neglected nearly as wantonly as the fantasy tradition is. He finds W. B. Yeats’ great admiration for romances nearly inexplicable, and doesn’t seem to know of Morris’s considerable influence on J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, and many other authors who have defined 20th century fantasy. For the next revision he needs to read at least a few of the critical studies which have helped define the modern genre and its history, books like C. N. Manlove’s Modern Fantasy (1975), W. R. Irwin’s The Game of the Impossible (1976), Stephen Prickett’s Victorian Fantasy (1979), Brian Attebery’s The Fantasy Tradition in American Literature (1980), Tobin Sebers’s The Romantic Fantastic (1984), Kathryn Hume’s Fantasy and Mimesis (1984), and the major critical surveys, Frank N. Magill’s Survey of Modern Fantasy Literature (1983) and E. F. Bleiler’s Supernatural Fiction Writers (1985). [Of course, this recommended reading list is far from complete.]

While Thompson gives us a readable, generally accurate and intelligent evaluation of the life and work of this brilliant 19th century artist and writer, he is woefully inadequate in his treatment of the works in prose. Research libraries will probably want to add this updated version of a standard reference work. Thompson’s appendixed “Gazetter” (also expanded and updated) which lists principle locations for surviving Morris stained glass, art, and furnishings throughout the world, is an additional attractive feature for Morris studies. But scholars and readers of science fiction and fantasy will find little to discover or to praise in Thompson’s glib dismissal of the prose.

Richard Mathews

Return to the Sea


After an excursion into fantasy with the fine book Feather Stroke (Avon 1989), Van Scyoc returns to her more typical exploration of extraterrestrial ecologies and the relation of humans to other species. In the Prologue, a
space pilot, struggling to protect human and other living specimens before he crashes on an unknown planet, provides a reasonable explanation for the origin of the various human groups and their distinctive relationships with the sea and the sea creatures and makes explicit the almost religious code of environmental principles that lead to genetic changes—changes enabling humans to be at home in the ocean of Aurlanis.

The story follows Nuela, a young woman of the land people, who goes into the sea in search of her younger sister Sinjanne, not yet returned from her formal rite of passage, the ordeal of kalinerre. Nuela learns much about the various ocean people and has many experiences and adventures among the sea creatures and sea-living humans, who occasionally ride dolphin-like mela-melas. She even discovers a sunken star vessel from which she frees some biologically modified whales. Though the ending has been left open for a sequel, Nuela does achieve self-mastery and an acceptance of her place in the sea resulting in a satisfying and intriguing novel. Van Scyoc portrays convincingly and gracefully the culture and folkways of different human groups and evokes powerfully the appealing freedom of genetically adapted humans at home in the ocean, swimming almost tirelessly in the water.

Diane Parkin-Speer

Serious Entertainment


On, but mostly beneath the surface of, Luna, most populous of the eight planets to which humanity has retreated after the never seen Invaders have evicted them from Earth, lives a hedonistic society of gadget-rich, sex-changing, body styling, TV-addicted, live-for-today survivors. After 200 years a Central Computer (CC) continues to provide "the safest possible environment for the largest possible number for the longest possible time," through direct links to everything, human and technological alike. (As Varley points out, this novel—his best to date—shares background, characters, and technology, but not chronology with his Eight Worlds future history.)

Though most are happy in what CC calls "a near approximation of utopia," the focus of the story is on the cynical journalist narrator, Hildy Johnson (yes, he adopted his name from a fictional character) who fails in several suicide attempts. Moving back and forth between King City, where he works for the tabloid News Nipple, and Texas Disneyland, to which he retreats in hopes that a nineteenth-century western-style life will satisfy his hunger for stability, Hildy (later she, later it) searches for answers to his/her/its nagging unhappiness. There are also several sojourns in virtual realities created by
CC—overriding built-in directives—in an attempt to understand and cure Hildy's—and others' suicidal impulses.

Hildy's acceptance in Delambre Crater, the junk heap of Luna where the most rabid of the Heinleiners—led by Valentine Michael Smith (!)—who want to explore deep space have built themselves a hidden society unconnected to the Central Computer, leads to the climax of the story, a demonstration of how precarious life on Luna has become. Luna society is not safe from itself, from an increasingly more powerful and more amoral CC, from an always hostile universe, and the climax of the book is a powerful demonstration of the dangers of all three.

Beneath the almost-black humor, the inside SF jokes, the outlandish characters, and the exaggerated social and biological developments that permeate this story of what might be, Varley warns of present dangers arising from too much reliance on technology to improve the here and now with no thought to the future. Steel Beach is an entertaining, serious examination of the human condition.

Arthur O. Lewis

Gran Prix Winner Finally Mass Market


Quebec writer Vonarburg's Le Silence de la Cite won the Prix Rosny Aine and the Grand Prix de la SF francaise in 1981, the latter prize not only a first for anyone outside France but the first for a woman. Translated into English in 1988, only now has this postholocaust feminist novel, fresh as it was a decade ago, been brought to the wide audience it deserves.

Generations after a planet-wide disaster, the few remaining people in a technologically sophisticated City work to counter the effects of a drastic reduction in normal births, the majority female. Outside the City humanity is reestablishing itself slowly without the aid of technology, but, in addition to the low male birth rate, development there is also affected by incomprehensible contacts with the City's "ommachs," machines that snatch outsiders who may be useful for the City's reproductive programs.

Through the protagonist, Elisa, who occupies a literal and figurative midway point between the City and the Outside, Vonarburg explores a wide range of complex personal and social issues. Elisa was born of advanced reproductive technology in the City laboratory; yet, her experiences of being both loved and manipulated as she grows up, her relationships with children, lovers, Outsiders, and inhabitants of the City (whatever their com-
bination of biological and mechanical components) result in her rejecting the obviously inhumane treatment of the Outsiders by the City's last survivors as well as the worst abuses of women within the Outsider patriarchy itself. Her psychic command of her body, fostered through both breeding and training in spontaneous healing, extends to an ability to change sex. Her children, created from her own ova and sperm, all born as girls, live part of their childhood as boys in preparation for adulthood in the patriarchy Outside.

This situation forms an unusually balanced perspective from which to explore gender issues, only one of the many insightful treatments of basic questions Vonarburg unfolds. How humanity and machinery interface, how to promote others' freedom without abrogating responsibility for their welfare, and how to live without certainty about whether one acts freely or from manipulation or conditioning are among others.

The Silent City is highly recommended—a complex exploration of representation and misrepresentation in relation to fiction and knowledge—a real incentive to watch for a second Vonarburg novel in English translation, In the Mothers' Land.

Susan Stone-Blackburn

An Attractive Alternative


In an alternative universe where the Irish developed steam power and an industrial revolution in the Middle Ages and Brendan the Navigator found the New World, making a civilized alliance with the Algonquins, the Hibernian Empire has built a generation starship, the Aisling Gheal. This “Bright Vision” will carry colonists from all Earth's cultures to settle another New World many light years distant. However, Healer Brendan Nolan, the free-thinking ship's surgeon, suspects the Sacred College for the Propagation of Faith, whose priest-scientists control the ship's crew, of a plot to subvert the colony's multicultural mission and establish a totally Christian colony in the new eden.

When Nolan and other dissidents are crash landed in a remote region on New World, they must learn to survive in a wholly alien albeit generally benign environment, then make their way to the colony which fears them. On their trek, Healer Nolan reenacts the adventures of Brendan the Navigator, discovering and making alliance with an intelligent alien species, which helps the earthfolk rejoin their fellow colonists. However, Nolan is still a danger; heroes always threaten the status quo, however humane it may be. So Nolan is rusticated again, sent back to Earth—and many wonders—with his beloved Healer Dervla.
The Silent Stars Go By is an ambitious, somewhat uneven adventure by a writer best known for his "Sector General" stories which, like this work, focus on issues of alien contact, medicine, and cross-cultural tolerance and communication. White’s realization of the alternative Ireland and America is quite believable, and Nolan is plausibly characterized. Particularly persuasive is the unusual, yet appropriately non violent nature of the priestly antagonists, although the absence of clear antipathies does mute the dramatic tension. As often happens in adventure stories, almost everyone other than the protagonist Nolan is undeveloped, and the sprawling episodic plot loses tight coherence and focus.

Despite its faults, The Silent Stars Go By is recommended as engaging, unpredictable, thoughtful science fiction.

David Mead

Earmarks of Transition


This second volume of a three-book cycle has all the earmarks of being transitional: few of the threads from the first volume, Heir to the Empire, are wound up, and only a few new plot elements are introduced. This doesn’t make for a cohesive book, but it’s not supposed to: after all, Zahn is writing a trilogy.

The second volume follows the pattern Zahn established in the first volume. Most of the momentum is built around the formula of getting into a dangerous situation, miscalculating (or being plotted against, usually by the preternaturally intuitive Grand Admiral Thrawn), and then escaping after a spectacular fight. Since Zahn doesn’t spend a lot of time fleshing out his characters, this gets old rather quickly. But there are a few elements here that kept my interest. The focus of the plot of Dark Force Rising is the Katana fleet—an Imperial fleet that went missing fifty years ago. One master ship had two hundred other ships slaved to it, and the entire fleet disappeared. No one knows where it went—except Karrd, trickster and smuggler, and he’s willing to sell that information to the highest bidder. Both sides, the New Republic and the Empire, desperately need ships and are willing to go to great lengths to get them. Mixed in with this is the insane Jedi Master C’baoth, who wants to mold Jedis in his image, but needs raw material—namely, Leia and her unborn twins; Leia’s efforts to enlist aid from the fearsome fighting race, the Noghri; Han and Lando’s continual scrapes (I’m not sure how they got out of one of them); and the endless plotting by rival factions in the Nevi Republic which climax in the final Katana battle fleet scene.
Though the format of the book gets repetitious, there were enough quirks in the plot to keep me interested. The biggest weakness of Dark Force Rising—and this was also a weakness in Heir to the Empire—is the lack of a single character that readers can identify with. Instead, we have to divide our time between Leia, Han, and Luke—and perhaps Grand Admiral Thrawn, my favorite, a wonderful bad guy. Zahn adds touches of humor that are most welcome: there are a race of beings called the Calimari, and minor characters called Sturm and Drang. Make sure you pick up the first book (now in paperback) before you tackle this one.

Karen Hellekson