SFRA Review

Issue #212, July/August 1994

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SFRA INTERNAL AFFAIRS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I want to welcome Amy Sisson as the new Editor of the *SFRA Review*, and to thank her for volunteering for this very important — and very demanding — job.

Now, what will you do to help her?

Right now, what Amy needs to make the new Review a success is reviews of recent non-fiction work on fantasy and science fiction, reviews of recent fiction, and information on matters of interest to our community. Even a little advice on what to do with the Review would be useful.

Please don't wait to be asked. Do something.

— David Mead

EDITORIAL

I hope you enjoy this issue of the *SFRA Review*. I'm pleased with the result, but there are many improvements I hope to make in upcoming issues, such as increasing the ratio of nonfiction to fiction reviews to something on the order of 75/25 or better. I also would like the majority of reviews to be somewhat more current. I've spent quite a bit of time recently writing to publishers for review copies and to potential reviewers to ask for their help and find out their interests. I hope that as publishers get to really know the SFRA and the Review, and as a pool of reliable, enthusiastic reviewers is built back up, some of these problems will tend to take care of themselves. I hope to establish stable, long-lasting relationships between the Review, the reviewers, and publishers, and I believe I have made a strong start.

In terms of philosophy, I see the Review as a forum for up-to-date SFRA organizational news, other news items which may be of interest to members, fairly in-depth reviews of genre nonfiction, and some reviews of genre fiction. Because fiction is reviewed in many other publications, I will be making a special effort to aim for some fiction reviews on lesser known, more unusual works which members
may not have the opportunity to learn about elsewhere, such as Terry Heller's review of *The Rag Doll Plagues* in this issue. And while I do want current reviews, I won't completely rule out older books for several reasons: 1) changing times and/or new information may make a book newly relevant; 2) this type of information and idea exchange is inherently valuable for its own sake; and 3) if I missed the book when it first came out, maybe you did too. Finally, although I welcome unsolicited reviews from both SFRA members and nonmembers, the Review will be based primarily on a system of assigning review copies to those who have indicated an interest in reviewing.

I have set a strict publishing schedule for the Review so that members can depend on receiving it regularly. Each issue will be mailed on the 25th (or the next day if the 25th falls on a weekend or holiday) of the month preceding the cover date. Therefore, #212 July/August 1994 was mailed on June 27, #213 September/October 1994 will be mailed on August 25, and so on. To meet the mailing deadlines, I will be taking the issues to press between the 10th and 13th of the mailing month. Please keep this in mind when sending your contributions.

In the meantime, please send your comments, suggestions, advice, news items and reviews. If you would like to review, let me know and I will send an interest profile for you to complete and return. Many thanks to those whose reviews and news items appear in this issue, and special thanks to David Mead, Bob Ewald, Paul Abell, Diane Miller and particularly to Neil Barron for all their help. I look forward to hearing from you.

— Amy Sisson
NEWS AND INFORMATION

CALL FOR INFORMATION

I have recently started a Ph.D. in Science Fiction Literature on the theme of time travel and hope that other people may have undertaken similar research. Please contact: Rosemary Gray, 80 Kinnaird House, Roden Court, Hornsey Lane, London N6 5NN.

— Rosemary Gray

UPDATE TO CLUTE/NICHOLLS ENCYCLOPEDIA

If you're a fortunate owner of the new Encyclopedia of Science Fiction, reviewed in issue #205 May/June 1993, you can acquire a ten page list of new information and corrections assembled between the publication date and September 4, 1993. Send a stamped, addressed envelope if you're in the UK; include an International Reply Coupon (available from any post office) if you're not. Sent to John Clute, 221 Camden High St., London NW1 7BU.

— Neil Barron

THE SCIENCE FICTION FOUNDATION COLLECTION

The Science Fiction Foundation Collection is the largest collection of material relating to Science Fiction in the European Community and one of the two or three most important outside the U.S.A. It was established as the research library of the Science Fiction Foundation, created in 1970 by George Hay with Arthur C. Clarke and Ursula LeGuin as patrons. It has been built up over the years thanks to the generosity of writers, publishers and fans who have donated books and funds, and is well established as the most important centre for study and research in Science Fiction within the U.K. It has regularly served visiting researchers from Europe and North America.

This function is increasingly important as the Collection is now based at Liverpool University, which will from October 1994 run a full-time M.A. course in Science Fiction Studies.
The Collection is housed in the Special Collections Department in the Sydney Jones Library, and consists of some 25,000 books and magazines in the field of Science Fiction and related genres, such as fantasy and horror. This is supplemented by an extensive stock of critical works, both books and journals and a number of special collections in its care. These include a large collection of Science Fiction in Russian and other Eastern European languages, a growing collection of manuscripts deposited on loan by their authors, an archive of Fanzines and material about Fandom, and the papers of the Flat Earth Society.

For the first time in many years the Collection has a full-time Librarian/Administrator who will be working on cataloguing its materials and creating a database which will extend its usefulness to scholars and researchers. The Librarian will also support the M.A. in Science Fiction Studies and expand the collection's role as a resource for the promotion of Science Fiction and its use in education.

The Collection is now available for use, and writers, critics, publishers, editors, teachers, librarians and researchers with an interest in the Science Fiction field are welcome to contact The Librarian/Administrator, Andy Sawyer, Science Fiction Foundation Collection, Special Collections Department, Sydney Jones Library, P.O. Box 123, Liverpool L69 3DA (Telephone 051-794-2696). Visiting researchers are welcome, but appointments must be made. The Collection is for reference only. Material cannot be loaned, although subject to the copyright regulations and the scale of charges of the University Library it may be possible to photocopy material.

— Andy Sawyer

PRACTICAL ROBOTIC INTERSTELLAR FLIGHT: ARE WE READY?

A conference entitled "Practical Robotic Interstellar Flight: Are We Ready?" will be held at New York University and the United Nations from August 29 to September 1, 1994. The principal sponsor is The Planetary Society, with additional sponsors including The United Nations Outer Space Office, Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Mission from Planet Earth Study Office - NASA HQ, American Astronautical Society, and many others.
The two main topics are 1) Feasibility of performing a robotic interstellar mission in the near term that is both affordable and has a short flight time, and 2) The search for planets orbiting nearby stars. The keynote speakers are Dr. Robert Forward and Dr. Carl Pilcher, Chief of the Mission From Planet Earth Study Office, NASA HQ. Other main speakers include Dr. Michael Klein of JPL, Dr. Richard Terrile of JPL, and Dr. David Brin. The participation of Dr. Forward and Dr. Brin serves as a reminder of the often close connection between science and science fiction.

For information on registration, abstract submittal and program, please contact Dr. Edward Belbruno at The Geometry Center, University of Minnesota, 1300 South Second Street, Minneapolis, MN 55101, E-mail BELBRUNO@GEO,M.UMN.EDU. Abstract submittal deadline and early registration deadline is July 15, 1994.

— Amy Sisson

CANDID CAMERA AT THE 1993 SFRA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

A two-hour videotape of the 1993 SFRA Conference held in Reno, Nevada is available from Milton T. Wolf. It includes most of the major speakers (Pohl, Poul Anderson, Kevin Anderson, Gunn, Robinson, Fowler, Goldstein, Slonczewski, etc.) as well as a four-minute sound bite from the Sci-Fi Channel and an interview with Guest Artist Rodney Marchetti. Many of the conference participants are also captured presenting papers or schmoozing with guests. While this is an amateur tape, it is usable for classroom teaching as well as being a great memento. If interested, send a check for $25 (proceeds above expenses will go to SFRA) to: Milton T. Wolf, Getchell Library, UNR, Reno, NV 89557-0044.

— Milton T. Wolf

C.S. LEWIS STUDY CENTER SOLICITS FUNDS

The Kilns in Oxford was one of C.S. Lewis's homes while teaching and writing. Phase I of a restoration project was completed with the labor and gifts of more than 70 volunteers. Phase II will begin this summer and requires about $30,000 to finish the International Christian Study Center, as the Kilns will be known, which hopes to welcome
its inaugural faculty in 1995. If this is the sort of project you'd like to support, send your contribution in any amount payable to The C.S. Lewis Foundation, Box 8908, Redlands, CA 92375.

— Neil Barron

NECRONOMICON PRESS PUBLICATIONS, SPRING 1994

This specialty press began its 19th year this spring. Publisher Marc Michaud deserves the thanks of weird fiction fans for his endurance and for the generally high quality and attractive appearance of his stapled, booklet-length publications. This spring's offerings include *Irrational Numbers* (34 p., $5.95), a collection of three tales by David Langford, who is better known for his humor; a dozen letters by HPL in the 1913 *Argosy* and comments thereon, edited by S.T. Joshi (40 p., $5.95); and the latest issues of *Lovecraft Studies* (#30), *Crypt of Cthulhu* (#86) and *Necrofile*, whose 12th issue expands to 32 pages and a new price for this quarterly: $12 for the U.S., $15 for Canada and $17.50 for overseas, all issues sent airmail. A new catalogue lists everything in print, available from 110 Lockwood St., West Warwick, RI 02893.

— Neil Barron

SFRA CHAMPAGNE BREAKFAST AT WORLDCON

Diane Miller will be hosting an SFRA Champagne Breakfast at the 1994 ConAdian Worldcon for those SFRA members attending the convention. The breakfast will be on Saturday, September 3, 1994 at 10:00 a.m. in Diane's suite at the Place Louis Riel Hotel, 190 Smith Street in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This information will also be posted in the ConAdian pocket program guide. Hope to see you there!

— B. Diane Miller

RECENT PERIODICALS

**CRANK!** There may be some hidden significance in this new quarterly's title, possibly explained in issue 1. I was sent issue 2, Winter 1993 (80 pages, $3.50). It comes with some high praise, such as Dave Hartwell: "... the best single issue of a science-fiction
magazine published last year." It includes only SF and fantasy fiction by professional writers, although editor Bryan Cholfin may have plans to include other types of material. This issue includes Gene Wolfe's "Empires of Foliage and Flower," originally published as a 1987 limited edition chapbook, David R. Bunch's "The Soul Shortchangers," Jonathan Lethem's "The Happy Prince," Carol Emshwiller's "Venus Rising" and the first sale of Gerald B. Stephenson, "It Don't Mean a Thing." Broken Mirrors Press, Box 380473, Cambridge, MA 02238, is the publisher of the magazine ($12 U.S., $18 elsewhere, per year) and a handful of books, including **Bunch!**, which collects 32 stories by the under-appreciated author of *Moderan*, two books by the idiosyncratic R.A. Lafferty, and other works. Attractively printed in a 6x9 inch perfect bound format; well worth the cost of a specimen issue.

**Issue 10 (v. 3, no. 2)** of *Peake Studies* reached me last November. This issue includes an interesting piece by Selwyn Goodacre, a medical practitioner, "A Christian View of the Titus Books," with a response by John Seland, a Catholic Priest. Goodacre also reviews the three volume Overlook Press 1992 edition of Peake's Titus books, which were edited by *Peake Studies* editor Peter Winnington. The news section noted that in mid-June 1993 the BBC had commissioned a series of six hour-long episodes dramatizing the Titus books, with screening probably in 1995. Letters and reproductions of Peake illustrations complete this 37 page, stapled, professionally printed issue. Subscriptions are on a per page basis; send £15 or £25 to G. Peter Winnington, Les 3 Chasseurs, 1413 Orzens, Vaud, Switzerland; American Express cards accepted.

*Science Fiction Eye* 13, Spring 1994, arrived in mid-May. It's the sort of mixture I've described before in these pages, a sort of high-tech countercultural SF for the nineties. Charles Platt explores the curious ideas (to be polite) of the Extropy Institute, which is pursuing immortality in a manner quite different from the cryonics nuts, who Platt has also written about. Not surprisingly, the institute is in the LA area, from which Platt escaped to return to NYC. Bruce Sterling entered the world of computer BBs in the mid-1980s, dropped out two years later, and re-entered the much enlarged world of the Well, CompuServe and the Internet in 1990, in which he's spent a lot of time since — more time than he should have, I sense from reading his perceptive piece. *SFE* appears about three times yearly; $12.50/3 issues from Stephen P. Brown, Box 18539, Ashville, NC 28814.
The Scream Factory 13, also Spring 1994, describes itself as "the magazine of horrors past, present, and future." It is roughly quarterly, at $21/4 issues to Box 2808, Apache Junction, AZ 85220. The odd-numbered issues are now supposed to be theme-oriented, and this time it's SF/horror hybrids in print and on film. Easily the best piece in the issue, and quite unexpected in this venue, is Ev Bleiler's excellent study of fantasy, horror and sex in C.L. Moore's early stories. Also worth your time is Rob Latham's survey of horror in SF novels since 1960, with Brian Stableford investigating the period prior to 1960. This issue is cover-priced $6.95.

— Neil Barron

WOMAN SF WRITERS ENTERING MAINSTREAM

Some of you may be interested to know that the new update of American Women Writers from Colonial Times to the Present (Vol. V, Supplement, Ed. Carol Hurd Green and Mary Grimley Mason, New York: Continuum, 1994) includes bio/bibliographies of nine women SF writers, including Marion Zimmer Bradley, Octavia Butler, and Anne Rice. Five of these are new, the others updates. It's nice to see them out of the ghetto and right up there with Emily Dickinson and Edith Wharton!

— Lynn F. Williams

CALL FOR PAPERS

The 17th Annual Eaton Conference on Science Fiction and Fantasy, to be held in Riverside, California in February 1995, will focus on "Unearthly Visions: The Graphic Arts of Fantasy and Science Fiction." Papers may address all aspects of fantasy and SF illustrations, including their relationships to narratives and their impact on modern culture; other possible topics are comic books, graphic novels, and forms of narrative which integrate text and illustrations. Film, television, and video are excluded from consideration. Papers, proposals or inquiries should reach this address by October 1, 1994: George Slusser, Curator, Eaton Collection, Tomás Rivera Library, University of California, Riverside, California 92521.

— Gary Westfahl
FEATURE REVIEW

ASSIMILATING THE MUNDANE

by Virginia Allen


Forgive my long wind-up to the review of this fairly short book, but a misty red haze has overlaid my visual field since reading Gary Westfahl's featured pronouncements in the pages of the SFRA Review (#205, May/June 1993) wherein he echoes with apparent seriousness the too familiar lament that science fiction is second-rate literature written by second-rate authors and studied by second-rate critics. From a purely formal perspective, it is a sorry and fallacious argument that needs to be exposed, refutation being more than it merits.

Norman Spinrad says it is time for us to choose up sides between science fiction and fantasy (Science Fiction Age, November 1993), but that is a different argument and one that is not fallacious at its core. What I most vigorously take issue with is defining the genre by its worst (though unnamed) examples. Westfahl will, of course, protest that what he offered was not a definition, but a description. What he is describing, however, Spinrad more accurately refers to as "sci-fi" or "anti-SF." In matters of definition what we are looking for is a prototypical example, not necessarily the most common example. Which is the "real" chair: a three-legged stool, a straight-back wooden kitchen chair, or a chaise lounge? The fact that there may be more three-legged stools around a particular place at a particular time does not signify. Calling all science fiction bad is like defining "chair" as "three-legged stool" or calling all heterosexual intercourse rape. It is not necessary to deny the existence of three-legged stools or rape, even marital rape, to reject these ostensive definitions. The unarguable badness of some science fiction is an accidental, not a defining property of the thing we are trying to identify. When Spinrad separates science fiction from fantasy, he will find an ample supply of badness in both categories, but badness will not be a necessary or defining characteristic of either.
Our susceptibility to logical fallacy is a very human characteristic. It is an inborn trait of dubious survival value. Perhaps it protects us in some obscure way from having to bear too much reality, but the unintended consequences of letting such catchy little tunes of bad rhetoric go unchallenged can be devastating. For example, witness the damage that has been done to the credibility of liberals by the simple rhetorical trick of turning back the self-deprecating charge of "political correctness" onto those of us who are seriously opposed to the forces of racism, sexism, and economic exploitation in our society because of the rhetorical excesses of the hapless and sometimes silly defenders of the faith. The PC-charge, which started out as an insiders' joke, has turned into an insiders' truncheon. The tendency of academic critics of SF to equate the entire genre with "sci-fi" has the same potential for backlash. It will warn up-and-coming young professionals to keep their love of SF out of their academic research, thereby depriving the field of their talents, and it will reassure those who already disparage the genre that their perception is correct.

Until someone persuades me with a rigorous statistical analysis that the degree of schlock in science fiction is greater or less than the degree of schlock in mundane fiction, I am content to accept Sturgeon's estimate: at least 90% of everything is schlock. Study the schlock if you want to, but it is the 10% that is by definition exceptional that interests me and defines the genre for me... which brings me to Nancy Kress.

When the whole of twentieth-century fiction is re-evaluated by some future canon-maker freed from the narrowness and occasional virulence of contemporary academic prejudice — if there is justice in the world or anything resembling independent literary judgment1 left — Nancy Kress's 1986 Nebula Award winning story, "Out of All Them Bright Stars," will certainly make the cut. It will stand alongside "A Clean Well-Lighted Place," "The Lottery," "A Rose for Emily," "Everything that Rises Must Converge," "Bears Discover Fire," "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas," and "Day Million." It is a classic story; Kress calls it "a gift story" (142), one that came whole and complete, as if it were writing itself. The story does everything that any mundane story ought to do, and then it does something more: it

1Note that the words prejudice, justice, and judgment all derive from the same root. No extra charge for that observation.
seamlessly adds a perspective for viewing the human condition that is inaccessible, by definition, to mundane fiction. Only another sentient symbolizing animal or an alien (which is fictional terms is pretty much the same thing) can see human behavior from outside the species, can view the species as species. The anti-foundational post-structuralist deconstructing postmodern ethnographizing socially constructed literary critics of the mundane academic world — without, apparently, having studied Plato's Theaetetus — have lamented with all the agonism of first discovery that we are trapped always and already inside the webs of our own subjectivity. In our effort to render coherence out of what William James called the "blooming, buzzing confusion" of sense experience, as David Hume made abundantly clear in his Enquiry concerning Human Understanding, all we have to work with is human experience, the limitations imposed by the human mind informed by fallible human perception. What Kress achieves is not a transcendence of that limitation, which is by definition impossible, but a slight shift in our angle of vision. The shame the narrator feels on behalf of our species is experienced only by her and by the human reader; all the alien does is hold up the mirror. Why he does so, why he comes here to this planet "out of all them bright stars," we can never fully know, limited as we are. He makes so little difference, he says. "Yeah. Sure."

In truth, we do not have a lot to recommend us as a species. We are a bullying, easily cowed, hierarchically driven simian clan prone to violence and logical fallacy. About the only thing that salvages our reputation is our capacity for story-telling. Our urge to make fictions appears to be a basic natural need, like the drive for food, water, sex, and a perch on the highest branch of the tree. Our intraspecies discourse about the making of fiction is almost as old as our oldest surviving fiction, and it is of some consequence that as the grandiosity and general unintelligibility of postmodern abstraction yields to the new historicism as the preferred critical argot, the concept of "narration" has lost its once apparent innocence. The latest old discovery, catalyzed anew by Hayden White's Tropics of Discourse (Johns Hopkins UP, 1978), is that imposing a narrative structure onto a set of "facts" does more than organize those facts; the tropes of any genre, from Scottish Enlightenment history to American New Wave science fiction, carry meaning deep within their very frames. When Henry James remarked that the single most important decision the author has to make is point of view, it was more than a comment on mere
craft; indeed, even to insist upon preordained distinctions among the
tropes of art, craft, and theory is to reify the nature and existence of
the very objects we have set out to discover the nature or existence of.

Introducing the subject of rhetoric, Aristotle says that all people
attempt to test and maintain arguments, to defend themselves and to
attack others. Ordinary people do this, Aristotle says, either at ran-
dom or through an ability acquired by habit. The trick (I am para-
phrasing now) is to study the people who succeed at random, sponta-
neously, or without instruction, and then figure out what it is they are
doing that works (Rhetoric I.1.i). I subsume poetics under rhetoric
where it belongs: both are arts in Aristotle's sense of the concept. You
see where all this is going then? The better to satisfy our basic urge
for fiction making, who ought we to turn to for instruction but some-
one, like Kress, who has mastered the art? Remember, however, that
all teaching is a political act (politics being, also, a practical art). There
is no innocent list of the elements of fiction, no innocent set of rules
for manipulating them, no innocent canon of models to imitate.

That said, let me begin my review proper: Beginnings, Middles &
Ends by Nancy Kress is one in the series of how-to books on mastering
the elements of fiction writing put out by Writer's Digest Books. Others in the series are Scene and Character by Jack M. Bickham, Plot
by Ansen Dibell, Theme and Strategy by Ronald B. Tobias, and Charac-
ters & Viewpoint by Orson Scott Card.

Unless you are from the regrettable "let's keep science fiction in
the gutter" school of thought, it is a minor political triumph for us that
known science fiction writers are integrated into this series without
apology or comment beyond an objective statement of their creden-
tials. Kress, for example, is identified as the author of five novels
(with Beggars in Spain forthcoming at the time of publication) and two
collections of short stories, a two-time winner of the Nebula Award,
"given by the Science Fiction Writers of America for the best stories of
the year," and as "fiction columnist" for Writer's Digest magazine.

Whether Kress set out to perform an exercise is assimilation, I
have no way of knowing. It could be the merest coincidence or only a
reflection of her personal reading history that causes her to juxtapose
high-profile examples from the "literary" canon with examples from
the canon of science fiction, yet that juxtaposition creates a compelling
subtext for the book in hand. Whether self-conscious or accidental, it is that subtext that I would like to explore in more depth.

Like many of these how-to texts, Kress's begins with an epigraph, presumably to state the theme for the book. Hers comes from Hemingway: "A writer's problem does not change. He himself changes and the world he lives in changes but his problem remains the same. It is always how to write truly and having found what is true, to project it in such a way that it becomes part of the experience of the person who reads it." (In this day and age you cannot help but balk at Hemingway's masculine pronouns and the embedded masculinist assumption of who the ever-changing writer is.)

Following this romantic, even vitalist set-up, Kress compares the gap between the novice's hopeful idea for a story and what actually comes out on paper to the Mariana Trench. Hemingway's vision of truth is not teachable; what is teachable, Kress says, is craft. It is, I think, no mere coincidence that out of all them great writers she might have selected to set in epigraph, it is Hemingway, who so aggressively tried to sell us his ethos as a truth-teller innocent of craft (an ancient rhetorical ploy). Student writers, Kress continues, tend to get stuck either at beginnings, middles, or ends. Each sticking point represents a different kind of problem (compare these crafty problems to Hemingway's single problem), each requiring a different kind of solution: thus her title and the organization of her book. She winds up her introduction with the kind of sentence, commonplace in science fiction—a trope, if you will—that would not necessarily be calculated to resonate with reassurance to the uninitiated mundane reader: "On January 23, 1960, the bathyscaphe Trieste settled 35,800 feet below the surface of the Pacific, shining light for the first time on the murky depths of the Trench..." (4).

Our [former] editor has pleaded for short reviews so I will not try to list all the mundane authors represented in the text with sage bits of advice or as examples for analysis. They range from Toni Morrison and Flannery O'Connor to William Faulkner and Tom Wolfe, but right alongside them are discussions of Flowers for Algernon by Daniel Keyes, "Lily Red" by Karen Joy Fowler, Joan D. Vinge's novel The Snow Queen, and Michael Crichton's best-selling Jurassic Park. Cinderella is retold as a story about three clones but, I regret to say, the re-telling is undercut by this sentence: "Maybe science fiction isn't your thing.
(although at least four different science fiction writers have updated Cinderella for the space age)" (56). Bradley Denton, Ursula LeGuin, John Kessel, Tanith Lee, and Gene Wolfe are given varying degrees of notice. Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* is mentioned between Wolfe's *Bonfire of the Vanities* and John Irving's *The World According to Garp*. Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* series is contrasted with John Updike's tiresome *Rabbit* series (tiresome is my characterization, not hers). And throughout the text Kress uses her own writing experiences for illustration: the rewriting of *Beggars in Spain*, the gift of "Out of All Them Bright Stars," the recurrent orange image in her fantasy story "The Price of Oranges," "Casey's Empire," which is a story about a struggling writer who gets stuck in the middle of things out of his own fear of failure, and another untitled fantasy story she got stuck in the middle of and never finished.

Nowhere does Kress discuss how to write science fiction. What she does instead is to presuppose that writing science fiction is just like writing any other fiction. She begins her instruction by highlighting the promises — emotional and intellectual — every story makes to the reader. They are worth examining closely: "Read this," the emotional promise goes, "and you'll be entertained, or thrilled, or scared, or titillated, or saddened, or nostalgic, or uplifted — but always absorbed." She outlines three versions of the intellectual promise: "(1) Read this and you'll see this world [emphasis added] from a different perspective; (2) Read this and you'll have confirmed what you already want to believe about this world [emphasis added]; or (3) Read this and you'll learn of a different, more interesting world than this." I expect that only a sophisticated reader of science fiction can come close to understanding what she means by her next remark: "The last promise, it should be noted, can exist on its own or coexist with either of the first two" (7).

Kress seems to identify those promises with genres — the emotional promise of romance is to entertain and titillate, the intellectual promise to confirm our belief that "Love can conquer all" — but how, exactly, the promises are made by a writer within a text, she does not go into. What a mystery novel promises — an entertaining intellectual challenge — gets fudged into what it sometimes delivers — "insights into how human nature operates under pressure." By her third example, a specific literary novel, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, the promise has been completely subsumed under what it delivers: "emotions of
anger, horror, guilt or recoil...." She goes on to say that this particular novel "unsettles our view of the world" (8-9).

This undelivered promise about understanding the elements of fiction is the weakness of the book, but what it does right more than compensates. In the last analysis, the book should be evaluated in terms of the expectations and perhaps the needs of its intended audience.

There is an apparently insatiable appetite in the book market for these how-to-write fiction guides. They serve three basic functions for readers: first and most directly, they provide so-to-speak standard information about the craft of fiction writing to novice authors. Much of this information is very formalistic; definitions of terms are illustrated with examples and woven into a text of experienced guidance to the novice. Many of these texts will become either required or supplementary texts in fiction-writing classes at the college level.

Officially I teach history of rhetoric, a couple of courses in linguistics, and science fiction, but not creative writing. However, since the fiction-writing classes at Iowa State are routinely introduced with the pronouncement that "no sci-fi will be written here," I do end up with a number of more-or-less talented novices coming out of my science fiction classes who want to do independent studies in creative writing. In addition to being always a little bit annoyed with my colleagues, I am always on the lookout for a good overview of the elements of the craft. Because of the generous mixture of SF examples in Beginnings, Middles & Ends, it works particularly well for those students, especially in combination with Card's two books in the series and the wisdom, advice, and class hand-outs from my own teacher and mentor, James Gunn. Because I am already persuaded of the artistic legitimacy of science fiction, I would unapologetically use the text in a class mixed with English majors and readers of science fiction. I doubt my good colleagues would think so, but a course syllabus based on Kress and the fiction introduced to illustrate the didactic points she makes could be very teachable.

There is a second important function of these how-to texts: they are read by struggling writers who have a good-enough intellectual understanding of how to put together a piece of fiction but who just are not making it happen consistently in their own work. For writers
at this intermediate level, books in the how-to genre provide inspiration, encouragement, the occasional useful tip, or a good excuse to avoid the keyboard for a couple of hours without having to admit defeat. Committed as I am to my personal goal of publishing a piece of fiction every decade, I thought the book served that function well enough, though I did get a little fatigued with the permutations of the extended domestic tribulations of Sam, Jane and Martha, which serve as a running example throughout the text. I could not for the life of me tell you who has the drug problem and who runs away from home.

Another function of the how-to-do-it books when they are written by accomplished authors is to let us get a glimpse of the living person behind the fiction we admire. What first motivated me to pick up Beginnings, Middles & Ends was the desire to know more about the person who could write "Out of All Them Bright Stars." Although no substitute for an extended interview with the subject, the text satisfied a little bit of that curiosity.

Both as a writer and a teacher, Kress seems to me to be mediating the space between two familiar views of the artistic process. The mundane, quasi-romantic belief that writing cannot be taught derives from the belief that the tropes of great art correspond to sublime, unchanging Nature. To value the innovative, the new, the surprising is to regard Nature not as static but as dynamic, changing, mutating, either winding down with entropy or progressing outwards toward, if not perfection, at least amelioration of the human condition. In the process of assimilating the mundane, what Kress gives us is starboard wine in old bottles.

This is a very different stance, it seems to me, from the prolonged epistemological crisis that drives members of the science fiction community — authors, critics, and readers alike — to disparage the entire genre in recurrent fits of self-reproach and, perhaps as an unintended consequence, to reinforce a prejudice against the genre in the public mind. We will have to wait to see where Kress stands when the SF community chooses up sides in Spinrad's internecine conflict.
NONFICTION REVIEWS


Alkon says at the end of his bibliographic essay that "the golden age of science fiction studies is now." Having recently completed editing the 4th edition of Anatomy of Wonder, I'm inclined to agree. When I wrote more than 20 years ago the essays that eventually led to the first edition of Anatomy in 1976, we were in the early iron age. Sam Moskowitz had been exploring the early years then, as he continues to do, and Robert Philmus's Into the Unknown: The Evolution of Science Fiction from Francis Godwin to H.G. Wells had been published in 1970 by, of all things, a university press, a sign of Things to Come. Alkon's essay usefully summarizes some of the scholarship of the past two decades that made this Twayne study possible, one in a new series called Twayne's Studies in Literary Themes and Genres.

The scholarship he cites has explored in detail many key works that were influential in the development of early SF, anticipating the discussions in chapters 2-4, which deal with key works in England, France and America. Most of these works are predictable: Frankenstein, Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, Albert Robida's neglected Le Vingtième siècle (1883) and Villiers de L'Isle-Adam's Tomorrow's Eve (1886), Looking Backward, A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court and two of Wells's novels, The Time Machine and The War of the Worlds. A number of other works are discussed more briefly to provide contrast and a more balanced narrative. He draws on his Eaton award-winning 1987 study, Origins of Futuristic Fiction, for the chapter on French works, many of which deserve to be better known.

Alkon is remarkably successful in overcoming the limitations of these introductory Twayne studies, which are wildly uneven. Although almost all of the works he discusses are well known to regular readers of SF, I think anyone will gain a better understanding of their meaning and historical importance. A very clear, graceful prose is wedded to a balanced, knowledgeable narrative, resulting in the best short history of early SF I know of. Its appeal will be both to the

The *Science Fiction & Fantasy Book Review Annual 1991*, for those who are unaware of its existence, is the fourth volume in a series of comprehensive book review collections devoted to the SF and fantasy genre area. The first quarter of the book is devoted to essays outlining specific genre areas and their foci for the year in review. This section contains several bold-headed groupings, each of which contain a recommended reading list: "The Year in Science Fiction" by Michael M. Levy; "The Year in Fantasy" by William Senior and C.W. Sullivan III; "The Year in Horror" by Stefan Dziemianowicz and Michael A. Morrison; "The Year in Young Adult Fiction" by Muriel Rogow Becker; and "The Year in Children's Literature" by Jill P. May. In addition, Neil Barron and Michael Klossner survey "The Year in Research and Criticism," which includes a bibliography of 1990 works.

The other three quarters of the book consist of the actual reviews of 1990 books which are collected from various sources, both original and previously printed such as those which also appear in the pages of the *SFRA Review*. Within the three sections, fiction, young adult fiction, and nonfiction, the reviews are arranged alphabetically according to the author of the book being reviewed.

As this book is especially comprehensive, it is an important reference work for libraries. My copy must have been near the end of the print run since the print, particularly in the first few pages, fades out in spots. At that price, I would hope the publisher checks the print quality of copies shipped to libraries and literary sources.

— B. Diane Miller

Forget for a moment the origin of this book. Regardless of where it came from, what you have is a collection of artwork, much of which is stunning, in a large full-color format. You have the imagination of over fifty individual artists set free within fairly loose guidelines. And if you do happen to appreciate where this book came from, you also have a treasure trove of images of your favorite characters and settings of the George Lucas phenomenon known as the Star Wars universe. As Lucas himself states in his foreward, these artists each offer "a personal interpretation of the imagery that makes up the trilogy." Aside from the art, those who collect trading cards will also enjoy the historical aspect of this book because the artwork within was specially commissioned for and originally appeared on a 140-card set of Topps trading cards also called the "Star Wars Galaxy."

The images are incredibly varied. There are portraits of each main character and several minor players, some which look like comic book drawings while others, such as a profile view of the Grand Moff Tarkin and a gorgeous watercolor of Obi-Wan Kenobi, almost look like the type of formal portraits which might grace the walls of an Imperial Palace. There are imaginary scenes which never actually took place in the movies, such as Han Solo battling Boba Fett in the swamps of Dagobah. Some works are perhaps best described as "mood" pieces, such as an unusual perspective work of Chewbacca and Han Solo rescuing Lando Calrissian from the Sarlacc on Tatooine. For many, this book may have the side effect of creating new appreciation of the versatility and beauty of comic book style artwork.

The book's layout and attention to detail are also to be admired. Alongside the large finished pieces are small pencil "roughs" showing the piece's development, photographic stills from the movie trilogy, text describing the artist's credits and his or her artistic techniques, and a photograph or even a caricatural self-portrait of the artist.

There are only a few minor drawbacks to this volume. First, a book as lavish as this deserves to be preserved in a hardcover edition, especially as the book's glued softcover binding is not particularly strong and will not hold up well over time. In addition, while the
vertical artwork fits nicely on a single page, the horizontal pieces are stretched partway across the two-page spread which results in a distracting interruption and loss of detail through part of the picture. Still, this is a wonderful book for those who enjoy science fiction, fantasy and comic book art — whether or not they are also fans of the Star Wars universe. I would be happy to see similar volumes produced illustrating other created universes, such as that of Dune, because it is amazing to see concrete proof that the work of one mind can be so rich and inspire the imaginations of so many others.

— Amy Sisson


Each successive annual represents improvement in layout, resulting mostly from improved computer printers. These annuals provide access by author and title to reviews in about 65 magazines, including academic journals, selected fanzines, library and book trade journals, the professional fiction magazines, and the Science Fiction & Fantasy Book Review Annual, which reprints most of the reviews appearing in these pages. Magazine Litteraire and Quarber Merkur are the only foreign language magazines indexed. The 1988 annual cited 4,700+ reviews of 2,163 books; I suspect this annual's figures are about the same. Citations to reviews published in 1990 will be published in v. 21 in Fall 1994. Gale Research has published three hardbound volumes of these indexes, 1923-73, 1974-79, and 1980-84. With the subsequent annuals through this one, 62,000+ reviews have been cited. Hall would like to cumulate the years since 1984 and provide camera ready copy of reviews published 1985-1993 if he could find a publisher. Better yet, a CD-ROM would easily accommodate both the book review indexes and Hall's invaluable research indexes as well. If there's anyone out there with some venture capital for such a project, write Hall directly. In the meantime, send him $10 for this latest index (v. 10, 1979 through v. 19, 1988, are also available at $10 each).

— Neil Barron

The compilers have no explanation as to why Dunsany (1878-1957) began writing, with his first book the self-published *The Gods of Pegana* (1905) followed in the next decade by the tales that make him still read today: *Time and the Gods* (1906), *The Sword of Welleran* (1908), *A Dreamer's Tales* (1910), etc. At that time, however, he was better known for his plays, five of which simultaneously ran on Broadway. Other works included poetry, some book reviews and many essays. Citations to works by Dunsany in English and translation take up two-thirds of this authoritative and well-organized bibliography, by far the lengthiest ever published. Citations to criticism occupy another 75 pages, although the compilers dismiss this with the comment, "Of the criticism of Lord Dunsany's work not much can be said." Indexes of names, of works by Dunsany and of periodicals in which his work appeared conclude the volume.

No explanation is given why an effort was not made to obtain access to a publications ledger maintained by Dunsany, "presumably still in the possession of the Dunsany Estate," although Mark Amory, who wrote a 1972 biography with the cooperation of the estate, had access. That biography is dismissed as competent "but rather lifeless and very inadequate in its treatment of Dunsany's writings." *Review* readers may recall Schweitzer's *Pathways to Elfland: The Writings of Lord Dunsany* (1989), the subject of a very unfavorable review by Bob Collins, and which is annotated here as "Analysis is somewhat cursory, but with occasional valuable insights."

If the amount of criticism about Dunsany in recent years is any indication, he's a decidedly minority taste, and this listing, thorough as it is, isn't likely to get many scholarly mills churning, for which we should be thankful. Large university libraries should consider but few others.

— Neil Barron

Written primarily with a sociological focus, this collection of essays looks at different aspects of popular culture and its relationship to the media and social deviance. An important idea for exploration, but one that is not carried through very well in this text. The individual introductions to the essays fail to tie in to the original text introduction and to one another. None of the essays were previously published and their quality varies. This reads almost as a collection from a meeting of the Popular Culture Association; if the essays were written specifically for this book, the editor failed to convey a consistent vision of what he hoped to accomplish. None of the essays focus on science fiction, or even written genres, but the focus on popular culture might be useful in a general class on popular culture or to stimulate discussion and comparison of other aspects of popular culture in a class on science fiction.

The book is organized into four major sections: I. Introduction; II. Social Reactions to Popular Culture Deviance; III. Popular Culture and Deviant "Taste Publics"; and IV. Media Content and Deviance. The introduction by the editor breaks no new ground, although he does well in his recap of the historical explorations of popular culture and deviance that have preceded his work. Most of the short introductions preceding the essays simply summarize the material within the essays themselves.

Several of the essays are quite good. I recommend Markson's "Claims-making, Quasi-theories, and the Social Construction of the Rock 'N' Roll Menace," along with Stern's "Selling the Dancer: Client/Dancer Interaction in Modern Taxi-dancing" and Friesen's "Powerlessness in Adolescence: Exploiting Heavy Metal Listeners." These three essays fall in sections II and III, while those in section IV tend to be less informative. Probably the best way to use this text would be to access the individual essays as appropriate to class needs, including the first chapter, rather than trying to use the entire book.

— B. Diane Miller

This is a companion to Server's *Danger is My Business: An Illustrated History of the Fabulous Pulp Magazines* (1993), which I favorably reviewed in issue 204. Server ended his history with 1953, by which time the pulps were moribund and mass market paperbacks had largely replaced them on the newsstands. Although not dated, they rarely lasted much longer than their pulp predecessors, with unsold stock pulled, covers ripped off and returned for credit, and the books discarded.

Server is quite misleading in characterizing his decade as sensational. He simply selects a very small sample of the sleaziest from the tens of thousands issued during that decade, which actually included such quality publications as Spock's *The Pocket Book of Baby and Child Care* 1946, the Mentor books from New American Library, the American Penguins, etc. But sleaze there was, and there are several hundred examples in living color to awaken memories, if you're old enough, or perhaps disdain if you're not. Server claims the paperback industry began in 1938 with Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth.* His bibliography indicates he knows better — what about dime novels, the German Tauchnitz and British Penguin series, Haldeman-Julius Blue Books, etc.?

He argues that his sample was aimed mostly at a working-to-middle-class male readership, often ex-GIs who had known the Armed Services editions. Most paperbacks of that period were reprints, but strong sales led to originals by writers later well-regarded, such as John D. MacDonald, Jim Thompson, Chester Himes and Philip K. Dick, one of many SF writers who tried to make a living from paperbacks. You'd expect a few diamonds (or at least zircons) in this rough trade, such as Arthur Miller's pre-Pulitzer *Focus, Junkie* by William Burroughs and several of Kerouac's books, all shown here. Presumably best remembered from this period is Mickey Spillane, whose Mike Hammer is a direct descendant from the comics for which Spillane had written.
Server's text probably doesn't total more than about 12,000 words, and it's that of an enthusiast/collector rather than a historian. It's the illustrations that give this book whatever appeal it has. Most covers are reproduced at reduced size, many with portions enlarged to show their recurrent elements, notably sex and violence (what else is new?). Some cover illustrators are identified, such as Earle Bergey of the junk SF pulps, one of many pulp illustrators who found paperbacks a natural market. Most of the standard genres are depicted: mysteries, "beat" fiction, hillbilly sagas (remember God's Little Acre?), SF, fantasy, romances, etc. If you lived through that period, as I did (as a teenager), you'll remember how you, too, wasted part of those years reading junk fiction.

Server is mostly expensive cotton candy. More nourishing and far better balanced are Thomas L. Bonn's Undercover: An Illustrated History of American Mass Market Paperbacks (Penguin, 1982), Piet Schreuder's Paperbacks U.S.A. (Blue Dolphin, 1981), both well-illustrated and listed in Server's bibliography, and Two-Bit Culture: The Paperbacking of America (Houghton Mifflin, 1984) by Kenneth C. Davis, the best of all and not listed. Server includes samples of the purple prose, but addicts of the stuff should acquire a copy of a wonderful cassette, Cheap Stories, "all the best parts from the worst books," with titles like Commie Sex Trap, Virgin in Blue Jeans and The Gay Detective, unfortunately out of print. It's even better than a secret decoder.

— Neil Barron


The first edition of J.R.R. Tolkien: The Art of the Mythmaker was reviewed in SFRA Review #203 (January/February 1993); it was uncirculated due to the typesetting and other publication problems that beset the Starmont Press and which are detailed in the article "A Requiem for Starmont House" in Science Fiction Studies 20 (3), p. 421. Thus, the "Revised Edition" is not, in substance, textually different from the previously published volume, although the bibliography has been updated. There is material of great value, well presented, but
there are some serious weaknesses, notably in the chapter dealing with The Lord of the Rings.

The first chapter is a condensed presentation of information based on the biography of Tolkien by Humprey Carpenter (1977). The second chapter discusses Tolkien's scholarly and non-fictional work and is especially enlightening; Tolkien's tendency to postpone scholarly publication because of perfectionist dissatisfaction with the product was also reflected in the creation of his fiction.

The greatest single service the authors provide to serious readers of Tolkien's work is discussion of the interrelationships among the various texts that constitute The Silmarillion and the other volumes edited posthumously by Christopher Tolkien, Tolkien's son and literary executor. They have provided a syntheses of the meticulous but dispersed annotations by which the younger Tolkien identifies and places the variants, fragments, and other unpublished material.

One element is lacking in their discussion of the "Ainulindalë"; they do not mention influences other than the Old Testament on Tolkien's cosmogony, but there exists sufficient scholarship noting other elements, especially Christian Neoplatonism, and the possible influence of Dryden and Milton mentioned by Randel Helms in his book Tolkien and the Silmarils (1981), a work cited in the object of this review. At this stage in Tolkien scholarship, a fuller statement of the influences on one of Tolkien's most impressive single pieces should be made available to the intended audience of studies such as this one. Still, anyone navigating the hypertext-before-the-fact of Tolkien's "histories" can only express gratitude for the guidance provided here.

The authors seem to have sensed that Chapter Five, on The Lord of the Rings, was something of a trap. Their approach, which they admit is somewhat mechanical, is to follow the narrative sequence but to use a framework of "themes." It is here that they run into difficulty; the term "theme" is not clearly defined and tends to be used almost as a synonym of "motif." What they call "theme" refers, most of the time, to various subjects. They speak of the "linguistic" theme, but there is not enough evidence provided to argue its real thematic status.
The discussion of *The Hobbit* condenses two earlier studies by David Stevens, and a discussion of the minor works and primary and annotated secondary bibliographies round off the study. These bibliographies are up-to-date, but the reader might be directed to examine two recent monographs, *The Lord of the Rings: The Mythology of Power* by Jane Chance (1992) and *Tolkien: A Critical Assessment* by Brian Rosebury (1992) for more sustained discussion of some of the issues presented here.

The text has value for experienced Tolkien readers and, with guidance through the terminological problems of Chapter Five, for undergraduates as well. Recommended subject to these qualifications.

— Amelia A. Rutledge
FICTION REVIEWS


Though directed toward readers aged ten to fourteen, *Beyond the North Wind* will appeal to all who thrill to times when the powers of magic, myth, and music stir emotions and ideas. Bradshaw, a classicist herself, writes with warmth and precision. The vivid descriptions clearly depict ancient Greek times while the dialogue is modern enough to hold a teenager's attention. In addition, her well-rounded characters provide a realistic bent to the story. For example, Aristeas, the main character and a young Greek poet/magician, is strong-willed, determined, and stubborn; however, he also possesses a sense of justice, compassion, and strong belief in following Apollo's creed.

Conversational humor and dramatic plights blend with philosophical statements about life. Perhaps the most profound insight comes when Aristeas tell the Arimaspians, the one-eyed monsters who devour human flesh, that without tears they can never learn or love properly. On another level, there is the message that though one's heart's desire is to be safely home composing poetic songs, a hero will journey even beyond the North Wind to save the Issedones and Griffins from being conquered by the brutal, hate-filled Arimaspians.

Filled with adventure and non-stop action, each chapter brings increased suspense. Will Aristeas be able to overcome the powerful Arimaspians? Can he help defeat the vicious attack planned by the witch Colaxis? Will he ever return home? Young or older, a reader can't help but wonder what will happen next. Highly recommended.

— Sandra Cammilleri


Those who have been waiting anxiously for the continuation of Ann Downer's tale that began in *The Spellkey* and continued in *The Glass Salamander* will find this further progression of events sur-
rounding the search for the magic books particularly enjoyable. Past readers will happily reacquaint themselves with Ulfra, who leaves the travelling troupe and joins the leopard lady Tansy in her tailor shop. They will revel to see Caitlin and Badger, now renamed Binder, married and living in the Weirdwood.

On the other hand, newcomers to the series may have some difficulty. Not only does Downer draw characters and events from the earlier two novels, she structures *The Book of the Keepers* so that every episode features the situations of a different set of characters. The result may be one of confusion rather than enjoyment of the strong images of the Weirdwood, the World Above, and the Royal Kingdom Below. My recommendation, therefore, is to find the earlier novels and read them first. Young adults should not miss this most enjoyable experience.

— Sandra Cammilleri


*Igniting the Reaches* is set approximately 1,000 years after humanity's outer colonies have revolted against the home solar system, leading to the almost complete destruction of all technological and industrial infrastructure in human-settled space. In the ensuing chaos that followed, Mankind almost ceased to exist; of the colonies that survived, only Venus prospered to any great extent. Earth was divided into various factions, but one superpower state, the North American Federation, emerged, and it currently threatens to monopolize trade amongst the stars. If it succeeds, a new empire will form and the trade between human outposts will vanish — trade crucial to the survival of colonies such as Venus.

The story focuses on two men from Venus who become friends on a trading mission to the outer systems (the Reaches): one a spaceman who thinks he is following God's divine plan and the other a young nobleman on his first voyage from home. During their travels they experience firsthand the threat to free trade that the North American Federation represents, so they combine forces in an attempt to end the stranglehold on commerce. In doing so, they essentially become privateers, raiding ships and outposts across the Reaches. Their activities
cause mayhem everywhere they go and tends to get the attention of the Federation garrisons on the worlds they "visit" rather quickly.

Drake raises many issues in *Igniting the Reaches* that tend to focus on the darker side of humanity. Slavery, mankind's own fragile nature, the willingness to kill for money and/or power, and whether the ends justify the means are recurring themes throughout this book. Possibly the most powerful issue he raises is based on the idea that anyone can become a proficient killing machine if thrust into a hostile environment. In the beginning of the story, Drake creates a situation in which one of the characters has little or no control of events around him. He must react rapidly to save himself and his companions, and in doing so realizes that not only can he kill, but he is good at it. The gradual transformation of the character continues with each new encounter, and as his adeptness at killing increases, so does his passion. He hates what he has become, and must continually struggle with himself in order not to be consumed by the rage that lies within.

This work has many wonderful qualities and presents a somewhat deeper nature than many of Drake's earlier works. The characters are definitely well developed and are realistically human. Possibly more detail could have been given to certain areas, particularly the methods used to travel in hyperspace and the alternate dimension that exists beyond the Reaches. However, this in no way detracts from the fast-action plot that David Drake has given to *Igniting the Reaches*. It is an excellent thriller that collectors and fans of adventure/military science fiction should read.

— Paul Abell


*This Side of Judgment*, J.R. Dunn's first science fiction novel, begins with the discovery of the nude body of a dancer, mutilated almost beyond recognition, near a Montana farm road. The computers at the local bank have been tapped. To Ross Bohlen, an operative of the federal Computer Subversion Strike Force (COSSF), this can only mean one thing: there are chipheads in the area and they are up to no good. Chipheads (cybernetically enhanced individuals) were an experiment meant to attain the next step in human evolution. They each carry a
brain implant that allows them to access computers and networks without need for a terminal. Unfortunately, there is one side effect. The massive influx of information made possible by the implant causes the subjects to slowly lose their sanity; one such individual has already gone murderously insane. It is the job of COSSF to hunt these people down and neutralize the threat they pose by any means necessary. Bohlen is hindered in performing this duty by his lack of rapport with local law enforcement, his boss, and many of his co-workers. As he nears the truth, he learns that things are much worse than he ever imagined, and the implications much more far-reaching.

I must say I'm impressed by the depth of character in the figures J.R. Dunn has created. None of them are perfect, but a mish-mash of good intentions (for the heroes, anyway) and several annoying vices results in an almost uncomfortably realistic cast of characters. Bohlen is a brash, arrogant, bullying, short-fused sort of man — the "I'm in charge here" sort. A hold-over from the "old school," he struggles to cope with the changing face of COSFF and its new director. The sheriff and deputies of Ironwood, Montana portray typical small-town cops, resentful of federal interference in local matters. However, while I wouldn't argue that people like the vigilante patrols (brainless, heavily armed, bullying hicks) don't exist, I don't think they added anything really useful to the plot. Their sole purpose seems to be to get the reader's blood up. There is an undisguised feeling of contempt among the agencies that seems rather childish (again, not unlike real life).

This is not a cyberpunk novel. Technology plays a major role in the war-torn, weary society of post-war America, but the main emphasis is on human nature. The aura and workings of a small town are accurately portrayed. However, being a technically inclined person myself, I was disappointed at times when certain issues and techniques were glossed over. I wouldn't want Dunn to pull a Tom Clancy and describe every nut, bolt, resistor, and semiconductor in excruciating detail, but I do think a little more elaboration on technical matters would spice up the story.

Dunn draws heavily on religion in places, and the underlying theme of the good versus evil battle is quite evident. Parts of the story are reminiscent of a Greek tragedy. Dunn seems determined to write a story that is neither "everybody-dies-so-it's-all-pointless" or
"and-everybody-lived-happily-ever-after," covering the middle ground and coming close to real life. I applaud this most heartily. There were parts of the book that annoyed me (and were probably meant to), and the undercurrent of tragedy is evident, but there are triumphs and a sense of closure in the book's ending.

— John Nordlie


This satirical novelette was part of the inspiration for David Brin's Hugo-nominated *Glory Season*. Originally published in serial form in Gilman's socialist newsletter (a precursor to fanzines?), it was rediscovered and published in 1979 as a single document. Much of Gilman's work has proven to be useful to modern feminist thinking. This story is no exception as its depiction of a feminist utopia from the point of view of an "Enlightened Western" male is a marvelous critical device used to point out the artificiality of most aspects of gender roles in Gilman's early twentieth-century America.

Through war, males have eliminated themselves from the remote society that comes to be called Herland. Unable to rejoin "civilization" for two thousand years, Herland has developed its own culture and society. Spontaneous parthenogenetic birth takes place to perpetuate the society, but Gilman does not attempt to explain the process, possibly detracting from the science fiction aspect of her work.

Three scientifically oriented male explorers bi-plane into Herland. Each represents a slightly different aspect of stereotypical masculine attitudes towards women. Terry Nicholson, the engineer, is very macho with the attitude that women are useful only as sex objects. Jeff Margrave, a botanist, idealizes women and places them on a pedestal. Van Jennings, the narrator, is more in the middle of the road and is therefore able to see the other two males' reactions to the society, along with the Herland females' reactions, more clearly, although his perspective is still colored by his masculinist upbringing.

The three men act as the foil to bring out the satire of Gilman's plot. Herland succeeds quite well as a society with no males at all, a
severe challenge to the men's assumptions of the proper workings of a society. The cohesive and universal value of Herland is a communal bond or sisterhood among the inhabitants enhanced by a devaluation of individualism of all the members of the society without actually eliminating that individualism. The society functions with a minimum of politics and legal structure as all the women consider themselves the mothers of all of the children.

The best satire arises when the three males attempt to teach the inhabitants of Herland about their own society. Education, economics, religion and gender roles all come into question as Van and his companions attempt to explain their society to the curious and sometimes horrified women of Herland.

Compared to more modern utopian novels, Gilman's work dates itself as a late Victorian version of feminism in the devotion to motherhood expressed by the Herland inhabitants, although understandable in the light of parthenogenetic birth, and in the near total indifference to sexuality expressed by the women. However, Gilman's insightful criticism of traditional gender roles makes this a delightful window on current feminist thought and an important feminist utopian work.

— B. Diane Miller


I make it a general rule not to read parts of a trilogy unless I have all three parts before I start. Nothing frustrates me more than a story that stops in the middle and leaves me hanging when I can't find the rest of it. But rules were made to be broken, and I made an exception in the case of Joe Haldeman's Worlds trilogy because Joe assured me that each book stands on its own and was fully plotted before the first was written. He did not lie. Each book of the trilogy is a wonderfully written, self-contained story; the second and the third build on the respective prior work without being repetitious. Thank you, Joe, this last one has been worth waiting the almost ten years between.
Worlds Enough and Time completes the fictional biography of Marianne O'Hara taken from her diaries, her personal narration, and the narration of her computer "clone," O'Hara Prime. Following the voyage of a generation starship that O'Hara helped launch in the previous book, the final book of this trilogy makes use of many hard science fiction themes and devices without ever seeming trite or condescending. The science is worked out to fine detail but is not forced upon the reader with lectures or literary gambits. As the main character, Marianne O'Hara is fully developed, and since the story is from her point of view, the lack of full development of the other characters is not a drawback to the story's development or enjoyment. A major focus in this book is the aging process that Marianne must confront. This contributed to her coming alive as the book's main character for this reader.

Life on a generation starship is rarely portrayed as all fun and games, but Haldeman's characters deal with problem after problem. How to entertain the people with limited supplies and unlimited time is the first problem addressed. Psychological aspects of losing contact with Earth is another, while physical aspects such as bacteria destroying the ship's greenhouse cause major survival decisions. Threaded skillfully throughout these sociological foci are Marianne's personal decisions and interpersonal relationships. Her awareness, rationalizations and value system interact with the group needs and life circumstances to create an exciting story. I enjoyed the coping strategies, politics, science, and relationships, and for me the novel succeeded in representing a valid female point of view. A few of the sexual adventures that Marianne recounts were uncomfortable or titillating for me, but that is probably related to my personal experience (or lack thereof). Her attitudes and discussion of this aspect of her life, including her group marriage and her extramarital relationships, did contribute to the futuristic setting.

O'Hara's continual examination of her value system is the pivotal point of the novel and the author's greatest risk in the portrayal of this character. Haldeman pulls it off without missing a beat! Well done.

— B. Diane Miller

"Slippery" Jim diGriz, aka "The Stainless Steel Rat," returns in Harry Harrison's latest book in the series: *The Stainless Steel Rat Sings the Blues.* In this installment, our hero robs a new mint only to be apprehended and sentenced to death. Things look grim for Jim, but at the last moment the Galactic League cuts him a deal: journey to the planet Liokukae and recover an ancient alien artifact. For this service, Jim will be allowed to live, as long as he turns over a new leaf and leaves his life of crime behind him. Things are complicated by the fact that Liokukae is the League's dumping ground for misfits, murderers, maniacs, and the terminally obnoxious. To help insure that Jim's priorities are in the right order, the League gives him a slow-acting poison that will kill him in thirty days unless he returns with the artifact and is given the antidote.

Reading this story, I couldn't help but think of it as a sort of "Escape-from-New-York-meets-The-Naked-Gun." Harrison's portrayal of religious zealots and macho types draw amusing parallels to real life, and there are quite a few good one-liners. The pokes at the music industry are pretty funny too. I didn't care for the frequent male-bashing or Harrison's perpetual preaching of the wonders of his favorite language, Esperanto. Jim diGriz is also one of those characters that is just too clever for everyone in the known universe. While the story is fast-paced and interesting, I felt that the ending was a little flat. I like the Stainless Steel Rat stories, but this book is not the crown jewel of the series. However, if you can get past the irritants, the book is a fun joyride through the galaxy.

— John Nordlie


For those of us born too late for the science fiction pulp age, Sheldon Jaffrey has gathered a collection of pulp stories that were considered somewhat risqué in their day. Not surprisingly, the stories are
quite tame by today's standards. However, as Jaffrey's introduction points out, "the tales are a part of our past popular culture, for good or ill, and deserve to be preserved..." This preservation is especially thorough in that it includes the stories' accompanying artwork and even the advertisements that appeared in the original pulp versions.

The stories themselves generally follow Theodore Sturgeon's 90% rule — well, maybe 95 or 98% in this case. But just as we laugh at the bad sf movies ridiculed on "Mystery Science Theater 3000," so can we laugh at these stories while simultaneously appreciating them for what they tried to accomplish at the time. One story particularly stands out in this capacity: "Zenith Rand, Planet Vigilante," in which the hero faces "death at the hands of the Carnian goat-women." It is implied that these hideous she-beasts will perform unspeakable sexual torture on the hero should he be captured, hence the "spiciness" which qualified the story for this collection.

Ironically, the selection that I thought best, "World Without Sex" by Robert Wentworth, is one that Jaffrey includes "if only as an example of how bad a story an accomplished writer can turn out if he really puts his mind to it." Yes, the story is entirely predictable, but it seems more like actual science fiction than the rest. It does, however, have one unforgivable passage which implies that women would be obedient and loving if only their men would give them a good beating once in a while. The 1940 original publication date in no way excuses that barbaric sentiment.

In general, readers may enjoy this book as long as they don't expect great science fiction — and Jaffrey makes no pretense that they will find it within Sensuous Science Fiction. For a glimpse of history into the beginnings of American science fiction, especially for those of us who didn't witness it first-hand, this book can be a valuable addition to a personal library.

— Amy Sisson


Star Trek fans are quite familiar with the concept of the Prime Directive, or non-interference in alien life. Another treatment of this
theme can be found in Louise Lawrence's *Keeper of the Universe*, a book perhaps best described as Young Adult/Science Fiction/Fantasy. A teenager from Earth named Christopher is kidnapped by Ben-Harran, a renegade Galactic Controller accused of genocide by the High Council of Atui. While most worlds live in unchanging peace due to the Council's planetary controls, Earth and other "hell worlds" in Ben-Harran's domain swim in violence, war and poverty due to his refusal to interfere with free will and social evolution. Christopher is forced to decide whether the loss of free will is too great a price to pay for the peace which Earth seems unable to achieve on its own.

Lawrence's story provides a good debating ground for this complex issue. In addition, there is an almost whimsical mix of fantasy and science fiction; Ben-Harran's wizard-like appearance and castle contrast nicely with a pair of robots that take logic to an amusing and sometimes annoying extreme. Overall, *Keeper of the Universe* is intelligent and original reading for the young adult audience, and older readers may enjoy it as well.

— Amy Sisson


*Powers That Be* is the story of Major Yanaba Maddock, a career military woman who has just been prematurely discharged due to a fiasco which left her lungs permanently damaged. Or so it seems. She is sent to the planet Petaybee, which is a condensation of "Powers That Be," in order to live out the remainder of her life in the relatively pure air found there.

Petaybee is a planet of ice and snow, terraformed into barely habitable conditions and force-settled by the descendents of Eskimos and other cold-climate Earth cultures. Upon arrival, Yanaba finds it a quaint and extremely friendly, if somewhat backward, world. Her medical recuperation is to be short-lived, though, as she is immediately reinstated as a military intelligence officer. Her mission is to uncover the strange secrets of a planet seeded with only certain life-forms, but which has impossibly and spontaneously generated unicorns. As Yanaba becomes closer to the natives, the mystery of the
planet and her inhabitants becomes deeper and climaxes with the military threatening to reclaim the world through any means necessary. Yanaba is forced to choose between Petaybee and the military, which until then has been her entire life.

The team-up of these two Nebula and Hugo award-winning novelists promises a story full of depth and strong characterizations. *Powers That Be* does not fail to deliver a literate tale with characters one can feel for, including one totally alien to the humans who inhabit Petaybee. The plot progresses swiftly and contains many surprises. It is characteristic of McCaffrey's other books, including her Pern stories, because of its focus on characters and story rather than window dressing (i.e. technology).

The only complaint I have with this book is the lack of sufficient background material for this new universe. There is no historical perspective from which to gain an understanding of where the characters are coming from. There are hints, but I would have liked some more historical reference. This does not detract from an otherwise fine effort from this power writing duo.

— John W. Sturgeon


Alejandro Morales's *The Rag Doll Plagues* is divided into three books that, taken together, present an overview of the interactions of European, Native American and Spanish-speaking cultures in the Americas. The first book is historical, dealing with a plague in 17th-century Mexico that threatens to decimate the population and destroy Spain’s American empire. The second book is contemporary, with AIDS as the plague. The third book is an extrapolation into the 21st century, when world pollution has produced living, waste-generated organisms that grow like cancers in the body of the planet, periodically attacking human population centers with deadly plagues. In all three books, physicians who are members of the same Chicano family attempt to deal with the diseases. Each is named Gregory Revueltas, and each has repeated visions of the other Gregories that guide him in his work.
Each doctor undergoes a profound transformation in the course of his work. The 17th-century Gregorio arrives in Mexico with typical imperialist prejudices about the natives, but in the course of his work, fighting the plague which does not discriminate by class, and under the influence of his visions, he goes native. He turns away from his Spanish fiancée and comes to think of himself as a Mexican. The 20th-century Gregory falls in love with Sandra Spear, a hemophiliac actress who acquires AIDS from a transfusion. He accompanies her to Old Mexico, where they rediscover the ancient Mexican/Indian spiritual traditions that treat death as a positive transformation. He discovers in his love and in these traditions that no person is really a spiritually separate being. The 21st-century Gregory finds himself in rebellion against the dehumanizing trends in his world, and turns back to the humanistic tradition in the anachronistic writings of his ancestors.

The third book draws on science fiction conventions, presenting an extrapolated southwest with similarities to that of Kim Stanley Robinson's *The Gold Coast*. Lamex is a self-governing region of the Triple Alliance of Mexico, the United States, and Canada, comprising most of western Mexico and the southwestern United States. Revueltas, as narrator, offers brief explanations of how several crises led to a new society that has strong but not inflexible class distinctions and dictatorial but not inhumane social policies. As an expert young doctor, Revueltas is highly successful at first because he is trained not to feel emotions toward his patients. He becomes a leader in a state-run emergency unit that deals with the pollution-induced plagues. As he discovers that Mexicans from the highly polluted Mexico City area have developed a genetic mutation that makes their blood, given in transfusion, a cure for most lung ailments, he also finds himself going native, coming to treasure the humanity of his patients. At the end of this book, Revueltas reflects upon the multiple ironies of Mexicans' new place in American civilization.

In this novel, Morales offers an interesting example of extrapolation used to explore contemporary social issues, especially the complex relations between Chicano and Anglo-European cultures in North America.

— Terry Heller

This is the first time I've read one of the Nebula collections. It's all there: the peer-selected fiction, intelligent editorial commentary by James Morrow, a knowledgeable essay on SF films, a memorial tribute to Fritz Lieber, a fannish blurb by Frederik Pohl, an exquisite poem by David Lunde, and informative appendices about the Nebula award itself. Reading this book is like taking a plunge not only into the world of science fiction but into its accompanying subculture as well.

As to the fiction itself, there are several standouts. Pamela Sargent's "Danny Goes to Mars" alone makes the book worth purchasing. The story of then Vice-President Quayle's trip to the red planet was even better when it first appeared in *Asimov's* in October 1992 due to its pre-election timeliness; had Bush won that election, I could easily envision the story's events taking place. And was it the intention all along to place Danny safely out of the -Wy on Mars and make room for the Republican party's surprise candidate...?

Interestingly, the other two exceptional stories, "The July Ward" by S.N. Dyer and "The Mountain to Mohammed" by Nancy Kress, both deal with medical issues although in very different ways. Dyer's is a surreal tale of the reality of doctoring, while Kress tackles the health insurance issue. Who says science fiction doesn't respond accurately to the times?

The remaining stories, while demonstrating talent and imagination, are not so amazing as to warrant special comment. And it is ironic that one of the stories I thought weakest was an award-winner by editor James Morrow himself, the novella "City of Truth." There is a common format which many science fiction plots follow, but at which Morrow's novella does not quite succeed (although perhaps that was never his intention anyway). The format is to take a current trend, exaggerate it to an extreme in the near future, and have the protagonist backlash and wish or fight for former times. Kress's story does this successfully, taking the current health care crisis to the extreme of identifying "uninsurables" by genescans and refusing them insurance if they indicate even a slight possibility of developing certain diseases. The main character, Dr. Jesse Randall, takes a chance,
treats someone he's not supposed to, and loses his gamble and professional career but wins the opportunity to discover what doctoring is really about.

Morrow's trend/extreme/backlash doesn't work as well. The trend is that of telling the truth, and the extreme is that children in their early teens are "brainburned," or conditioned into truthfulness, so that typical conversation may run something like, "I don't really care how you feel today, so I won't bother asking." Art, film and books are all lies that must be destroyed by "critics" (shades of Fahrenheit 451), and makeup and fancy clothes are untruthful representations as well. The backlash: a man, upon learning his son has a terminal disease, realizes he must learn to lie to give his son a psychological fighting chance, and the only people who can help him are underground liars called "dissemblers." Again, perhaps Morrow did not intend this story to indicate what he perceives as a current trend; perhaps it was instead a mind exercise on what such a world would be like if one ever were to exist. But for some reason my mind insisted on interpreting the story as an attempt at exaggerating a trend, and because I don't see that trend actually occurring in society today, the story doesn't ring true (no pun intended) to me. The story is well written, but I can't identify the appeal it must have had to other science fiction writers in order to win the Nebula.

In any case, Nebula Awards 28 is a wonderful slice of science fiction, and I look forward to seeing what Pamela Sargent accomplishes as editor of Nebula Awards 29, 30 and 31.

— Amy Sisson


After nine fantasy novels, Mickey Zucker Reichert has switched gears to write her first science fiction novel entitled The Unknown Soldier. As Reichert is a physician as well as an author, it is not surprising that this book opens at a hospital, where residents Jason Walker and Shawna Nicholson are going about their usual medical business when an injured patient with amnesia arrives. The amnesia is not the only unusual thing about him; although the John Doe speaks unaccented English and appears to be American, his behavior is odd
enough — not knowing you have to open a sugar packet before putting the sugar in your tea — to show that he is definitely out of place. The armed men who try to kill him in his hospital room draw a bit of attention to the mysterious John Doe as well.

Having recently seen Mickey Zucker Reichert participate in a convention panel on medicine in SF, and having recently read two excellent medical related stories in Nebula Awards 28 (reviewed this issue), I was eager to read this story. While the medical aspect of the novel didn't disappoint, it's a minor part of the story, and the rest left me with mixed feelings. The weakest part of the book was the use of the dreaded "redshirt syndrome": introducing a minor character whom the reader knows will be killed as a device to show how ruthless the villains are without sacrificing a main character. The villains themselves are faceless Arabs who are difficult to take seriously because it almost seems they were chosen by process of elimination now that the Russians are out; I have no desire to promote political correctness, but perhaps it would have simply been more interesting to have a fanatical American group portray the bad guys. Finally, the plot is interesting but a bit thin so that the reader doesn't care so much about its outcome as long as the main characters come through.

Other aspects help make up for the novel's weaknesses. A particularly strong point is how Carrigan, as he eventually recalls he is named, remembers killing several people but does not know if he is a trained military commando, a traitor turned against his own forces, or simply a homicidal maniac. Due to the nightmarish glimpses of his past, he is terrified to find out who he is. Another nice touch is the way Drs. Nicholson and Walker react in the face of danger, sometimes calmly and logically, other times completely irrationally.

One last comment, which I mean not as any type of positive or negative statement but merely as an observation, is that had I not known the author of this book, I would have thought it had been written by a male writer. Observations aside, my final conclusion is that I would be glad to read Mickey Zucker Reichert's next science fiction novel to find out how she develops as an SF writer.

— Amy Sisson

In *Hot Sky at Midnight*, Robert Silverberg paints a gloomy picture of a near-future Earth suffering in the grips of runaway global warming. Increasing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere are slowly choking off the human race. Dr. Nick Rhodes, a researcher for Santachiara Technologies' Survival/Modification Program, is working on ways to genetically engineer humans to enable them to adapt to the poisonous environment. Nick's girlfriend, Isabelle, is a political activist who is violently opposed to his work. His longtime friend, Paul Carpenter, works for Samurai Industries' weather prediction agency, tracking the poisonous clouds of greenhouse gasses that threaten America's west coast. Paul isn't satisfied with his career, however, and becomes the captain of an iceberg tug boat, a move that eventually leads him into trouble. Meanwhile, Victor Farkas searches the Earth-orbiting habitats for a mad but brilliant scientist who holds the key to making the new interstellar travel program possible.

When I first started reading this book, two things struck me as similar to other works of science fiction. The heavy-hitting megacorporations behind the scenes are Japanese-controlled, and humans are being genetically altered to adapt to life on a hostile world. The Japanese theme is hardly unique, and I think anyone who has followed the British Dr. Who series will draw parallels between Silverberg's genetic revamping of humans to Dr. Devros' genetically engineered Daleks. I was pleasantly surprised, however, when the story unfolded in unpredictable directions. In addition, Silverberg's characterization is good: the heroes make mistakes (some of them pretty bad), the "villains" are not really that evil (and also jump to some false conclusions), and the supporting characters have their faults too. The only preachiness in the story was the continual references to the damage humans have done to the Earth, including the runaway greenhouse effect. However, the world portrayed, although depressing and bleak, is based on actual predications of what would happen to the Earth's climate should the greenhouse effect get out of control. Most of the technology is believable, too. Silverberg deserves much credit for not only establishing a good setting and getting the technical stuff right, but spinning a good yarn as well. Getting all of these in just the right proportion is pretty rare in this critic's opinion.
The ending of the story was not what I expected. It lacked a sense of closure in certain areas, which made it more like real life. In today's world of science fiction where you can guess the plot and ending of about 80% of all novels, movies, and TV shows, Silverberg really kept me off balance, which impressed me very much.

— John Nordlie


What would happen if the island of Manhattan was suddenly ripped out of the ground and carried away by an enormous alien ship? John E. Stith speculates on that premise in his *Manhattan Transfer*, a novel which follows the actions of several characters as they attempt to learn where Manhattan is being taken and why. Are they in some bizarre alien zoo? Are they lab rats? Are they a captive food supply?

Parts of Stith's story are original and fascinating, particularly the language learning process used by the humans to contact other captive races and ultimately their captors. Unfortunately, the good ingredients are partly bogged down by a predictable subplot involving a religious fanatic and several long descriptive passages which serve to confuse the reader rather than make the characters' surroundings easy to visualize. Had these elements been absent, the story would have lost nothing, perhaps indicating that the novella would be a more appropriate format. However, some unexpected plot twists and strong attention to scientific detail more than make up for the few shortcomings in this entertaining book.

— Amy Sisson
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