Best Genre Fiction of the Year

When LJ's editors pick the best books of the year, we find that we often don't have the time—or the expertise—to consider the broad field of genre fiction. This year, to round out the Best Books list, we decided to turn to the true experts—LJ columnists Rex Klett (mystery), Susan Hamburger (science fiction), and Kristin Ramsdell (romance). Here are their picks.

Mystery

The doyen of Hispanic literature delivers a vivid, sensuous mystery featuring sometime shaman Sonny Baca. (LJ 9/1/96)

Add to the Jane Austen renaissance this utterly authentic, deliciously witty mystery of manners. (LJ 4/1/96)

Literate prose oaks an intriguingly complex plot as a magician probes his grandfather's murder. (LJ 3/1/96)

Science Fiction

Award-winning new epic, humans struggling to colonize a hostile planet turn to native "nighthorses" for their salvation. (LJ 8/96)

More top-notch Moisley: Easy Rawlins just can't avoid murder. (LJ 6/1/96)

In this wickedly entertaining tale, a thief turned human works all the angles to "settle" a domestic dispute. (LJ 11/1/96)

Science Fiction

A clash between morality and technology vivify this near-future, hard-science tale. (LJ 12/96)

In this penetrating new epic, humans struggling to colonize a hostile planet turn to native "nighthorses" for their salvation. (LJ 8/96)

More than six-score years after his birth, a burst of Ives scholarship has led to several recent volumes that find him a place in music history but will be of interest chiefly to musicologists. In this admiring portrait, Swafford introduces the rest of us to the complex man who was not only the first substantial American composer of orchestral music but also a leader in the life insurance industry, a shy and quirky personality, and a devout idealist and champion of American philosophy. This work is "Ivesian" in the best sense in its commingling of the man, his works, and his environment. (LJ 3/15/96)

Possibly the man who did the most to change the contemporary understanding of what art is and very probably the most cryptic artist of the 20th century, Duchamp has been the subject of books filled with psychoanalysis, stylized imitation, and convoluted interpretation. In a twist Duchamp would have probably appreciated, Tompkins here fashions a straightforward biography. By turns amusing, affecionate, and critical, the book seamlessly blends a life story and a critical examination of the enigmatic art. (LJ 12/96)

Once considered the evolutionary "missing link," the Pitdownd Man fossil was proved in 1952 to be a scientific fraud. Who could have planted the ape's jaw and human cranium in an English gravel pit in 1912? In this exciting, real-life detective story, Edgar Award winner Walsh reveals how the deception was accomplished and identifies the perpetrator. (LJ 8/96)
FICTION


Taylor's translation of Perl's epistolary novel of 19th-century Jewish life in Eastern Europe gives the English-speaking reader an opportunity to savor a Hebrew classic. The novel's world was daunting, and the Haskala—"the Jewish Enlightenment"—was engaged in a battle with the religious revival movement known as Hasidism. Perl, an ardent advocate of enlightenment, wrote this work in 1819 to parody Hasidism. It stands as the prototype as well as the pinnacle of the novel genre in Hebrew. As an historical novel, it is also a rich contemporary source of Jewish life in Galicia and the Pale. Recommended for scholarly and Jewish studies collections.—Molly Abramowitz, Silver Spring, Md.


In his latest novel, Roth shows his age. Not that his writing is any less vigorous and supple. But in this autumnal tome, he is definitely in a reflective mood, looking backward. As the book opens, Roth's alter ego, Nathan Zuckerman, recalls an innocent time when golden boy Seymour "the Swede" Levov was the pride of his Jewish neighborhood. Then, in precise, painful, perfectly rendered detail, he shows how the Swede's life did not turn out as gloriously as expected—how it was, in fact, devastated by a child's violent act. When Merry Levov blew up her quaint little town's post office to protest the Viet Nam war, she didn't just kill passing physician Fred Conlon, she shattered the ties that bound her to her worshipful father. Merry disappears, then eventually reappears as a stick-thin Jain living in sacred poverty in Newark, having killed three more people for the cause. Roth doesn't tell the whole story blow by blow but gives us the essentials in luminous, overlapping bits. In the end, the book positively resonates with the anguish of a father who has utterly lost his daughter. Highly recommended. [Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 12/96].—Barbara Hoffert, "Library Journal"


Smith whisks readers into a surreal, paranoid Clockwork Orange-like world of frighteningly easy violence. In New Richmond, Virginia, former police lieutenant Jack Randall roams the dank ventilation chutes and festering floors of a 200-story MegaMall with "food courts the size of small towns," determined to rescue his seven buddies—make that six and one half—who are made up of spare parts. Jack, a refugee from better times with a price on his head, deals with a killer stalking him as well as bad guys from the Spares Farm who want their inmates back. The nastiness of the dismembering theme is relieved by a piquant humor and suspense that pace the reader through amazingly inventive scenes. Jack doesn't rise much above the tough-talking one-dimensional thriller hero who personifies through all the battles. But the Spares, including the six-foot-five Mr. Too, who carries a bag with a talking head, take on an endeavor quality. Visually fascinating, Spares is scheduled to be a major film from Dreamworks SKG. Recommended for suspense collections.—Molly Gorman, San Marino, Cal.


This work is vintage Spark, and to those familiar with this prolific and much-honored author, perhaps that is all that need be said. With the lucidity, clarity, and wit that has long marked her style, she explores the often shadowylike relationship between real life and the creative process. A glimpse of a girl selling hamburgers at a French campground ignites film director Tom Richard's imagination, and around it he builds his latest movie. When the film is still in production, he suffers a serious accident and awakens to find his vision being threatened by others trying to take over the story. He also awakens to disruptions in his "real" life—many of those around him are losing their jobs, his daughters' marriages are in the process of breaking up, and long held resentments, jealousies, both personal and professional, are coming to the surface. The result is a sexual and economic whirlwind that eventually leads to violence—and another film. For the creative artist, everything "in our world...[may] start from a dream," but dreams also start from reality. It is this paradox and its attendant parables that Spark exposes so astutely and entertainingly in this highly recommended work. [Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 12/96].—David W. Henderson, Eckerd Coll. Lib., St. Petersburg, Fla.

Having influenced numerous sf writers throughout his career, he brought his expertise to science fiction in 1985 with the publication of his novel, Contact. His final work, a collection of essays called Billions and Billions, will be published by Random in June.


In this fourth and final book in a 30-year publishing odyssey (following 2001, 2010, and 2061), 2001 astronaut Frank Poole, presumed dead and adrift in deep space near Jupiter, is recovered alive in the year 3001. Intent on saving humanity, he returns to Jupiter's satellite, Europa, to contact partner Dave Bowman, whose mind has become absorbed by a third monolith. Unfortunately, Clarke uses this book as a vehicle to showcase scientific ideas and breakthroughs at the expense of the story, spending too much time catching up on Poole on what he's missed in the last 1000 years while failing to develop fully the current situation and squeezing the conclusion. Recommended only to complete the quartet.


After Project Starseed's 99th and last colonizing ship leaves a ravaged Earth to find a habitable planet, it is dropped by faster-than-light quantum wave technology to a frozen planet orbiting a dead sun. Stowaway Carlos Mondragon; Dr. Rina Virili; her son, Kip; daughter Day; and the rest of the crew find themselves stranded with a crazed captain intent on leaving the planet. Commanded by mysterious beads found in an excavation, Day and two scientists trek across the frozen wastelands toward the polar continent in search of escape. Master craftsman Williamson (Demon Moon, Tor, 1994) evokes terror and uncertainty on the frozen planet in this highly recommended adventure.


Foster here returns to the Commonwealth Universe, the setting for his Iceciger trilogy and Flux novels, for this morality tale of first contact with aboriginal aliens. Two Commonwealth teams sent to compare from advanced societies compete for a treaty with the Seni after discovering that they have sacred stones with unexplainable powers for healing, gardening, fishing, transportation, and other uses. The Seni must demonstrate to the humans why their cultural mores prohibit a treaty. Foster treats the Seni with compassion and respect, showing that primitive cultures are not necessarily des-
tined for exploitation. A fascinating anthropological novel with complex characters that belongs in all sf collections.

Anderson, Poul. The Fleet of Stars.
In the fourth installment of Anderson's "Harvest of Stars" series (e.g., Harvest the Fire, LJ 10/15/95), Anson Guthrie returns from the distant planet Amaterasu to investigate fragmented rumors about what solar lenses have found in deep space. On Earth he joins Penn, a former Earth policeman, and his Terran girlfriend, Kimna Konan, to learn why the cybercosm thinks it's too dangerous for humans to resume space exploration. This hard-science novel effectively explores the relationships between men and machines, cultural differences, and rebellion. Highly recommended for sf collections. [Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 11/15/96.]


McCaffrey, Anne. Dragonseye.
In this long-awaited "Dragonriders of Pern" novel, the Dragonriders finally get to protect their world from the danger they've been anticipating for 200 years. When signs appear that Thread, the deadly silver strands that devour everything organic, will soon make an appearance, Dragonrider Chalkien's failure to believe in the danger of Threadfall threatens to destroy the entire civilization. Recommended for fantasy collections. [Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 10/15/95.]

Lost in the 1950s and recently recovered, this 1936 fantasy novella by the late Leiber is published here for the first time. In the style of H.P. Lovecraft, Leiber writes about a time-travel experiment in which a scientist's attempt to prevent the death of his best friend's wife has unexpected repercussions. While the temporal science is shaky, the scientist's fear of his power rings true. For libraries wanting a complete Leiber collection.

Calder, Richard. Dead Things.
St. Martin's. Feb. 1997. c.208p. ISBN 0-312-15103-9.$20.95. SF Completing his dark trilogy (Dead Girls, LJ 4/15/96, and Dead Boys, St. Martin's, 1996), Calder again couches his story in dense prose sprinkled with literary and cultural allusions and fills it with images of death and sex. Here, Gabriel returns to Earth to eliminate the Meta plague by destroying the infected teenage girls. For collections with the earlier books.

Moorecock, Michael. Fabulous Harbors.
Moorecock compiles nine previously published fantasy stories from 1966 and 1993-95 with the same characters and concerns that appear in Blood: A Southern Fantasy (AvonNov: Morrow, 1995) and uses this collection as a transition to his upcoming War Amongst the Angels. In this "multiverse," Rose von Bek, Sam Oakhurst, Elric the albino prince, and the Beggs family continue their adventures. For readers already familiar with these characters; buy on demand.

Del Rey: Ballantine. Feb. 1997. c.368p. ISBN 0-345-38692-2. pap. $12. SF In the conclusion to sf veteran Chalker's trilogy, Cory Maddox is stuck inside the cycle of cyber-reincarnation of a virtual reality box created by the missing Matthew Brand. Sentient computers live vicariously through him and 51 other people trapped in virtual reality, and Brand is the key to their escape. It is essential to have read the first two books to comprehend this novel. Buy to complete the collection.

Willis, Connie & Cynthia Felice. The Promised Land.
Ace: Berkley. Feb. 1997. c.368p. ISBN 0-441-00405-9.$21.95. SF Delanna returns home to the mining and farming planet Keramos to settle her mother's estate, take the money, and return to a civilized planet. To her dismay, she finds that to claim her inheritance she must stay on her mother's land for one year. She also learns that upon her mother's death she was automatically married to Sonny Tanner, a man she remembers (barely) from childhood. Willis's (Bellweather, Spectra: Bantam, 1996) romantic adventure effectively explores a young woman's coming of age. Recommended.

Forward, Robert L. Saturn Ruh.
Three male and two female human specialists are paid $1 billion each to voyage to Saturn to convert helium in the upper atmosphere into methalium fuel. When part of their apparatus is swallowed by one of the giant, flying, birdlike creatures they call rukis, the crew finds a way to communicate and cooperate with the rukis so both survive. The hard science, while technical, lends credence to Forward's (Camelot 30K, Tor, 1993) suspenseful story. Highly recommended for sf collections.

Abandoned as a baby by her mother, orphaned at 23 by the cold man she thought was her father, Lanen Kaeler leaves home to find Dragor Isle of which she has long dreamed. This adventure fantasy by a gifted storyteller belongs on most fantasy collection shelves.
school demands to be sent to the prep school most of his friends attend. His father's refusal has more to do with his own idealism than with concern for his son's safety. The duelizing voices brilliantly depict a generational collision of ethics, but here the child is weary and cynical and the parent is hoping against hope. This showcase of new authors is an exciting counterpoint to the more staid, seasoned annuals like O'Henry, Pushcart, and Best Short Stories. Here's hoping it's a yearly event.—Adam Mazmanian, "Library Journal"

□SF & FANTASY □

By Susan Hamburger, Pennsylvania State University Library, University Park


SF Get ready! In this exciting work, based on the popular comic by Nimoy and concepts developed by Isaac Asimov, the military and government try to contain news of a message signaling the imminent return of aliens who, during Earth's primordial past, rescued several species, seeded them on different planets, and nurtured them through intelligent evolution. Recommended.


SF When Chief of State Leia Organa Solo refuses to interfere with the politics on Narn Chorios, minority leader Seti Ashgad imprisons her on the mineral-rich planet and releases the Death Seed plague. Hambly (Sisters of the Night, LJ 10/15/95) vividly creates the intriguing planet, creates villain and an exciting adventure for fans of the Star Wars saga. Recommended. (Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 1/19/97.)


SF Szczesuil, a member of the New England Science Fiction Association, here compiles all of Kornbluth's solo and pseudonymous works published in the pulp magazines. The 56 stories are full of Kornbluth's cynicism and abrasive wit. Regrettably, they are not chronologically arranged, obscuring Kornbluth's development as a writer. Still, this is highly recommended.


SF This collection includes the Hugo Award-nominated title story, in which a time traveler lands in an alternate Pennsylvania, and eight others, most previously published, that are replete with skillfully drawn characters. Flynn (Firestar, LJ 1/96) provides commentary with each story. Highly recommended.


SF Severely injured when a malfunctioning shuttle crashes on her space station, Lt. Commander Alis Nussem blames biologist Karl Stanton for pilot error. Now they must learn to work together as their ship encounters a mysterious moon-sized object hurtling toward Earth. Stith's (Reunion at Neverend, 'Tor, 1994) well-developed characters and the hard science propel this space-faring story. Highly recommended.


SF Clough's (An Impossible Summer, Walken 1992) hardcover debut offers a suburban fantasy in which Rob Lewis wakes up one morning with the ability to read—and, ultimately, influence—the emotions of people around him. Frightened, he leaves home, drifting aimlessly through New York City until he meets microbiologist Edwin Barbarossa, to whom he turns for help. Clough explores power, control, and friendship in a well-crafted psychological study. Recommended.


SF Hari Seldon, now a candidate for first minister, finds himself embroiled in a psychohistorical conundrum—he must deal with the re-created personalities of Joan of Arc and Voltaire, who surface as computer simulations. Gifted storyteller Benford (Far Futures, LJ 12/95) makes the characters come alive. Isaac Asimov's estate authorized this extension of Asimov's "Foundation" series; expect additional volumes from Greg Bear and David Brin. Highly recommended.


SF Cecelie, a computer security apprentice at Sept. Fortune in Venice, must break an online bank security system the company designed in order to pass the test for senior apprentice. While retrieving the data, she discovers that the Septs are planning to take over the net to control the wealth and power of information. The high-tech intrigue and real vs. virtual masks recommended Lewitt's (Memento Mori, LJ 11/15/95) work for most collections.


SF In Moon's (Rennmant Population, LJ 3/15/96) hard sf adventure, Lt. Esmay Suiza faces a military court hearing following her emergency captains of a patrol ship during battle after the captain turned out to be a traitor. Tormented by nightmares from repressed memories of sexual assault, Esmay recaptures her self-esteem and the military's trust. Highly recommended.


SF After a March 1997 Antarctic ocean avalanche released methane to mix with bromotetracloride in the atmosphere during a solar storm, strange charged particles began the glimmering in the ozone layer. HIV-positive magazine publisher Jack Fimegan wastes the millennium in his crumbling New York mansion. Hand's (Waking the Moon, HarperPrism: HarperCollins, 1995) bleak ecological disaster novel, which straddles sf and fantasy, belongs in most collections.


SF In her fine reworking of the medieval poem, "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," Crompton (Merlin's Harp, LJ 9/15/95) explores honesty, promise-keeping, honor, and the power of women. Recommended.


SF The first hardcover edition of Bradley's 1977 novel.


SF Lujan Sereg, admiral in the military defending the Unified Worlds against Issel Sector threats, recovers from a bombing by terrorists attempting to co-opt the government. Thorley's (Echoes of Isssel, Tor, 1996) creates an intriguing continuation of her Unified Worlds military and political saga. Recommended for sf collections.


SF Having developed Direct Neural Coupling, the Neurodyne company is doing well—but someone may be selling its secrets to Microbotics and creating killer mechanical bugs. Hogan's (Paths to Otherwhere, LJ 12/95) tension-filled thriller is recommended for sf collections.

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corruption or the repression of tradition and ignorance. These are not folk tales about great chiefs but heart-rending stories about ordinary people—maids, insurance salesmen, fathers, and mothers—trying to make a life for their families, caught up in the political and spiritual struggle for Africa. Larson accompanies each story with a brief biographical sketch of the authors, many of whom have experienced exile, imprisonment, and execution because of their writing. An excellent introduction to African literature and an important complement to any African American collection. Highly recommended for all libraries. —Ellen Flexman, Indianapolis—Marion City P.L., Ind.

Weldon, Fay. Wicked Women.
In these 20 stories, some previously published, Weldon continues to pursue the themes of love, relationships, and family with the humor and poignancy that have made her other writings (e.g., Worst Feasts, LJ 5/15/96) so engaging. Delivering these themes with varying degrees of satire, sincerity, and subtlety, she offers intricate moments in the lives of defeated lovers, insecure cuckolded spouses, ill-fated offspring, during widowers, keen children, and underdogs who overcome the oppression of love. Weldon brings together all facets of the relationship race with a unique mastery, using sharp and cultivated prose. Recommended for all libraries. [Prepared in Prepub Alert, LJ 5/1/97.]—Judith A. Altman, Chicago, Ill.

□ SF & FANTASY □

By Susan Hamburger,
Pennsylvania State University Library,
University Park

Keyes, J. Gregory. The Blackgod.
In this sequel to The Waterborn (LJ 6/15/96) Hezi, the daughter of the powerful river that flows throughout the land, escapes from the imperial palace in Nhol and her destiny to join with the River. Hiding among the Mang horsemens with her bodyguard, Hezi must learn to wield her waterborn power. Blackgod, the Raven, reveals how she can defeat the River with the help of Perkar, a cattlemen, by traveling to the headwaters in the mountains. Enriched by spiritualism, mystery, and cultural detail, this fantasy belongs in most collections.

Crispin, A.C. The Paradise Snare.
With the re-release of the Star Wars movies, interest in the books will likely in-
crease. While many of the recent ones took the beloved characters into the future, this first book in the "Han Solo Trilogy" tells the story of the smuggler/pilot's childhood and teen years. Abandoned, then taken in by a Fagin-like thief/space pirate, and finally raised by an old female Wookiee, Han escapes into his first piloting job, where he falls in love for the first time and saves his girlfriend from enslavement. Crispin deftly weaves Han's early years into the Star Wars® storyline and provides details that shape his personality. This prequel belongs in Star Wars® sf collections.

Fabi, Mark. Wyrm.
In 1999 Michael Arcangelo, a computer-virus hunter, is called in by an old friend to debug a computer designed to learn chess and defeat human grandmasters. He finds a "worm" that exhibits all the signs of intelligence and sentience and that involves the Internet. Inteeweaving mythology, virtual reality, role-playing games, chess strategy, and artificial intelligence with a theory of a Group Overmind Deemo susceptible to religious symbolism, first-timer Fabi pits a group of computer programmers and hackers agaun a formidable opponent who may fulfill end-of-the-world prophecies as the millennium approaches. Although the narrative flow is often broken by explanations of technical terminology and concepts, this work is imaginative and solidly conceived. Recommended for sf collections.

Lee, Adam. The Dark Shore.
This debut novel of a planned trilogy is an auspicious beginning for Lee, who has an elegant way with descriptive passages. Seeking revenge on the man who killed his family, Drew devotes his life to killing him. Drew returns from the Dark Shore with flesh-eating cackledemons—which are immune to magical Charm—to destroy the cities and subjugate the people of Ith. Drew must join the sorcerers, witches, and thieves to defeat Wrat. Recommended for fantasy collections.

After the heroic female Pict warrior Barra and her partners, the Egyptian Kheperu and the Athenian Leucas, lose all their mercenaries profits to pirates, they return to her foster home in Tyre to seek work. There they find a building war among the rulers houses instigated by an evil sorcerer, who raises the dead to fight for him. Barra and her partners must defeat him to save the city. This first novel colorfully depicts Phoenicia during Egyptian rule, but some of the characters lack the complexity needed to make the reader care about their fate. Recommended for historical fantasy collections.

Dalkey, Kara. Bijapur: Blood of the Goddess II.
In 16th-century India, English apothecary apprentice Thomas Chinnery travels from Goa on a Portuguese caravan aiming to find a supernatural goddess with the power of life and death—but he only wants to escape and go home. As it heads for Bijapur, the caravan adds an Islamic army also seeking the goddess. This historical fantasy provides an intriguing look at India's various customs, languages, and religions. Highly recommended.

Anthony, Piers. Hope of Earth.
As a stand-alone novel following Isle of Woman (LJ 9/15/93) and Shane of Man (LJ 9/15/94), this latest in Anthony's godseyes series explores what makes humans human via several characters living in various places and times throughout the world's history. Based on meticulous historical research, the book paints a vivid portrait of humanity and its hell-bent rush to destruction from disease. Highly recommended for sf collections.

Cochran, Molly & Warren Murphy. The Broken Sword.
In this sequel to The Forever King (LJ 6/15/92), Cochran and Murphy continue the story of King Arthur reincarnated in 20th-century New York City. Blind Beatrice can see only when she holds the Holy Grail she found in a market in Frascati. She becomes Arthur's companion, and the two return to America with the grail, pursued by an evil sorcerer. Arthur must choose whether to break Excalibur to protect Beatrice or fail in his attempt to restore the Round Table. This rollicking good contemporary fantasy adventure belongs in all fantasy collections.

Coe, David B. The Children of Amarid. 
In his first novel, historian Coe has crafted an elegantly written fantasy. The Children of Amarid, mages who have protected the people of Tobyn-Ser for a millennium, have been behind the brutal attacks on their avian familiars. When Jaryd joins the mages, he discovers the traitor responsible for the atrocities. Recommended for fantasy collections.
FICTION
Set in Renaissance Florence, this historical fantasy features Catherine de Medici, her astrologer, and her chef. The book abounds in colorful descriptions of the city and its people, but the focal point is food and its preparation; there are even recipes and a food glossary. Highly recommended for fantasy collections.

Collected here are the first three novels in Vance's classic "Demon Princes" series. Kerth Gersen seeks the demon princes, a destructive race that disguises itself as human, to exact revenge for the death of his family and planet. Recommended for sf collections not owning the separate titles.

The demon dactyl awakens in a mountainside cave on Corona populated by elves, goblins, humans, centaurs, and giants. When goblins destroy the village of Dundallis, orphaned Pony and her friend Elbran survive. Aided by magically powerful gemstones, they fight to defeat the evil dactyl. Recommended for fantasy collections.

When the Agatean Empire requests the Great Wizard, Lord Vetinari of Ankh-Morpork sends a pathetically inept wizard named Rincewind 6000 miles away to the Counterweight Continent to intercede. The latest novel in the satirical fantasy "Discworld" series; for fantasy collections with the series.

The editors of the new sf magazine Absolute Magnitude here compile 16 adventure sf short stories published in the magazine from 1993 to 1997 and written by both established writers, including Allen Steele, Terry Bisson, Hal Clement, Alan Dean Foster, and Barry B. Longyear, and newer authors. Highly recommended for sf short story collections and for libraries lacking the magazine (originally published as Harsh Mistress).

Members of the Science Fiction Writers Association (SFWA) annually read and vote on the best fiction from their peers. This 1995 compilation includes not only a Nebula Award-winning novella by Elizabeth Hand and a novelette by Ursula K. LeGuin but short stories, poetry, and essays from the annual symposium assessing the state of science fiction, among other riches. Essential for science fiction collections not only for the winning entries but for the evaluative essays by some of the genre's top writers.

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balance and truce that bring her beyond the deathbed of Albert’s mother and to her own front door as she becomes the next Mrs. Hornstein to her son’s fiancée. Wagner’s delicately etched scenes of emotional combat and redemption draw a picture of love and forgiveness and tragedy that bind, bless, and transform the narrator into a woman of great depth and grace.—Reviewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 9/1/97.]—Beth E. Andersen, Ann Arbor Dist. Lib. Mich.

The best-selling author of romantic suspense has a magical wad of depth and words, whether with a book’s title, location, or colorful blend of character names. In her newest work, a missing granddaughter named Susan is the only shadow on a canvas of vibrant personalities like Mrs. Orion and Captain Nicholas. Susan’s missing grandfather has summoned former college roommate Hallie to their historic seaport town to help find his granddaughter, who has disappeared mysteriously from her bedroom. As Hallie puzzles over her friend’s fate, at the same time contending with suspicious relatives, it feels as if Whitney is carefully putting into place all the loose threads of a handstitched tapestry. What matters here are the characters’ wonderful wretched temperaments—no sinners, no saints, but ultimately lots of forgiveness—and the subtle, little glimpses of fear that keep readers looking for answers right up to the satisfying conclusion. Suitable reading for any library. [Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 3/1/97.]—M.E. Cuddy, Narragansett, R.I.

"Only a couple of hours before the baby was kidnapped, the grandfather reached reconciliation with death." The promise of a fast-paced, multidimensional story in this opening sentence is fully realized as we view ensuing events as recounted by the grandfather, the kidnapper, the baby’s mother, a protégé of the grandfather, and several others. Wright (After Gregory, LJ 11/15/95) endows each character/narrator with a distinctive personality, bringing their voices into a harmonized inquiry into the intertwined natures of consciousness and discipleship. Rich in ideas and accessible in style, this novel will appeal to readers of both serious and popular fiction.—Francesca Goldsmith, Berkeley P.L., Cal.

Playwright and short-story writer Youngblood’s first novel, a moody, lyrical coming-of-age drama, wades through words usually left unspoken, naming the poetry of abandonment and poking at the taboo of sex stirring within the parent-child relationship. At age seven, Mariah Kin Santos suddenly loses her quasi-idyllic childhood in Manhattan, Kansas, when her subtly despairing, drug-addicted mother takes her by train to rural Georgia and leaves her with two singular maiden aunts, promising to return. Mariah waits, subsisting on remembered words and keeping, physically and emotionally, for reunion. After some years, she learns of the existence of her artist father and journeys to Los Angeles in an impassioned attempt to locate family and wholeness. Instead, she meets her ambivalent fate. Mariah returns to Georgia with a smaller family circle, larger and more sorrowful experience, and the hope—perhaps—of peace. Occasionally intense, but too sensitive and honest to be outrageous, this intriguing debut will appeal to many readers. For most public library fiction collections.—Janet Ingraham, Worthington P.L., Ohio

Short Stories

In News of the World (Norton, 1987), Carlson wryly observed the public’s fascination with the weirdness of tabloid journalism by giving us a straightforward account of Bigfoot, our most popular urban legend. The strongest stories in his uneven new collection have this same sort of quirky sensibility. In "The Chromium Hook," we find out the real story behind that deranged mental hospital escapee who has terrorized generations of teenage couples, and "What We Wanted to Do" is a hilarious account of medieval warfare gone haywire, told in a way that could pass as a modern-day, excuse-ridden statement to the press. "The Hotel Eden" and "Oxygen" are truly engrossing and pack an emotional wallop, but most of the other stories here have a somewhat generic feel and fail to transcend the conventional, man-has-difficulty-relating-to-women plotline. For larger fiction collections.—Christine DeZellar-Tiedman, Univ. of Idaho Lib., Moscow

Kauffmann here continues to employ the innovative prose that made her previous writings (e.g., The Body in Four Parts, LJ 9/1/93) so enticing. Aptly named, this collection is less about place than about people. The characters share a deep sense of intimacy, presented without heavy reliance on context that readers are thus invited to imagine. Some stories feature characters with simple idiosyncrasies, such as a boy who can write with both hands or a woman who continues relationships with deceased loved ones in her dreams. Others reveal a thoughtful use of Kauffmann’s lucid prose, as when a naive young mother burying her dead infant observes that "the dirt is gravey." At times humorous, sad, or sexually charged (the most original tale narrates erotic moments between letters of the alphabet), these stories have the rare ability to describe subtle emotion within the minds of selected characters. Recommended for all libraries.—Judith A. Akalaitis, Chicago, Ill.

□ SF & FANTASY □

By Susan Hamburger,
Pennsylvania State University Library,
University Park

In hip, staccato language, the master of cyberpunk (e.g., The Hacker and the Ants, Avon, 1994) merges California surfer culture with a tale of 21st-century artificial plastic and mold lifecycles. The intertwined lives of Herbertstoten, anti-Moldies (the Moldies’ inventor, human “cheeseballs” who have sex with Moldies, and isolationist Moldies on the Moon) enchant this fast-paced tale of kidnapping and alien takeover. Recommended for sf collections.

This three-part fantasy set in Roman-occupied Britain, creates the link between The Forest House and The Mists of Avalon and should satisfy fans of both those books. Spanning almost 400 years, it tells the stories of the high priestesses and ladies of Avalon. Recommended for fantasy collections. [Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 2/1/97.]

The latest Sector General novel in White’s deep-space medical series featuring a mammoth space hospital (e.g., The Galactic Gourmet, LJ 7/96), Final Diagnosis revolves around the possibility of a cross-species interstellar virus. Recommended for Sector General, Patient Hewitt overcomes his extreme xenophobia to help the doctors and nurses uncover the cause of the inexplicable illnesses that have plagued him throughout his life. A fascinating character study whose on-target delineation of the "us" vs. "them" mentality is particularly relevant to cut diverse world today; highly recommended.
FICTION

Sawyer, Robert J. Franchise.
Tor. May 1997. c.352p. ISBN 0-312-86325-X. $23.95. A Nebula Award winner and Hugo Award nominee, Sawyer has created a gripping medical sf thriller. Pierre Tardivel, a French Canadian geneticist, works on identifying junk DNA for the Human Genome Project. At risk for contracting Huntington’s chorea, Tardivel drives himself to succeed in a race against time to complete his research. Skillfully interwoven is the identification of John Denmijuk as the Treblinka death camp’s Ivan the Terrible, the cloning of Neanderthal genes, and a greedy insurance company that illegally and clandestinely takes DNA samples from its policy owners and kills high-risk clients before it has to pay out large claims. Highly recommended for sf collections.

Shatner, William with others.
Star Trek®: Averager.
Pocket. May 1997. c.374p. ISBN 0-671-55132-9. $22. Shatner and his co-writers resurrect captain James T. Kirk to join Ambassador Spock and the crew from Star Trek®: The Next Generation™ in saving the Federation. A radical Vulcan group, the Symmetricists, seizes on the Federation’s vulnerability by unleashing a deadly virus that destroys chlorophyll and kills the food supply as a warning against ecological monocultures. Continuing the storyline from the last Star Trek® movies and following through on the first series’ stories about Kodos the Executioner, Shatner’s team has created a compelling and satisfying morality play with a wiser Kirk and more emotional Spock. Recommended for Star Trek® collections. [Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 1/97.]

Weis, Margaret & Tracy Hickman.
Legacy of the Darkword.
Specs. Del Rey. Jun. 1997. c.336p. ISBN 0-553-09965-5. $23.95. Weis and Hickman return to the world of the “Darkword” trilogy in this heroic fantasy, which measures up to its predecessors. After the fall of Thimhallan, its people migrated to Earth. Bereft of magic, the evil Technomancers on Earth wanted and feared the new darkword. Believing that it could help defeat the alien invading Hch’nyv, King Gerald and General Boris try to convince Saryon to go back to Thimhallan to retrieve the sword. Recommended for fantasy collections where the “Darkword series” is popular.

McCaflrey, Anne. Freedom’s Choice.
Putnam. Jun. 1997. c.304p. ISBN 0-399-14270-3. $23.95. Continuing the storyline from Freedom’s Landing (LJ 4/15/95), this second book in the series finds the human and aliens on the penal planet Botany planning a rebellion against their slavemasters. After the Cat-tens subdue and transport to penal colony planets people from Earth and other civilizations for their Eosi masters, one Cat-ten, Zainal, chooses to remain on Botany. His plan? To join his fellow slaves in convincing the absentee owners of the planet to turn against the Eosi and free the colonists. McCaffrey is at her best with interspecies interactions and uniting for a goal against a common enemy. Highly recommended for sf collections.

McDevitt, Jack. Eternity Road.
HarperPrism: HarperCollins. May 1997. c.352p. ISBN 0-06-105208-6. $22. After a cataclysmic viral plague wiped out humanity sometime in the 21st century, the next civilization arose in isolated pockets. In the Mississippi Valley, Ilyrians built their town on what had been the Roadmakers’ Memphis. Some believed in the mythical Heaven on the eastern ocean where books and other technological wonders had been saved. When all but one member of an expedition dies trying to find Haven, the leader’s sons join a second party on the long overland trek east. Unfortunately, the book raises more questions than it answers about the knowledge that was lost, leaving the reader unsatisfied. From the author of Ancient Shores (HarperCollins, 1996); a possible candidate to sf collections.

Tepper, Sheri S. The Family Tree.
Avon. May 1997. c.384p. ISBN 0-380-97478-9. $23. While investigating the separate murders of three geneticists, police sergeant Dora Henry stumbles upon talking animals from the future who have come 3000 years into their past to prevent the extinction of their species before a plague destroys most humans. Overnight, sentient weeds and trees begin taking over the suburbs and carrying off babies from families with more than two children. Tying together the Earth Goddess Koré and ecological scare tactics leaves this morality tale a little too preachy and strident. A disappointment from the author of the Hugo Award nominee Grass (LJ 9/15/89); recommended for larger fantasy collections only.

Gloss, Molly. The Dazzle of Day.
Tor. Jun. 1997. c.256p. ISBN 0-312-86336-5. $21.95. Gloss’ second novel (following The Jump-Off Creek, LJ 7/89), and her first in the sf genre, explores a utopian theme. A group of Esperanto-speaking Quakers search for a new planet to colonize. Many generations and 175 years later, they arrive at their New World, a planet whose inhospitable climate causes them to debate staying in the safe cocoon of their ship. This is the story of generations intermixing, getting along, fighting, and resolving differences in the Quaker way on a ship outfitted more like a pueblo than a tin can. These fascinating interactions in a biodome in the sky could just as well have taken place on an island. Highly recommended for sf collections.

Modesto, L.E., Jr. The Ecolitan Enigma.
Tor. Jul. 1997. c.384p. ISBN 0-312-86339-X. $23.95. In this fourth book in the Ecolitan Matter series (e.g., The Ecolitan Operation, L’or, 1989), Ecolitan Institute field agent Nathaniel Whaler is sent to a colony planet to evaluate its economic development potential and he is targeted for assassination. His discovery of a plot for interstellar war threatens the government. This highly charged novel contains all the ingredients of a political thriller. Recommended for sf collections.

Scott, Melissa. Dreaming Metal.
Tor. Jul. 1997. c.320p. ISBN 0-312-58576-0. $22.95. Fantasy Scott returns to the world of Dreamships (Tor, 1992) to further explore artificial intelligence. Celinde Fortune performs illusions in a theater on Persephone five years after riots pitted Cooke labor against machine-rights activists. When she combines two computer chips for her act, the resulting karkurk, named after her dead twin Celeste, seems to be an independent artificial intelligence. From an entertainer’s perspective, Scott deftly explores this complex, class-stratified world where the lowest workers fear that artificial intelligence may obtain human rights they don’t have. Highly recommended for sf collections.

ROC.NAL. Jun. 1997. c.256p. ISBN 0-451-45511-8. pap. $12.95. In this eco-feminist fantasy from Antieu (The Jigsaw Woman, ROC, NAL, 1996), post-apocalyptic society’s territories outlaw technology and live in harmony with the Earth. Gloria Stone practices the healing arts with herbs and laying on of hands in Arizona Territory’s Coyote Creek. She has no memories beyond ten years ago. Then a mysterious epidemic sweeps through the community, and finding its cause leads Gloria to the truth about her past. Redolent with the sounds and scents of the desert and with a satisfying sense of Gloria’s self-discovery; highly recommended.

Shinn, Sharon. Jovah’s Angel.
Ace. Berkley. May 1997. c.400p. ISBN 0-441-00404-0. pap. $13.95. Fantasy With angels all the latest rage, Shinn (The Shape-Changer’s Wife, LJ 10/15/95) pens another fantasy tale in the Archangel world. After a night of revelry, the reigning archangel breaks her wing and is replaced by Alleluias, a nondescript scholar who must rely on the human Caleb, who believes only in science. Competently done but not exciting; recommended for fantasy collections.
FICTION

Weil, Grete. Last Trolley from Beethovenstr.  
c.176p, tr. from German by John Barrett.  
$21.95.  
F

Best known for her novel, The Bride Price (LJ 4/1/92), Weil here depicts German would-be poet Andreas, who is seeking to come to terms with the role of the German people in the Holocaust. As a journalist in Amsterdam during World War II, Andreas witnessed the roundup of Jews and sheltered some, notably Daniel, a 17-year-old boy. Now Andreas, living comfortably with Susanne, Daniel’s sister, but haunted by his memory of Daniel, who died at the Mauthausen concentration camp, revisits Amsterdam and then Mauthausen to get past his grief. Though it is occasionally disjointed, the story rings true and is very moving. The characters and their interactions are well drawn. Recommended for most public libraries. —Ann Irvine, Montgomery Cty. P.L., Md.

Yoshimoto, Banana. Amrita.  
F

In the popular young author’s latest novel, an oddly winsome blend of personal psychology and the paranormal overlay the story of a young woman’s fight to reclaim herself after twin tragedies. Twentysomething Sakumi lives in Tokyo with her nontraditional family, all of them recovering from the shocking death of Sakumi’s younger sister, noted actress Mayu. Shortly after Mayu’s death, Sakumi falls down a staircase, sustaining injuries that continue to distort her memory and perception well after her physical recovery. As she reaches toward wholeness, Sakumi interacts with several colorful, warm, and often clarivoyant people, most importantly her young brother, who begins to exhibit uncanny abilities and adult restlessness midway through grade school. The earnest, peripatetic confusion of Sakumi’s narrative whims the reader from one peak moment to another, as Sakumi integrates her sometimes-mundane, sometimes-astonishing experiences. This emotionally resplendent novel, which follows Yoshimoto’s Lizard (LJ 11/15/94), will surely fit in any collection where contemporary fiction circulates well. —Janet Ingraham, Worthington P.L., Ohio.

Short Stories

Hers 2: Brilliant New Fiction by Lesbian Writers.  
F

The contributors to this fourth collabora-
tion by editors Wrovelton and Drake (His 2, LJ 6/1/97) identify as lesbians; their creations are defined not by their sexuality but by how they learn—with varying degrees of grace—to deal with change, loss, and death. In Wrovelton’s “Sex Less,” Lesbian Bed Death does not come as a tragedy but as a relief and opens the question: If sexual activity defines lesbianism, where does that leave celibate lesbians? As shockingly as green toads appear, seemingly out of nowhere after rain in the desert, a middle-aged lesbian realizes the depth of her elderly parents’ acceptance of her in Judy Grahn’s “Green Toads of the High Desert.” In “Breakfast at Woolworth’s 1936,” Ayotomi Polyanay pulls off a difficult feat: getting in the mind of a white racist opposing integration. And in “Poker Face,” Robin Strober explores the depths of political incorrectness: a sexual fantasy involving Wayne Newton. A couple of weak pieces don’t detract from a generally pleasing anthology. Recommended for general collections. —Ina Rimpau, Newark P.L., N.J.

Theroux, Paul.  
The Collected Stories.  
F

As one might expect from the cosmopolitan and prolific Theroux (Kowloon Tong, LJ 3/1/97) the 60-some short stories here take place all over the globe, from Boston to Moscow, north to south, and take in all classes of characters and protagonists. As one, also would expect from one of the very best travel writers, sense of place is evoked beautifully. A sense of “otherness” pervades many stories, an attempt by characters to find and define themselves in alien situations. But truly, the range is colossal: some stories are wry, ironic, and distanced, some are dead-on serious, a few academic stories stand up very well, and Theroux’s wit and elegant style shine throughout this book. In fact, defies short-format review, but, fortunately, needs only notice. Highly recommended. [Previewsed in Prepub Alert, LJ 3/15/97].—Robert E. Brown, Onondaga Cty. P.L., Syracuse, N.Y.

SF & FANTASY

By Susan Hamburger,  
Pennsylvania State University Library, University Park

FANTASY

In her first foray into science fiction, novelist Forbes (Nowle’s Passing, LJ 4/15/96) creates a utopian world in 3000 A.D. in which the population has stabilized, almost everybody is employed, crime has been eradicated, everyone is good-looking, and individuals go through a regular regeneration process that erases their childhood memories. Lydian, an information analyst, encounters unemployed Merle online and agrees to meet him in Paris. When she discovers that he can change his appearance instantly, Lydian suspects that Merle is not human but a virtual-reality construct. Then Merle teaches her the secrets of shape-shifting, and the inquisitive Lydian begins to question their very existence. Forbes explores issues of morality, mortality, sexuality, loneliness, ecology, and bioengineering in this thought-provoking, chilling look at a potential future. Highly recommended for sf collections.

Niven, Larry.  
Destiny’s Road.  
FANTASY

On the planet Destiny, which has been settled by Earth colonists, Jenny Blocher lives in Spiral Town at the far end of the peninsula. After accidentally killing a man from one of the caravans that supply trade goods and the essential potassium-rich speckles, Jenny flies down the road into the unknown, assuming new identities to avoid capture for 27 years. Curious about what happened to a second landing spaceship, Jenny traces its route 200 years after it first landed. He discovers what really beffiled the ship, that there are other towns along the road Spiral Town residents never knew about, and the secret of speckles. This realistic tale of power, deceit, adventure, and awakening by Hugo and Nebula Award winner Niven is highly recommended for sf collections.

Black Swan, White Raven.  
FANTASY

The fourth book in Datlow and Windling’s anthology series of well-known and obscure fairy tales retold by contemporary writers, this collection features 19 short stories and two poems about Snow White, the fisherman and his wife, Hansel and Gretel, Rapunzel, and others. Writers like Joyce Carol Oates, Pat Murphy, Don Webb, and Jane Yolen put interesting twists to the sanitized Victorian versions we have, proving that these tales, along with the originals, aren’t really for children. Highly recommended for fantasy and short story collections.

The Science Fiction Century.  
FANTASY

This anthology contains 45 short stories,
mostly post–World War II and mostly American, representing the earliest writers in the genre (H.G. Wells, C.S. Lewis), Golden Age authors (Poul Anderson, A.E. Van Vogt), hard science and cyberpunk writers (William Gibson, Bruce Sterling), women authors (James Tiptree Jr., Connie Willis), and writers known outside science fiction (Michael Shaara, E.M. Forster). In his introduction, Hartwell places sf in the context of literary history and prefaces each story with a short biographical and bibliographical essay. While he purposely omits certain authors who have been heavily anthologized (Ray Bradbury, Ursula K. Le Guin), Hartwell has chosen excellent examples representing 100 years of science fiction. Highly recommended for sf and literature collections.


Heavily laden with physics, which some readers may find daunting, this intriguing hard sf novel tackles a new Theory of Everything (TOE) to supersede Einstein’s theory of relativity. When documentary reporter Andrew Worth chooses to cover a conference on TOE, he discovers its link to a new mental illness, named Distress for the anxiety it manifests. Recommended for hard sf collections.


In his first novel, astronomer and planetary scientist Hartmann writes about human and alien civilizations on Mars in 2031. After biologist Dr. Alwyn Stafford goes off alone to explore the Martian landscape and discovers a strange, strange object, one that appears to be an alien artifact. This good character study explores relationships among humans and the planet Mars in the tradition of Clarke’s 2001: A Space Odyssey. Recommended for sf collections.


Found in a survival pod in space by prospectors, the infant Acorna soon exhibits the ability to analyze deficiencies in plants by taste, purify water and air, and heal. Taken to the planet Kezdet to avoid scientists who want to study her, Acorna discovers barbaric child-labor practices and vows to rescue the children. McCaffrey and Ball have created a magical alien in this fantasy/science fiction story. Recommended for sf collections.


Always set in the present, Dedman’s short sf lays the groundwork for his first novel, a realistic fantasy pitting itinerant photographer Michelangelo Mago Magistrale (Mage) against a reclusive wealthy and powerful Japanese American businessman with ancient magical powers. To clear himself of a murder charge, Mage searches for the real killer while learning to use and control the magic. Dedman skillfully blends realism, Japanese magic, organized crime, mystery, and memorable characters, heightening belief that the magical acts could actually happen. Recommended for fantasy collections.


Among the recent spate of actors in sf TV series co-writing sf books comes one by Babylon 5’s Ambassador Londo Mollari. Aliens believe Richard Faraday, who plays diplomat Harmon the Eldar in Star Peace, an sf show, really is Eldar. Then Faraday is called upon to avert a galactic war. This space opera with a lot of references to old TV shows satirizes fans who believe TV characters really exist. Unfortunately, the pedestrian treatment makes it a marginal purchase for sf collections.


This prequel to the Majipoor novels explores the conflict in Lord Valentine’s Castle and Valentine Pontifex. Award-winning Silverberg is at his best in continuing the saga of this fantasy world. Highly recommended for fantasy collections.


Dozois has again selected the best short sf of 1996 for inclusion in this award-winning anthology series. Among the 27 writers are Gregory Benford, John Kessel, Robert Silverberg, Maureen F. McHugh, Bruce Sterling, Charles Sheffield, and Stephen Baxter, with contributions covering romance, aliens, a high-tech future, the space program, Africa, scientific thriller, hard science, and cyberpunk. Highly recommended for all sf collections.


In post-holocaust America 2242, domes protect the remaining cities and control their residents. While flying one of his helicopter recon missions outside the Pittsburgh dome, Berk Nielsen is stunned among the cloistered survivors in Philadelphia. He meets Sadonya, a young girl, who shows him the freedom he never knew he craved. Wood’s Looking for the Mahdi, Ace, (1997) second novel examines the illusion of freedom in a controlling society. Recommended for sf collections.


In his second novel, following No Man’s a Mountain (Mayhaven, 1996), physics professor Cramer writes elegantly about the ramifications from the high-particle physics superconducting supercollider (SSC). Two alien races notice the SSC activities—the Hive assimilates and destroys civilizations while the Makers share knowledge. In a race toward first contact with Earth, we can only hope the Makers reach us first. Recommended for hard sf collections.


Attanasio continues the epic fantasy, begun in The Dragon and the Unicorn (HarperPrism: HarperCollins, 1996), with the story of young Arthur on his journey to Camelot. When Merlin discovers that Arthur’s only joy is killing, he vows to turn the youth around with a magical sword. Recommended especially for fantasy collections where The Dragon and the Unicorn was popular.


In late 1950s Florida, the transplanted Nix family opens Dogland, a tourist attraction, and their beliefs in integration attract the attention of the Klan. Young Christopher Nix befriends a black man and a Seminole woman who may know the real secret to the Fountain of Youth. Shetterly captures the rhythm, feel, and language of cracker Florida, its legends, and the clash of cultures. Recommended for fantasy collections.
A Classic Christmas Crime.
Pavilion, dist. by Trafalgar Square.
1997, c.192p. ed. by Tim Heald. ISBN 1-85793-757-0. $22.95. m
These 13 original mysteries (first published in Great Britain in 1995) cluster around the theme of Christmas, but they differ widely in venue, atmosphere, motive, and type of murder. Most of the contributors to A Classic English Crime (1990) are also represented here. Welcome reading for Christmas or any time.

Doherty, P.C.
A Tournament of Murders.
The third series tale (following A Tapestry of Murder, St Martin's, 1996), tells the story of the Franklin while on pilgrimage to Canterbury, begins in 1356. After a dying squire, wounded in battle, confides family secrets to Gilbert Savage, his knight, Gilbert vows to avenge the squire's father's name. A fine historical.

Robb, Candace.
The Riddle of St. Leonard's.
Also set in 14th-century England, the Owen Archer series (e.g., The Lady Chapel, LJ 9/1/94) continues as the plague ravages York. The one-eyed Archer investigates rumors that not all the deaths at St. Leonard's Hospital have been caused by the pestilence. Involving and detailed; recommended.

Additional Mysteries
Alexander, Bruce.
Person or Persons Unknown.
Eighteenth-century London comes alive in Alexander's (Wattery Grave, LJ 9/1/96) fourth Sir John Fielding mystery. Here, Sir John, the blind magistrate of the Bow Street Court, and his ward and helper Jeremy Proctor investigate the murders of prostitutes in Covent Garden. After several deaths occur, it becomes clear that they are searching for not one but two brutal killers, each with his own cruel method of murder. With the help of the Bow Street Runners and Gabriel Donnelly, a doctor and medical examiner, Sir John and Jeremy sort through numerous suspects before finally discovering that the deranged murderers were under their noses all along. A first-rate mystery plot, vividly depicted atmosphere, and the growing relationship between Sir John and Jeremy make this an excellent addition to a quality series. Recommended for all collections.—Melissa Kazma Rockicki, NYPL

Harvey, John.
Still Waters.
Charlie Resnick, the Iacocca British police investigator who has starred in previous Harvey novels (Rough Treatment, Avon, 1991) and short stories, is faced with the death of an abused woman, a friend of his lover, Hannah. At the same time, he tracks down the circumstances of an idiosyncratic art theft. This standard police procedural formula is given a bit of depth by passages detailing relationships, both business and personal, between the members of the Serious Crime Squad; however, the reader is left with the impression that the most interesting characters may be Resnick's cats. Too many references to events from previous books make this a purchase only for libraries who already own them.—Elsa Pendleton, Boeing Information Services, Inc., Ridgecrest, Cal.

Perry, Anne.
The Silent Cry.
Prolific mystery writer Perry has evaded the scientific precision of modern forensic fact-finding by weaving current day issues and characters into a richly detailed Victorian-era milieu. One man is found murdered and another on the edge of death in the notorious London slum called St. Giles. Although it looks as if they may have engaged in a mortal fight, they are in fact father and son from a well-to-do family. Later, links develop between these men and a series of violent rapes of prostitutes. Hester Latterly, nurse and protector of the surviving son, Rhys, counterbalances detective William Monk in their mutual pursuit of the truth. By the novel's end, revelations of corruption and depravity break through the severe conventions of upperclass Victorian prudery in a dramatic courtroom scene. Perry followers and others will enjoy this new addition. Highly recommended.—Michelle Fayt, Fairfield P.L., Ct.

Ross, Kate.
The Devil in Music.
Ross's historical mysteries featuring English dandy Julian Kestrel (e.g., Whom the Gods Love, LJ 4/1/85) have earned a loyal following. This fourth entry in the series moves Kestrel from his usual London haunts to Milan and makes Ross take on a trade paperback to hardcover status. While traveling the Continent with his friend, Dr. MacGregor, Kestrel reads of the recent uncovering of a four-year-old murder involving the aristocratic Malvezzi family and decides to try out his investigating skills once again. The victim was Lodovico Malvezzi, a Milanese marquis and famed music lover. Given his inquisitive manner, suspects are all to easy to find, especially among his family. Added to the mystery of his death are the disappearances of a talented musical protégé of the marquis and a surly servant, various intrigues related to Italian politics, and rebellions. Kestrel is undermined by these challenges but finds Malvezzi's beautiful young widow a dangerous distraction. While the plotting is not as tight as in previous novels, the final chapters are replete with enough revelations and twists to please Ross's fans and leave them looking forward to the next novel.—Jan Blodget, Davidson Coll., Davidson, N.C.

☐ SF & FANTASY ☐
By Susan Hamburger,
Pennsylvania State University Library,
University Park
Preuss, Paul.
Secret Passages.
Using some of the same characters who appeared in his Broken Symmetries (LJ 10/15/83), Preuss leisurely sets the scene for a groundbreaking physics experiment by telling the life story of its inventor, the mysterious physicist Manolis Minakis, in flashbacks to 1920s-40s Crete. Preuss, who established his reputation with hard sf but has since expanded into psychological themes, intertwines Minakis's artifacts, Greek customs, and quantum physics with love, incest, secrets, and the theory that the future creates the past. The hard science (and science fiction) only sneaks into the last few chapters of this fine character-driven novel. Highly recommended for both fiction and sf collections.

Dickson, Gordon R.
The Dragon and the Gnarly King.
In this latest book in his humorous dragon series (e.g., The Dragon on the Border, Tor 1992), Nebula and Hugo award winner Dickson returns to the tale of the English professor who must adjust to life as a medieval dragon in a parallel 14th century world. When the King of the Gnarlies kidnaps Jim and Angela Eckert's adopted son Robert, Jim again assumes his dragon form to save the child. Jim and Angela bring their 20th-century sensibilities and his fledgling magical abilities to a medieval world of talking wolves and trolls. Dickson adds a sly touch of humor to make this a highly enjoyable read. Highly recommended for all fantasy collections.

Wandrei, Donald.
Don't Dream:
The Collected Horror and Fantasy of Donald Wandrei.
In 1939, Wandrei cofounded Arkham
House to publish the work of H.P. Lovecraft. But he also was a writer of sf, horror, and fantasy for the pulp magazines "Weird Tales" and "Astonishing Stories." In a companion volume to Colossus: The Collected Science Fiction of Donald Wandrei (Fedogan & Bremer, 1989), editors Philip J. Rahm and Dennis E. Weller have rounded off Wandrei's published and unpublished horror and fantasy short fiction, prose poems, essays, and marginalia. "Don't Dream" contains traditional supernatural horror stories, light-hearted fantasy tales, non-scienced oriented science fiction, and his short "dream" mood pieces. While some of his pseudo-science is now dated, Wandrei's imaginative use of language renders his fiction worthy of a new reading 60 years after it was first published. Highly recommended for libraries lacking the out-of-print collections The Eye and the Finger (1944) and Strange Harvest (1965).

Dunn, J.R. Days of Cain.

In the future, Gaspar James of the planet Arpad monitors time travel and guards the historical past from being altered. When his protégé, Alma Lewin, and other renegades go back to 1943 to liberate the death camps, Gaspar and a team travel back to stop them. This emotionally powerful story by the author of This Side of Judgment (LJ 5/15/94) belongs in most sf collections.

Blaylock, James P. Winter Tides.

Haunted by the memory of only being able to save one twin girl from drowning, Dave Quinn abandons surfing for a safe life in Earl Dalton's treasure-prop company in Huntington Beach, California. When Canadian artist Anne Morris is drawn back to the town where twin sister Elinor drowned 15 years before, she and Dave find themselves shadowed by Elinor's malevolent spirit. Earl's son Edmund believes that Elinor's spirit is Anne's dark side and obsessively pursues her. Blaylock's (All the Bells on Earth, LJ 11/15/95) vivid descriptions and deft characterizations place ordinary flawed people in escalating horror situations. This contemporary ghost story exploits the underbelly of human nature and belongs in most fantasy and horror collections.

Free Space.

This sf anthology focuses on a libertarian view of a free-space universe spanning 300 years. Twenty contributors of 19 original stories and one poem include William F. Buckley Jr., Gregory Benford, Poul Anderson, and L. Neil Smith. An intriguing collection by some of the genre's best writers; recommended.


From a grossly overpopulated Earth in 2239 A.D., an exploratory colonization mission to Alpha Centauri finds Mies Cochran carrying an avatar virus inside him that, after sexual intercourse, halts conception—the perfect birth control. The explorers discover the remains of an ancient civilization and a way to see what caused their extinction through the eyes of the last, long-dead inhabitant. The authors (Iris, LJ 2/15/90) make a strong statement about overpopulation, solutions to it, and humanity's purpose for existing. This thought-provoking book, a mix of sexually explicit passages and scientific exposition, is recommended for adult sf collections.


Sorceress Inya, Lady of Moontooth and guardian of portals to other worlds, reluctantly accepts Muri Amrey as her student of magic. A disturbed young man, Amrey seemingly disappears on one of the worlds Inya has sent him to in order to retrieve a wizard stone. He returns years later as Kar Kalin, conqueror of the world, and takes Inya prisoner. In Amrey's lust for power, Inya realizes she is his mirror image and the only one who can stop him. Christian's insights into abuse of power make her second fantasy thriller (following Mainline, LJ 5/15/96) a rossing good morality tale. Recommended for fantasy collections.

Saberhagen, Fred. Berserker Fury.

This seventh title in the Berserker series (Berserker Kill, LJ 9/15/93) finds the intelligent, deadly Berserker machines infiltrating human colonies to destroy them. The humans have cranked the Berserkers' codes and plan a battle defense. Although it helps to be familiar with the series, this novel can stand alone. Full of action and intrigue, Saberhagen's fast-paced military sf adventure is recommended for most collections or where the series is popular.

Northern Frights 4.

This original anthology series contains 17 dark fantasy and horror stories and three poems mostly by Canadian authors, including Scott Mackay, Sally McBride, Dale L. Sproule, and Robert Charles Wilson. The stories are good representations of some of the best in Canadian genre fiction akin to Ray Bradbury's short pieces. Recommended for larger collections.

Weber, David M. In Enemy Hands.

This latest Honor Harrington novel (Honor Among Enemies, LJ 6/15/96) finds her promoted to commodore and adjusting to home life as her planet's first female feudal steatholder. On a routine flight, Harrington's enemies capture her spacecraft, and she must escape execution on a planet called Hell. Weber blends a mix of political intrigue with space adventure for another satisfying tale. Recommended.

Sheffield, Charles. Putting Up Roots.

This third book of the Jupiter novels (following Higher Education, LJ 4/15/96 and The Billion Dollar Bay, LJ 12/96, both with Jerry Pournell) finds teenagers at odds with Earth society shipped off to a distant planet. On Solferino, Josh Kerrigan and other trainees search for usable plant life for the Foodlines conglomerate. Supposedly uninhabited by intelligent life, Solferino holds many surprises for and raises questions from the trainees. Sheffield expertly condems corporate greed in a story that parallels the destruction of the rainforests and dehumanization of the natives. Recommended.

Tales in Time: An Anthology Companion to Three in Time.

This companion volume to Three in Time: White Wolf Redecoration Trio (White Wolf, 1997), a collection of three classic time travel novels, reprints 13 time travel short stories from respected genre authors Brian W. Aldiss, Ray Bradbury, L. Sprague de Camp, Harlan Ellison, Robert Silverberg, James Tiptree, Jr., H.G. Wells, and others. Recommended for libraries lacking these authors' collected works.

Kanaly, Michael. Thoughts of God.

First novelist Kanaly alternates a gruesome tale of two hunters, a serial killer of young girls pursued by a licensed vigilante, with vignettes of life on other planets, and God's diary entries considering the experiments he's set in motion and their implications for good and evil. While the concept of God's diary is interesting, the serial killer portions only offer a predictable thriller. A marginal purchase.
Cherryh, C.J. Finity's End.
SF
Cherryh returns to the 24th-century world of her Hugo Award-winning novels Downbelow Station (DAW, 1981) and Cyteen (LJ 5/15/88). Fletcher Nechts, orphaned at age five on the Pell station and bounced for 12 years through a succession of foster families, finds refuge working with the planet-dwelling hiss, an indigenous primitive alien race. In a political maneuver toward uniting the merchant ships and driving the pirates out of business, the merchant ship Finity's End bargains with Pell for Fletcher's return. On Finity's journey to the other space stations to forge a new peace, Fletcher must come to terms with his new life and his feelings. Cherryh sensitively portrays a young man's growth, maturity, and self-knowledge as he discovers what family means and that peace is not just the absence of war. Highly recommended for all sf collections.

Keltia's last king has died and the alien Firvolgi, taking advantage of the void, have moved in to take over the land and monopolize space travel. When the foundling Athyn Calanagh grows up to become Blackmantle, High Queen of the Kelti, she drives the Firvolgi off Keltia with the help of her lover, the gifted bard Morris Douglas whom she has rescued from the dead. Kennealy-Morrison wisely includes a glossary of terms and names to help readers decipher the Celtic words she liberally uses, but her glorifying tribute to Morrison is a jarring intrusion on her series. Larger collections should buy on demand.

ISBN 0-88677-743-7. $22.95. SF
Last seen in Exile's Song (LJ 6/15/96), Margaret Alton returns to Darkover to learn to control her newly discovered combined powers, including the shadow matrix on her hand. Bradley again provides a rich anthropological study of complex relationships among individuals, ruling families, and the right of succession. Highly recommended for fantasy collections where the series is popular.
Cruel Fictions, Cruel Realities: Short Stories by Latin American Women Writers.


The Oxford Book of Latin American Short Stories.


The 53 stories in The Oxford Book of Latin American Short Stories are grouped together in three chapters—the "Colonial Period," "New Nations," and the "Contemporary Period," which covers the entire history of Latin America. Classic writers such as Gabriel García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, and Jorge Luis Borges are included, as well as lesser-known authors like José Balza and Horacio Quiroga. A few stories written by women are found mostly in the contemporary period. Echevarría's excellent introduction will be helpful to the unfamiliar reader. An excellent purchase for all public and academic libraries that need a comprehensive collection of Latin American short stories.

Cruel Fictions, Cruel Realities, edited and translated by Leonard (Spanish, Iowa State Univ.), is a more specialized collection of short stories. All the authors are Latin American women, and all their stories deal with cruelty. Cruel acts are directed toward women, men, and groups of people in these diverse stories. None of these authors is included in the Oxford collection; bibliographies are given for each, as well as a selected bibliography of other women writers. These short stories are soberly written and would appeal to anyone interested in women's studies, sociology, and life in Latin America today.—Lisa Rorhaugh, East Palestine Memorial P.L., Ohio


Winner of the 1997 Mary McCarthy Prize in Short Fiction, Griffin's collection brings us into a rural Tennessee community that is as multilayered and fascinating as any real town. The language is the straightforward vernacular one would hear when hanging out at a local bar or at the gas station, but, though it is often humorous, it is never quaint or condescending. This makes the insight of the characters all the more startling, as when the narrator of "Goats: The Courtship of Dixie Pepper" realizes it's his own fault that his marriage is over, no matter how much he'd like to blame someone else. The effect of the Vietnam War on a community is an undertone to many of the stories, yet Griffin doesn't forget that the other wars had their own casualties. Recommended for most collections.—Christine DeZelar-Tiedman, Univ. of Idaho Lib, Moscow


There are few characters to root for in Wilnot's debut collection of eight short stories. Austere and grim, the book chronicles myriad human descents into one or another sort of hell. In the book's title story, for example, Pandy, a formerly affluent white cheerleader turned heroin addict, is touched, but ultimately never saved, by a young African American woman she meets in a club. Similarly, Jane, a self-destructive white socialite, is murdered by a treacherous West Indian man she knows will hurt her but to whom she is nonetheless inexplicably drawn. The book's most affecting piece, "Spade in the Minstral Mask," describes the difficulties facing a successful black musician as he attempts to transcend his class origin. Racism and economic inequality are addressed with profundity and power, as illusions about the ease with which one can supposedly move into the middle class are laid to rest. Well crafted and bold, these are stories that haunt and unsettle. Recommended for public libraries.—Eleanor J. Bader, New Sch. for Soc. Research, New York

SF & FANTASY

By Susan Hamburger, Pennsylvania State University Library, University Park


Cheryry returns to the 24th-century world of her Hugo Award-winning novels Downbelow Station (DAW, 1981) and Cyteen (LJ 5/15/88). Fletcher Niehurt, orphaned at age five on the Pell station and bounced for 12 years through a succession of foster families, finds refuge working with the planet-dwelling hisu, an indigenous primitive alien race. In a political maneuver toward uniting the merchant ships and driving the pirates out of business, the merchant ship Finity's End bargains with Pell for Fletcher's return. On Finity's journey to the other space stations to forge a new peace, Fletcher must come to terms with his new life and his feelings. Cheryry sensitively portrays a young man's growth, maturity, and self-knowledge as he discovers what family means and that peace is just the absence of war. Highly recommended for all sf collections.


John Ross, a Knight of the Word, travels to Hopewell, Illinois, on the Fourth of July weekend to stop the horrendous future that he sees in his dreams. The demon of the Void arrives in town to set in motion the cataclysmic events that will make Ross's dreams a reality. Caught between them is 14-year-old orphan Nest Freemark, who has inherited magic from her mother and grandmother; the future of humanity depends on her actions. In this realistic fantasy, Brooks (First King of Shannara, LJ 3/15/96) skillfully explores good vs. evil. Highly recommended for fantasy collections.—[Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 5/15/97]


Alcoholic Wycherly Musgrave, fleeing the memory of a car accident in which his girlfriend drowned, crashes another car in Morton's Fork, West Virginia. Telepathic actress Sins Dellen returns home seeking her roots in Morton's Fork, where no one will admit her mother existed. Parapsychologists Truth Blackburn and her fiancé, Dylon Palmer, arrive to investigate the paranormal activity centered in the town. As their lives converge around the ruins of a burned sanitarium, the characters must call on their strengths to survive. A master of science fiction and historical fantasy, Bradley proves herself equally adept at contemporary fantasy with a Gothic twist. Like Wicklight (LJ 8/96), this title mixes parapsychology with the occult and strong characterizations. Recommended for larger collections and where Bradley has a strong following.—[Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 5/15/97]
Drake uses his experience writing military and historical sf to craft an intricate first book in a new epic fantasy series. A raging storm washes up a woman onto the shore of a small island village. Tenocritis claims to be a minor wizard from the empire of the Isles, which the Hooded One, the most powerful sorcerer of all time, sank 100 years before. Her arrival precedes the appearance of a large ship carrying a noblewoman, soldiers, and her companion, a powerful but undirected wizard. They seek Sharina, heir to Count Niard, who is living as the daughter of an innkeeper. She and her half-brother Garric, a descendant of King Carus, fight to take their rightful royal place with Tenocritis's help. This rueful sword-and-sorcery fantasy is recommended for larger collections. [Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 4/15/97.]

Vance, the 14th writer to be honored as Grand Master (1997) by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, first published The Face and The Book of Dreams in 1979 and 1981, respectively. This reprint of the final two novels of the popular five-volume Demon Princes series is annotated to bring readers up-to-date with the plots of the previous novels. Kirith Gersen hunts down the fourth and fifth demon princes who, cloaked as humans, murdered his family and destroyed his home planet. These stories of retaliation and revenge, some of Vance's best, belong in most sf collections that don't already own the original releases.

In 3131, most of the galaxy is populated by born-again Christians and ruled by the Catholic pope. Nonbelievers are persecuted and forced to accept the crucifix parasite, which allows people to be resurrected. The biggest threat to the establishment is Aenea, a young female architectural apprentice who teaches peace and the way to immense knowledge of the heart and mind. Helped by her lover, Ruul Endymion, Aenea exposes organized religion as a parasite of the Core—the sentient evolution of the World Wide Web. Concluding his Hyperion saga (Hyperion, Doubleday, 1989; The Fall of Hyperion, LJ 3/15/90; Endymion, Bantam, 1996), Simmons cleverly embeds historical references to Christ, Buddha, and Joan of Arc in this allegorical tale about the female messiah of the future. Highly recommended for all sf collections.

Last seen in Exile's Song (LJ 6/15/96), Margaret Alton returns to Darkover to learn to control her newly discovered combined powers, including the shadow matrix on her hand. Bradley again provides a rich anthropological study of complex relationships among individuals, ruling families, and the right of succession. Highly recommended for fantasy collections where the series is popular.

The author of Expiration Date (LJ 12/95) uses the image of ghosts inhabiting people's bodies as a metaphor for multiple personality disorders. In the winter of 1995, a ghost possessing the body of Janis Plume killed Scott Crane, the King of the West, upon whom the land depends for balance and fertility. Janis, aided by winter Sid "Squeak" Cochrane, must find teenage Koot Hoonie Parnagas in Long Beach, California, who may either help her resurrect the dead king or become the next one. Influenced by sf master Philip K. Dick, Powers taps into Dick's surrealistic style to great success here. Recommended for larger fantasy collections.

Still grieving for The Dooms' lead singer after more than 25 years, the author, who claims to have married Jim Morrison in an occult ceremony, fashion her latest Keltiad book (The Oak Above the King, LJ 4/15/94) as homage to their love. The Keltia's last king has died and the alien Firvolgi, taking advantage of the void, have moved in to take over the land and monopolize space travel. When the foundling Adhmun Cahanagh grows up to become Blackmantle, High Queen of the Kelts, she drives the Firvolgi off Keltia with the help of her lover, the gifted bard Morrige Duglas whom she has rescued from the dead. Kenneally-Morrison wisely includes a glossary of terms and names to help readers decipher the Celtic words she liberally uses, but her glorifying tribute to Morrison is a jarring intrusion on her series. Larger collections should buy on demand.

In this historical fantasy about the little-known Viking king Hading, Anderson (The Fleet of Stars, LJ 2/97) stashes out exciting Norse literature to create an epic tale of a young man raised in secret by giants after his parents are killed. The heir to the Danish throne grows up and gathers armies to support his effort to reclaim his kingdom. While some of the narrative threads lack historical treatments, the vivid characterizations and action sequences makes this a good choice for larger fantasy collections.
Stuart, Dabney. The Way to Cobbs Creek. Univ. of Missouri. Nov. 1997. c.176p. ISBN 0-8262-1142-7. pap. $16.95. $r Stuart's collection of short stories is anchored by and related to a novella of the same title, in which protagonist Mark Runson explores the complex interrelationships between the people in his world. In the three subsequent stories, the focus is turned on those who people the fringes of Mark's story and whose own stories cleverly mirror events from Mark's narrative. That Stuart is first and foremost a poet (see, for instance, Long Gone, Louisiana State Univ., 1996) is evident in the lyrical prose and evocative images that glean throughout his writing. The central characters in the three shorter stories are compelling, and their tales are rich vignettes of life. However, in trying to explore so many of the complexities of Mark's life, Stuart waivers and seems to lose his focus, leaving his title novella a less compelling whole than the sum of its parts. Recommended where demand warrants purchase.—Caroline M. Hallswoth, Cambrian Coll., Sudbury, Ont.

Troutt, David Dante. The Monkey Suit and Other Short Fiction on African Americans and Justice. New Pr., dist. by Norton. Feb. 1998. c.320p. ISBN 1-56584-326-6. $24. $r In this unique collection, which reveals African American history as a relentless struggle for civil rights, Troutt (law, Rutgers Univ.) fictionalizes ten legal cases, including Powell v. Alabama (1932), the principal Scottsboro Boys case; Buchanan v. Warley (1917), the first challenge to the constitutionality of segregation; and Mapp v. Ohio (1961), in which warrantless searches were deemed unconstitutional. Most of these finely crafted short stories read well, though the opening piece, "Glow in the Dark," does not; it is told in dialect, which weights it down. Other stories transform the legal cases while assuming an individual vitality that bodes well for reading. Recommended for public libraries and for all African American studies collections.—Frederick H. Thomas, Essex Community Coll., Baltimore

Zelazny, Roger & Jane Lindskold. Donnerjack. Avon. 1997. c.512p. ISBN 0-380-97326-X. $24. $sf Zelazny died in 1995 after beginning this next-to-last hard sf collaboration with Lindskold. They have created a dazzling, 22nd-century future in which the real world, Verite, coexists with a computer-generated realm, Virtu. While citizens of Verite can visit the virtual world, denizens of Virtu cannot exist in Verite until John D'Arcy Donnerjack makes a deal with Death to save his beloved Virtu, Ayradys. She is the first to cross over to Verite in exchange for giving their firstborn son to Death. First Donnerjack and then his son must find a way to cheat Death. In this intricately plotted novel, the authors create believable, densely populated worlds with a richness of characterization and subplots that will leave readers believing in Virtu. Highly recommended for most sf collections.


Haldeman, Joe. Forever Peace. Ace: Berkley. Oct. 1997. c.336p. ISBN 0-441-00406-7. $21.95. $sr Veteran sf writer Haldeman views this novel not as a continuation of but as a follow-up to the problems raised in his highly acclaimed 1975 novel, Forever War. In the Universal Welfare State in 2043, draftees and volunteers link their brains to "soldierboy" war machines that do the actual fighting hundreds of miles away. Black physics professor and linked draftee Julian Class; his white mentor and lover, Dr. Amelia Harding; and her colleague Peter discover that the high-profile Jupiter Project is about to re-create the Big Bang that will destroy the solar system. The original 20 survivors of an experiment to link brains via implanted jacks discover they can turn people into pacifists by linking them for two weeks. Together with Julian and Amelia, the group stays one jump ahead of assassins as they try to stop the project and pacify key figures. At once a hard science, military, and political thriller, this book presents a thoughtful and hopeful solution to ending war in the 21st century. Essential for sf collections.


Miller, Walter M. Saint Leibowitz and the Wild Horse Woman. Bantam. Nov. 1997. c.448p. ISBN 0-553-10704-6. $23.95. $sr The long-awaited sequel to the classic A Canticle for Leibowitz (1959) was completed by Terry Bisson (Pirates of the Universe, LJ 3/15/96) from instructions left by Miller before his death in 1996. After World War III, America is divided into territories (Plains, Texark, Oregon, and others) struggling to reindustrialize. In this fragmented society, the papacy plays an important role in uniting the factions. In Texark, Ninny Blacktooth regrets the vows he took to be a monk. While trying to get out of monastery life, he becomes embroiled in the search for a new pope. Unfortunately, despite its humor and social commentary, this book is a bit of a disappointment; the plot drags and seems pointless, and there is very little of the vision that made the original so compelling. For larger sf collections and where the original book is popular. [Previewed in Pulp Alert. LJ 7/97.]

FICTION

Star Wars: Tales from the Empire.

Zahn, Timothy.
Star Wars: Specter of the Past.
Spectra: Bantam. (Hand of Thrawn, Bk. 1). Dec. 1997. c.352p. ISBN 0-553-09542-0. $23.95. $f In the first of two new novels, Zahn (Heir to the Empire, Bantam, 1991) turns in his usual high-caliber performance in the ongoing Star Wars space-opera saga. A few remaining Imperial officials seek to negotiate a peace with the New Republic, but calls for vengeance against the Bosthans for their compliance in destroying the Caamas planet and pirate raids on supply ships threaten to tear apart the New Republic government, with Leia, Han, and Luke trying to maintain the peace. The second novel, Vision of the Future, will be published in 1998. For sf collections with the series.

Lackey, Mercedes & Larry Dixon.
Owlflight.
DAW, dist. by NAL. Oct. 1997. c.304p. ISBN 0-88677-754-2. $21.95. FANTASY Following the events in Storm Breaking (LJ 10/15/96) but without continuing that novel’s characters, the stand-alone Owlflight is the latest in Lackey and Dixon’s “Valdemar” series. After mage-storms wreak havoc with the laws of magic, his parents disappear, and barbarians sack and burn his village, young Darian retreats into the forest. There he encounters a magical race and discovers his own special powers with birds. This engrossing tale of discovery is recommended especially for libraries that collect the “Valdemar” fantasy series.

Norton, Andre & Sherwood Smith.
A Mind for Trade.
Tor. Oct. 1997. c.256p. ISBN 0-312-5920-1. $21.95. $f Following Derelict for Trade (LJ 12/96), Grand Master Nebula award winner Norton teams up again with Smith (coauthors of a hard sf series with Dave Trowbridge) to continue her venerated “Solar Queen” series. Their new space opera mixes psychology with adventure. Four crew members inexplicably develop a not-necessarily welcome psi (telepathic) link among themselves. As they attempt to mine a planet with hostile weather and floating creatures that appear to kill on contact, they find their psi abilities necessary to save their lives. The novel is short on character development while long on perilous situations and scientific detail. Buy where series demand is high.

O’Leary, Patrick.
The Gift.
Tor. Oct. 1997. c.288p. ISBN 0-312-86402-7. $22.95. FANTASY O’Leary made a widely praised sf debut with his first novel, Door Number Three (LJ 9/15/95). Here he weaves a magical tale about the Usher of the Night, a deaf boy king, and Tim, the woodcutter’s son, who becomes the Wind Tamer. In a land where most magic has been forgotten, only one Mother Death can vanquish the Usher of the Night, with help from the Wind Tamer. O’Leary cleverly embeds tales within tales as he layers and interseces his story lines. For larger fantasy collections.

Chapman, Vera.
The Notorious Abbess.

Draulans, Dirk.
The Red Queen.
Thomas Dunne Bk: St. Martin’s. Nov. 1997. c.224p. tr. by Sam Garret. ISBN 0-312-15636-7. $20.95. $f As translated from the original 1994 Dutch publication, Draulans’s hard sf novel explores a future world in which one woman, Diana, genetically engineers a modified smallpox virus that kills men. One fertile, immune man survives to become the only hope of preventing total annihilation of the species. Loaded with lectures on ecology, genetics, and sex and populated with bland characters, this is not an essential purchase.

Shatner, William. Tek Net.
tures of private detectives Jake Cardigan and his partner, Sid Gomez, as they search for Sid’s missing ex-wife. Although set in the year 2122, this thinly disguised detective story has very little sf. The irate dialog and cookie-cutter characters offer nothing new to enliven this pedestrian series. Buy only on demand. [Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 6/1/97.]

The Year’s Best Fantasy and Horror: Tenth Annual Collection.
Griffin: St. Martin’s. 1997. c.624p. ed. by Ellen Datlow & Terri Windling. ISBN 0-312-15700-2. $29.95; pap. ISBN 0-312-15701-0. $17.95. FANTASY The discriminating editors selected 39 short stories and four poems as the best published in 1996 from genre and mainstream sources. The broad and inclusive coverage runs from traditional fantasy and horror to dark fantasy, magical realism, and surrealism from such well-known authors as Tanith Lee, Michael Bishop, Robert Silverberg, Gabriel García Marquez, Patricia A. McKillip, and Jane Yolen, among others. The editors’ consistently good choices makes this an excellent purchase for all fantasy and horror collections.

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LIBRARY JOURNAL/OCTOBER 15, 1997
FICTION

Middenhall is a hideous English mansion, owned by the Midden family, and a wide and wild collection of Middens live on the property. Their idyllic country life is shattered with the appearance of Tabitha Bright, who mysteriously appears, stark naked, under the bed of Marjorie Midden’s handyman. Add to this mix a corrupt and not too bright chief constable who cooks up a sex scandal allegedly taking place at Middenhall to deflect publicity from his own nefarious deeds. The plot is akin to a Shakespeare comedy of errors, albeit a very dark comedy, with unlikely twists and turns on every page and sex and violence running rampant. The “happy ending” is all but obscured by the dead bodies, the sexual abuse, and the smoldering ruins of Middenhall. Shakespeare it is not. Monty Python fans will be amused. For larger collections—Joanna M. Burkhardt, Univ. of Rhode Island Coll. of Continuing Education Lib., Providence

Unlike his previous book (Flyy Girl, LJ 9/1/96), which was basically a YA novel, this is for adults and, ironically, less vulgar. Narrator Bobby Dallas begins the story as he is graduating from Howard University in Washington, D.C., and seeking a career in radio. Like Flyy Girl, this book has its problems, starting with the repetitious plot line: Bobby meets girl. Bobby gets job. Bobby loses girl. Bobby gets job. Bobby is confused. By midbook, the emotional chaos of the main character becomes annoying. The author has done an impressive amount of research into the world of radio and gives an honest if tiring interpretation of a black man struggling to do right, while getting it all wrong. By the penultimate chapter, it appears that Bobby Dallas, now successful in radio at the age of 31, will never win a woman who loves him. But then Faye Butler, the love of his life who started out with him at Howard in the first chapter, returns to him in a happily-ever-after sort of ending. Fans of Terry McMillan or E. Lynn Harris may enjoy this. Because the author shows promise and offers a rare view of the true-to-life emotions of black males, this is recommended for larger public library collections.—Shirley Gibson Coleman, Ann Arbor Dist. Lib., Mich.

Meet Saada Rayyis. She is lying in a hospital bed, awaiting an operation and summing up her past. She ponders her strained relationship with her mother, wonders about her sister, and remembers old boyfriends. Mostly, she thinks about her identity: of being a Christian of Arabic blood who grew up in Palestine. Keenly aware that her Arabic heritage gives her strength, she becomes a teacher of Arabic literature and language. Like Yared herself, the author of 15 other books, Saada is a professor in Beirut, and much of this novel takes the form of her internal questions, severely dampening the narrative tension. In addition, there are few descriptions of cities, landscapes, or historical events, which makes this book a universal fable of being true to oneself but disappoints the reader looking for a more evocative depiction of life in the Middle East. Recommended only for large public library Arabic literature collections.—Yvette Weller Olson, City Univ. Lib., Seattle

Short Stories

This compelling collection of short fiction explores the lives of people who are haunted by personal anguish and terrible loneliness. Most of the main characters in these stories are financially stable but are nonetheless emotionally impoverished and so desperate for meaningful human interaction that many seek comfort from strangers, often with predictably unfortunate results. For example, in the poignant title story, Martin is a solitary and unhappy young man who receives $30,000 from a trust fund established for him by his grandmother. Martin’s ambitions are modest—“to be near a friendly group of people”—he is unable to realize them, and the story ends when the prostitute he has tried to befriend robs him. This strong collection (Burgin’s third following Private Fane, Univ. of Illinois, 1991) is recommended for libraries with large modern fiction collections.—Patrick Sullivan, Manchester Community Technical Coll., Ct.

Bringing experience in film production to her writing, Chin provides a unique perspective to her offering of five original short stories and alternating pieces of poetic prose. The intergenerational Chinese American characters are seen with the descriptive detail of a camera. Of particular note are “Bellevue,” in which a young woman describes the plight of her father on the day he “disappeared into the great loop of the Washington D.C. Beltway,” and the title piece in which a troubled young woman searching for solace finds herself retreating to her parents’ home. The majority of this work assumes a Cantonese-Chinese flavor, drawn out by the mattering of references to Chinatown found throughout the text. Although Chin’s work is promising, it is not for general readers. Best suited for academic or large public libraries with Asian literature collections.—Shirley N. Quan, Orange Cty. P.L., Fountain Valley, Calif.

SF & FANTASY

By Susan Hamburger, Pennsylvania State University Library, University Park

Following his Quicker than the Eye (Avon, 1996), Bradbury, author of such sf classics as Fahrenheit 451 (1953), returns in top form with another new collection of 21 short stories, only four of which were previously published. In “Fee Fie Foe Fum,” Grandma fears her grandson-in-law’s intentions for her with his new garbage disposal unit. In “Someone in the Rain,” a man’s adult experiences at a summer resort don’t live up to his childhood memories. Bradbury explores a tarnished circus, one of his favorite themes, in “That Old Dog Lying in the Dust.” He paints vivid word pictures of people and small towns in a kind of skewed Norman Rockwell way that moves beyond sf categorization. A must for all fiction collections.

Baker’s witty debu novel is a pip. Full of exquisite descriptions of 16th-century England and the Spanish Inquisition (Baker was an actor and director at the Living History Centre and has taught Elizabethan English as a second language), this is a bittersweet tale of a young woman’s first love. The initial assignment for 18-year-old Mendoza, transformed into an immortal cyborg by the 24th-century Company, is to retrieve from Renaissance England an endangered plant that cures cancer. Posing as a Spanish lady accompanying her doctor father, she falls in love with the mortal Nicholas Harpole, secretary to the owner of Iden Hall and its exotic gardens. Amidst the raging Catholic-Protestant overtures revolving around the English throne and the fervent religious bloodlust of common folk, Mendoza is torn between her task and her love. Baker’s story comments powerfully on religious hypocrisy and xenophobia. Highly recommended for most collections. [Prepared in Prepub Alert, LJ 10/1/97]
Asaro, Catherine. *The Last Hawk.*

In 2258 A.D., Kelric, a fighter pilot, crashes on Coba, an off-limits planet. He discovers a thriving civilization headed by women managers of 12 estates who want to keep their world hidden and free of domination by the Skolian empire. Choosing to spare his life, they detain Kelric as both honor-bound captive and prisoner for 20 years. As he is traded or sold to different estates, his knowledge of the physics-based quis dice game that governs Coba increases his value and power. Set in the same universe as *Primary Inversion* (LJ 2/15/95) and *Catch the Lightning* (LJ 11/1/95), this intriguing novel combines hard speculative science (Asaro is a physicist) with romantic relationships and other two threads in the Skolian empire saga, it can stand alone. Recommended for larger sf collections.


In this worthy sequel to *Resurrection Man* (LJ 6/15/95), magic, gradually seeping into the world since World War II, has replaced warfare in 2074 A.D. When the Chinatown section of Vancouver is besieged by powerful, malevolent magic forces, the residents seek assistance from the Southsiders of Edmonton. Canadian writer Stewart's tight, vivid prose blurs the boundaries between fantasy and science fiction. Recommended for larger sf and fantasy collections.

*The Mammoth Book of Best New Horror.*

Jones, who also edited *The Mammoth Book of Dracula* (Carroll & Graf, 1997), has selected what he considers the 24 best horror stories of 1996 from a cast of international authors, mostly British, including Poppy Z. Brite, Ramsey Campbell, Graham Masterton, and Cherry Wilder. Instead of emphasizing shock or gore, most of the tales are written in a quiet Bradburyesque style. In *Donald R. Boulton's "360,"* a woman returning to her old neighborhood plays a dangerous game of hopscotch in a dark alley. Jones's introductory overview covers the year's horror scene: novels, anthologies, mainstream and small presses, magazines, reference books, films, television, and conventions. For larger horror and short story collections.


Kerr returns to her historical fantasy series about Devery and the Westlands (*Days of Blood and Fire, LJ 6/15/93; Days of Air and Darkness, LJ 6/15/94*). Lilloriga, a young girl with magical powers to foretell the future, is forced to use them to her scheming mother's advantage. Secretly taught to control these powers for herself, Lilloriga must balance competing needs in this tale of Celtic palace politics and murder. While Kerr's thorough knowledge of Celtic lore shines throughout the novel, a reader new to the series should read the preceding books to understand references to earlier events. For collections where the series is popular.

Moorecock, Michael. *The War Amongst the Angels.*

This is the final volume of Moorecock's triology (Blood, Morrow, 1995; Fabulous Harbors, LJ 2/15/97) about Rose von Bek and her friends Col. Samuel Oakenhurst, Colinda Dovero, and Jack Karaquorzian, who can all transport themselves from our mundane reality into the Second Ether. Rose recounts her life and loves including her involvement in the War in Heaven. Moorecock blends reality and fantasy with myriad references to the real and imagined. Recommended for collections owning the other titles.

Stasheff, Christopher. *My Son the Wizard.*

Stasheff (The Secular Wizard, Ballantine, 1995) continues the adventures of the wizard Sir Michael (Matt Mantrell), a doctoral student transported via an ancient poetical chant to the Middle Ages country of Merovence. Matt moves his parents from their decaying New Jersey neighborhood to Merovence where, with magical rhymes, they help him and his wife, Queen Alisande, fight off invading Moors and goblins. Stasheff creates wonderful portraits of educated people, unappreciated at home but invaluable elsewhere. While there are scattered references to acclimate readers new to the series, a full understanding of the plot is best gained from reading the earlier books. For libraries with the series.

Stasheff, Christopher. *A Wizard in Chaos.*

In this new entry in "The Rogue Wizard" series (A Wizard in Peace, LJ 9/15/95), Gar Pike and his companion Dirk DuLaine land their spaceship on a planet colonized by people from Earth who, as a result of a rejecting government, devolved into a medieval society at war. Gar and Dirk seek a solution to the present warfare. The mixture of fantasy and sf blends well with Stasheff's dry wit and commentary on societal evolution. For libraries that own the series.

Watt-Evans, Lawrence. *Touched by the Gods.*

A new epic fantasy from the author of Out of This World (Ballantine, 1994). After being mercilessly teased his whole life for being selected before his birth as the gods' Champion of the Domdur Empire, Malfeld, a blacksmith's son, just wants an ordinary snifty's life. When a dark magician gathers evil forces to destroy the empire, Malfeld must decide if he will attempt to meet his people's expectations of him as their chosen defender. Watt-Evans gracefully presents the tale of a man's denial of his true calling. Recommended for large fantasy collections.

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**Time Machines: The Best Time Travel Stories Ever Written.**

An interesting collection of time travel short fiction from varied perspectives on hard science to no science at all. The 22 selected short stories were published between 1850 and 1997 and represent both classic writers like Edgar Allan Poe, Rudyard Kipling, Isaac Asimov, John W. Campbell Jr., Rod Serling, and Roy Burbury and contemporary authors like Connie Willis, Harry Turtledove, Jack McDevitt, and Robert Sawyer, among others. Recommended for larger sf collections.

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**Goonan, Kathleen Ann. Mississippi Blues.**

Goonan (The Bones of Time, LJ 3/15/96) follows up her acclaimed first novel *Queen City Jazz* (LJ 11/15/94), which showed how nanotechnology changed the world, with this excellent sequel. Verity travels down the river from Cincinnati to New Orleans experiencing postnanotechnological America. Full of vibrant descriptions and musical analogies, this novel offers an experimental view of the future, albeit a strange one. For most sf collections.

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**Watt-Evans, Lawrence.**

A new epic fantasy from the author of Out of This World (Ballantine, 1994). After being mercilessly teased his whole life for being selected before his birth as the gods' Champion of the Domdur Empire, Malfeld, a blacksmith's son, just wants an ordinary snifty's life. When a dark magician gathers evil forces to destroy the empire, Malfeld must decide if he will attempt to meet his people's expectations of him as their chosen defender. Watt-Evans gracefully presents the tale of a man's denial of his true calling. Recommended for large fantasy collections.
Best Genre Fiction of 1997

Last year, LJ instituted a new feature: a roundup of the best genre fiction of the year. After all, what books are more popular in libraries—and what books get higher shif in the standard review sources? The feature produced such a success that we are repeating it again this year. Once more, Mystery columnist Rex Klett, former SF columnist Susan Hamburger, and romance columnist Kristin Ramsdell pick the year’s best reading in their respective areas.

Mystery

Gash, Jonathan. Different Women Dancing. Viking. ISBN 0-670-87369-1. $21.95. Taking a break from his popular Lovejoy series but writing with his accustomed panache, Gash introduces Dr. Clare Bentonall and Bonn, a male escort, as they investigate a suspicious traffic fatality. (LJ 6/1/97)

James, P.D. A Certain Justice. Knopf. ISBN 0-375-40091-1. $25. What is justice? At the top of her form, James examines the question in this brilliantly plotted novel, which revolves around the brutal murder of a London barrister. (LJ 11/15/97)


Science Fiction


In this new collection of 21 short stories, the master of sf and quiet horror paints vivid word pictures of people and small towns. (LJ 11/15/97)


Sawyer, Nebula Award winner, has written a gripping medical sf thriller about identifying and illegally sampling DNA. (LJ 5/15/97)

Romance
Dodd, Christina. A Well Pleasured Lady. Avon. ISBN 0-380-79089-0. pap. $5.99. This bawdy, vivid, highly sensual Georgian features a resourceful heroine with a secret, a vengeful hero, and a remarkably dysfunctional family in a rather dark plot. (LJ 8/15/97)


Combining Native American folklore with the grim realities of inner-city street life, Eagle compellingly writes about three disillusioned people who join forces to make things better and discover strength, love, and redemption in the process. (LJ 5/15/97)


An incorrigible prince and an intelligent, independent heroine find unexpected love in this impressively researched, intricately plotted story notable for its appealing characters, exceptional use of language, and exquisite handling of sexual tension. (LJ 11/15/97)


Brainy physicist Jane Darlington’s plan to have a baby nets her not only a baby but a very angry football star—and a “down home” family she never expected to have. Heartwarming, funny, and memorable. (LJ 2/15/97)


Putney works her unique brand of literary magic on a doomed hero, a compassionate heroine, and a seemingly impossible situation in this emotionally wrenching novel. (LJ 9/15/97)

page-turner traces the 350-year-old quest to solve a postulate known as Fermat’s Last Theorem. It is a tale of obsession, duels, cross-dressing, suicide, near-defeat, and ultimate victory. Who knew mathematics could be so exciting? (LJ 10/15/97)


Swafford here does for the mighty Brahms what he did last year for Charles Ives in another LJ Best Book: he combines formidable prose and a gracious writing style to illuminate both the composer and the man, so vivifying him that the pages practically hum with his grandiloquent music. (LJ 9/15/97)


Tannenhaus convincingly shows how a gifted young man who wanted to be “the new age’s prophet” became instead its “scourge”; a penitent ex-Communist who wrote for Time became a bellicose servant of the opposition and testified for the government against Alger Hiss. Tannenhaus humanizes his fascinatingly flawed subject without admiration or ideology. (LJ 2/1/97)


Both a New York Times music critic and a friend of the composer, Tommasini is eminently qualified to bring forth this first full biography of America’s most underrecognized 20th-century musical creator. The author is thorough in relating the best and worst Thomson had to offer, but the prose flows smoothly and teems with gossip anecdotes about life in the Midwest after the turn of the century, Paris in the Twenties and Thirties, and New York City in the decades after the War. (LJ 9/15/97)

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