

characters be an AI coming into self-awareness after arriving in a distant star system. The plot posits that the AI was launched in 2032, an event I consider unlikely in the extreme given the current moribund state of our space program. Although QUEEN OF ANGELS has many interesting ideas, I enjoyed Brin's rock-um sock-um EARTH

THE MT VOID

Page 2

(which also had many interesting ideas) far more. Still, both Brin and Bear deserve special attention for daring to write that most difficult of SF novels -- one that takes place about 50 years in the future. Recommended. Has a better shot at the Nebula than the Hugo due to large amounts of stylistic experimentation, stream-of-consciousness writing, and detailed characterization."

2. Well, the time has come for the changing of the guard. The Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society has three libraries and three librarians. With only three librarians you would not expect to have two leaving at the same time and two new librarians coming in. But we do. So this is probably a good time to express our appreciation for the two librarians who are leaving and our even greater appreciation to the one librarian who is staying. (Hey, look--let's be reasonable. If we only show appreciation for leaving librarians, more librarians will leave. Right?) So our greatest appreciation has to be expressed to Mr. Lance Larsen. Many of you in Lincroft already know Lance by sight if not by name. He is the gentleman whose head is a long way from the floor but whose hair is not.

Leaving we have Tim Schroeder. Now what can we say about Tim? He is one of those people who takes things easy and is preternaturally natural. I never realized how unaffected he was until the night he was at my house when he took a drink of soda in a glass. Much later in the evening he was still fiddling with the now dry glass. Apparently out of absentmindedness I found him sticking a stockinged foot into the glass. Now that is a world-class level of lacking affectation, I can tell you. After that I was always careful to be sure to be a good host and always keep his glass full. I think we all want to wish Tim good luck and prosperity. (He's not leaving AT&T, but has moved into an office that has no extra room for the library.) I would award him the glass that he stuck his hoof in, but we got rid of it long ago. Tim will be

replaced by Rebecca Schoenfeld in HO 2K-430.

Last but not least--unless you count by pounds--we want to thank Evelyn Leeper, the former Middletown librarian and accomplished kvetch. The Middletown library has left her office and is currently in my office. I am sure we will all want to wish Evelyn health, happiness, and prosperity. And of those three the one we hope most for her is prosperity. I mean, I'd like to see her with the Mercedes-and-a-Porsche-in-the-garage sort of prosperity. We'd like to see her living a life of luxury in a big house with her husband and servants and faithful dogs. We want to see her with a fantastic video room with thousands of movies on cassette. And window treatments on the living room windows.

If this is the sort of thing you want to see Evelyn have, just send me the money and I'll see her family gets it. (Oh, incidentally, the library and I are in MT 3D-441.)

Mark Leeper
MT 3D-441 957-5619
...mtgzy!leeper

ONLY BEGOTTEN DAUGHTER by James Morrow
Ace, 1991 (1990c), ISBN 0-441-63041-3, \$4.50.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
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God is alive and well and living in New Jersey (Brigantine Point, to be precise). If that seems unlikely, it's because you haven't read James Morrow's O_n_l_y_B_e_g_o_t_t_e_n_D_a_u_g_h_t_e_r.

If one takes as a premise that God had a son two thousand years ago (and I've accepted far more outre' ideas for the sake of a story), then Morrow's extrapolation makes sense. Last time a male was born to a female without male assistance. But God is an equal opportunity employer, and so this time a female is born to a male with female assistance. (Well, science helps.) The last one was Jesus Christ; this one is Julie Katz. The last was wonderful (according to the official version); this one is a regular hell-raiser (so to speak).

A modern-day (literal) daughter of God is likely to face some problems growing up, and Julie is no exception. Her life is complicated

by the growing tide of Christian fundamentalism. In a skillful parody of the story of Herod's Massacre of the Innocents, Morrow has the fundamentalists first appear when they blow up a sperm bank and research center and almost destroy Julie, who is saved only because her father fled with her, or rather with the jar with her embryo, shortly before the attack. His use of a Saab instead of a donkey as the getaway vehicle is merely another nod to the 20th Century.

Julie grows up, is tempted by the Devil, meets up with her brother (half-brother?), and through it all seeks for her mother. (Well, everyone makes God in his or her own image, right?) Her life parallels that of the last of God's offspring, but with a modern twist. Julie sees things more from a 58th Century perspective than from a 38th Century one, more from an American than an Aramaic. Through it all, Morrow centers on the human aspects of religion. He shows us the potential for good and the potential for evil present in any major religious movement. In this, Morrow continues a theme he has used in previous works, notably his "Bible Stories for Adults."

In one way, O_n_l_y_B_e_g_o_t_t_e_n_D_a_u_g_h_t_e_r is similar to Nikos Kazantzakis's L_a_s_t_T_e_m_p_t_a_t_i_o_n_o_f_C_h_r_i_s_t: it allows the child of God to be very human. Now, my feeling is that if the claim is that 2000 years ago God's son became human to share in human suffering, then it is not unreasonable to give him human faults, frailties, and feelings. If he has no human feelings, then he is not really human. Morrow seems to agree with this, and Julie is definitely human. This sounds as if it could be heavy-handed and preachy (certainly the film version of T_h_e_L_a_s_t_t_e_m_p_t_a_t_i_o_n_o_f_C_h_r_i_s_t was), but Morrow displays a much subtler touch than he has in some of his previous works (notably T_h_i_s_I_s_t_h_e_W_a_y_t_h_e

Only Begotten Daughter August 15, 1991

Page 2

W_o_r_l_d_E_n_d_s) and the result is thought-provoking rather than authoritarian.

O_n_l_y_B_e_g_o_t_t_e_n_D_a_u_g_h_t_e_r will not appeal to people who either reject religion outright (though as I said, more far-fetched premises have been accepted in science fiction and fantasy--look at all the gods and goddesses in T_h_e_I_l_i_a_d, and people still read that) or who take their religion so seriously that they allow for no leeway in its examination. (A third set, of course, may be those who are unfamiliar with the story Morrow is paralleling. In our ever-diversifying United States, this is

becoming a readership to be reckoned with.) But for the reader who wants to take a new look at an old legend, I highly recommend O_n_l_y_B_e_g_o_t_t_e_n_D_a_u_g_h_t_e_r. The fact that writing science fiction about religion limits one's audience in the ways I described means that not many people are doing it, more's the pity, and among those brave souls, Morrow is one of the best.

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TALKING MAN by Terry Bisson
Avon, 1987 (1986c), ISBN 0-380-75141-0, \$2.95.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
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This review may be futile: the book in question is four years old and, while not out of print, not extremely easy to find either. But it's a good book, a fun book, and maybe you'll run across it someday. Who knows? Now that Bisson has won a Nebula and may win a Hugo (for "Bears Discover Fire"), they may even reprint it.

T_a_l_k_i_n_g_M_a_n starts out in Kentucky, as many of Bisson's works do. Bisson is one of the new authors who have discovered that the rural South makes an excellent setting for fantasy. If the plot of T_a_l_k_i_n_g_M_a_n is a little too much like the plots of other fantasies full of wizards and spells of un-being and all that folderol, Bisson makes up for it in the setting. And his setting keeps changing. As the spells begin to work, things change. The Mississippi becomes wider, flows through a deep canyon, flows north. Bisson's characters deal with all this change using their ingenuity, but there is also a fair amount of luck (meaning convenient auctorial intervention).

The cover, by the way, is reminiscent of the cover of Jack Womack's T_e_r_r_a_p_l_a_n_e! Womack is the "other" Kentucky science fiction writer. It makes one wonder if everyone in Kentucky drives an old maroon car with white sidewalls and funny white lights around it.

RED GENESIS by S. C. Sykes
Bantam Spectra, 1991, ISBN 0-553-28874-1, \$4.99.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
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R_e_d_G_e_n_e_s_i_s is the first of a new series from Bantam Spectra. My comments on this series in general are at the end of this review, but first I will discuss R_e_d_G_e_n_e_s_i_s.

R_e_d_G_e_n_e_s_i_s has been described as being Heinleinesque, and not without reason. Sykes gives us a powerful business tycoon as our strong main character. Convicted of killing millions through a series of accidents involving toxic waste, Graham Kuan Sinclair is exiled to the Martian colonies--forever. Forbidden any contact with Earth, any news of Earth, even a watch showing Earth time, he must make his way, without money or inherited power or influence. (Yes, the parallel to Edward Everett Hale's "Man Without a Country" is obvious--Sykes quotes Hale at the beginning of the novel.) Since there's never any doubt Sinclair will survive--at least not to my mind--the only question is whether he will remake the new world to his liking and control it the way he did Earth, or learn a new humanity and social conscience. With the spate of "powerful man suffers serious misfortune and finds sensitive inner self" movies this year (R_e_g_a_r_d_i_n_g_H_e_n_r_y, T_h_e_D_o_c_t_o_r, D_o_c_H_o_l_l_y_w_o_o_d), this

plot

may look old, but I'm sure R_e_d_G_e_n_e_s_i_s was written before any of the films were made and merely reflects a social trend. But even with the handicap of familiarity, Sykes manages to balance the libertarian with the socialist to achieve an ending that doesn't hand the reader a canned party line in either direction. If some of the plot elements are unlikely, obvious, or both--well, I'm willing to forgive them for the sake of a good story with good characters, which this is.

Asimov's introduction about Mars reads like all his science essays over the past twenty-five years and Eugene Mallove's closing essay on Mars says nothing new. Their inclusion makes the book look as if it were aimed at a school audience ("Learn science through science fiction!") and needed some educational material. But anyone who needs the material probably won't find the story interesting, because the story assumes the reader knows something about Mars. (Not to mention that a package with such pretensions to education should not include the canard about the Great Wall of China being the only man-made object visible with the unaided human eye from the moon. To distinguish an object twenty feet wide from 240,000 miles would require the eye to have a resolution of 0.001 s_e_c_o_n_d of arc--physically impossible given the dimensions and placement of the retina's rods and cones. And if it could detect an object twenty feet wide and thousands of miles long, it could also detect I-80, which is considerably wider.) It's a cute packaging trick, but the novel is strong enough to stand on its own.

R_e_d_G_e_n_e_s_i_s is a very promising first novel for Sykes and an auspicious start for "The Next Wave."

Bantam Spectra's "Special Editions" series seems to have fallen by the wayside (or been replaced by their "Signature Editions," reprints of books they feel did not get enough attention the first time around). This new series is "The Next Wave," which Bantam describes as a "dramatic new series of books at the cutting edge where science meets science fiction." Packaged by Byron Preiss Visual Publications, each book has an introduction by Isaac Asimov and a scientific essay relating to the novel's subject matter, as well as a novel by a (relatively) new author. I suspect the latter is true in part because the entire work is copyrighted by Byron Preiss Visual Publications rather than by the author, the essayist, and the cover artist. (Asimov retains the copyright on his introductions--but then, he's Asimov.) This bothers me in part because this means the cover artist is uncredited inside (though there is the signature "Jensen" on the cover art itself, strangely enough with a copyright symbol, so who knows who _ d _ o _ e _ s own the copyright?), and in part because having the novel's copyright assigned to Byron Preiss Visual Publications implies that any financial benefit goes there as well. I could be wrong, and Sykes is entitled to make whatever deal she wants in any case, but I prefer to be sure the author is benefiting from her or his work.

None of this has anything to do with _ R _ e _ d _ G _ e _ n _ e _ s _ i _ s, of course, which I highly recommend.

THE WILD BLUE AND THE GRAY by William Sanders
Questar, 1991, ISBN 0-446-36142-9, \$4.50.
A book review by Evelyn C. Leeper
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"The Wild Blue" in the title is "the wild blue yonder"; "the Gray" are the airmen of the Confederate States of America. Yes, it's another "What if the South won the Civil War?" alternate history. But this one doesn't take place on the North American continent, but instead on the European battlefields of World War I, or rather, above them. In this universe the Confederate States is helping the Allies (Britain, France, and presumably Russia) fight the Central Powers (Germany and Austro-Hungary). And our main character, Amos Ninekiller, is on loan to the Confederate air force from the Cherokee Flying Corps of the Indian Nations.

The details of how the South won are left somewhat hazy--the British navy came in on their side, but no other real information is given. Sanders instead sticks to telling a good World War I adventure story set in the universe. And a good story it is, with action and danger. Sanders can describe a dogfight or a battle so that you feel as if you're there. Perhaps he's no Humphrey Cobb or Erich Maria Remarque, but he does not gloss over the horrors of war in order to tell his story either.

By using a Cherokee as his main character, Sanders is able to show us everything from an "outsider's" point of view. He even manages to touch briefly on an issue that the United States armed forces in our universe didn't come to terms with until after World War II: racial integration. (Am I reading too much into it to see a parallel with the current furor over the military's continued discrimination against gay and lesbian soldiers? Probably.)

Now, any alternate history fan knows that half the fun of reading an alternate history story is picking nits. And I have some--minor ones to be sure, but this is part of the game. For starters, William Faulkner didn't change his name to Faulkner until 1924, eight years after the story takes place. The character mentioned on page 130 (no fair peeking!) did not get involved in politics until later either. And the inclusion of a madam named Rhetticia O'Hara whose father always said, "Frankly my dear, I don't give a --," can only be described as a serious miscalculation brought on by the author's having read too many Simon Hawke "Time Wars" books.

Sanders also uses some stock alternate history tricks. (This is not a complaint. Every genre has its conventions.) One character muses how if the Union had won then the current war wouldn't be in the mess it was (when of course the reader knows that it did and it was). Sanders also takes a jab at a recent president at the end of chapter 2 by

Wild Blue and the Gray August 16, 1991

Page 2

describing a parallel situation in the alternate world, which led me to fear that every chapter might have a similar punch line. Luckily, they didn't. Consider this a hint to the beginning alternate history reader: check the chapter and scene breaks. Things that happen right before them are frequently meaningful parallelisms; things that happen right after them are usually not. For example, if you have an alternate World War II novel, at the end of a chapter you might get:

After checking in, Frank decided to drop by the mess to meet his shipmates. The only man sitting there was a young man in his twenties. Frank approached him. "Hi, my name's Frank Clark."

The man stuck out his hand. "Please to meet you," he said in a thick Boston accent. "I'm John Kennedy."

while at the beginning of a chapter the same scene would read:

After checking in, Frank decided to drop by the mess to meet his shipmates. The only man sitting there was a young man in his twenties. Frank approached him. "Hi, my name's Frank Clark."

The man stuck out his hand. "Please to meet you," he said in a thick Boston accent. "I'm Bill Jones."

Anyway, to get back to the work at hand, Sanders seems to go with the "tide of history" theory in that World War I in this universe is remarkably similar to World War I in ours, but fans of the "great man" theory will find him sympathetic to their cause as well. While I greatly enjoyed T_h_e_W_i_l_d_B_l_u_e_a_n_d_t_h_e_G_r_a_y, Sanders does leave a couple of loose ends lying around (for possible sequels, no doubt--one is even c_r_e_a_t_e_d toward the end of the book) that I would have preferred to see tied up. Still, the book stands by itself and provides a thumping good read, nothing to be sneezed at today. Highly recommended.