

SIX OF SWORDS by Carole Nelson Douglas. Corgi pb, dist in Aust by Corgi & Bantam Books. (C) $1982.\ 345pp.\ A\$5.95.$ On sale now.

Many modern fantasy novels are quest stories, and tell the adventures of a band of friends, or two persons, who band together for mutual protection. Sometimes the couple are male, or less often, female. The couples are sometimes male and female, but when they are they nearly always first band together for mutual protection. In SIX OF SWORDS the female, Irissa, is left behind when the rest of her people depart into another (apparent) dimension. The reason she is left behind is not made clear to her and at the time she determines to stay in her glade and spend her life there. Just previous to the discovery that she has been left behind she meets up with a wounded swordsman who accompanies her to one of the castles of her people and both witness the departure. The swordsman is determined that she go with him and eventually both set off to find another "gate" so she can follow her people.

Douglas's prose is a little voluminous: "The man laughed, and it was an arresting sound, like fresh water trickling over a rock." Altogether a middle-of-the-road fantasy. *

THE POSTMAN by David Brin. Bantam h/c, dist in Aust by Corgi & Bantam Books. (C) 1985. 294pp. A\$17.95. On sale now.

THE POSTMAN is set after a limited nuclear war. It was limited in that it did not wipe all life off the face of the earth — what it did do was to throw vast amounts of dust into the atmosphere and create a greenhouse effect. After the bombs fell society fell apart and the delivery systems for food, medical supplies etc fell apart, contributing to the numerous deaths.

Fifteen years after the bombs, a man who was earning his way performing short classic plays was robbed. Following the robbers in order to try to get some of his gear back he came across a postal delivery van from just after the war. The dead postman gave up his leather jacket to the traveller, one Gordon Krantz, who also took the leather postal bag and some letters to read along the way. The next place he staved at thought he was actually a representative of a returning civilisation and not wanting to disillusion them (and lose a good meal) he played along. On leaving the village he was given letters to deliver to the neet village he was journeving towards. And there... Ouite a good read: a well thought-out novel.

THE MENTOR 59A

UNICORN VARIATIONS by Roger Zelazny. Sphere pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1983. 252pp. A\$7.95. On sale now.

I have not read many of Zelazny's short stories, and before I read this volume I did not realise he had written so many. There is usually an introduction to each story included here which sheds some light on its previous history and the circumstances in which it was written.

The stories are: UNICORN VARIATION; THE LAST OF THE WILD ONES; RECKTAL; THE NAKED MATADOR; THE PARTS THAT ARE ONLY GLIMPSED: THREE REFLEXES; DISMAL LIGHT; GO STARLESS IN THE NIGHT; BUT NOT THE HERALD; A HAND ACROSS THE GALAXY; THE FORCE THAT THROUGH THE CIRCUIT DRIVES THE CURRENT; HOME IS THE HANGMAN; FIRE AND/OR ICE; EXEUNT OMNES; A VERY GOOD YEAR; MY LADY OF THE DIODES; AND I ONLY AM ESCAPED TO TELL THEE; THE HORSES OF LIR; THE NIGHT HAS 999 EYES; ANGEL, DARK ANGEL; WALPURGISNACHT; THE GEORGE BUSINESS and SOME SCIENCE FICTION PARAMETERS: A BIASED VIEW. The writing styles he uses tends to be different in each story and so each seems fresh to the reader's mind. The stories range from 1964 to 1981 and sources range from Galaxy to Granfaloon.

I quite liked this collection - it showed a side of the author I had not seen before.

ELEPHANT SONG by Barry B. Longyear. Orbit pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1982. 234pp. A\$8.95. On sale now.

This is the first UK publication of the third in the circus world series. The first in sequence was CITY OF BARABOO, then comes ELEPHANT SONG and then CIRCUS WORLD.

ELEPHANT SONG starts off with the destruction of the starship City of Baraboo and tells how the survivors of the crash pulled themselves together without the aid of any outside help and started to set themselves up as a community, but using the background of the circus for social cohesion. They had their ordinary jobs in the community, but they also had their circus roles, which was reflected in their names. When the ship crashed and the shuttles landed, many of the animals died. Indeed some had died previously in the bad air on the mother ship. Some of the animals that survived were the elephants, which were one of the cornerstones of the idea of a 'circus'. The elephants were used to help set up the villages by building the roads joining the shuttle sites. However after thirty years there were only a few elephants left alive. All the elephants on the ship had been female and after the last one died, how would the idea of the circus carry on? What annoyed me was that all through the novel Longyear called the cows 'bulls'.

D.A.R.Y.L. adapted by N.H. Kleinbaum from a screenplay written by David Ambrose, Allan Scott and Jeffrey Ellis. Hodder & Stoughton pb, dist in Aust by Hodder & Stoughton. (C) 1985. 157pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

As can be seen from the above this is a novelisation of a movie. It is obvious from reading that this is so, either that or it was written for twelve year olds. Unfortunately the plot is given away in the blurb before one starts reading.

Said plot starts off with a thrilling chase when the car that Daryl is being driven in is forced off the road and goes over a cliff, killing the driver and destroying the car. It seems that Daryl is a robot boy who has been commissioned by the Pentagon to see how he reacts with the environment so that they can get onto the real aim of the project — to make a soldier that will take orders and be almost indestructible. Daryl manages to keep out of the military's hands until he has some family life with a couple who wanted a child and were willing to foster one before being allowed to adopt one. Daryl manages to keep his robot nature secret (he does not know himself that he is a robot...) and is surprised as anyone when the military take him back. The scientist running the tests is determined that he is now 'human' but his female assistant dobs her boss in.

 ${\tt D.A.R.Y.L.}$ has a simple plot; I imagine the movie will appeal to kids as will the book.

STARSILK by Sydney J. van Scyoc. Penguin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books Aust. (C) 1984. 245pp. A\$6.95. On sale now.

STARSILK is part of yet another trilogy, the previous volumes being DARKCHILD and BLUESONG (reviewed previously in this magazine). Those volumes told of the earthexodis, when earth's peoples adapted to other worlds (or ships, at the case may be) and one such world was where Reyna, who was the daughter of a Barohna, was preparing to go into the surrounding mountains and attempt to kill one of the savage animals there to prove her claim to her mother's throne and bring on the 'maturity' of her body into that of a barohna. Before this happens, she and a young hunter are sent off-world to search for Birnam Rauth, the ancestor of the clones who were now in the family of the barohna.

They arrive on the world of the starsilks, (strange pieces of cloth that have the ability to sing and give messages) along with a member of another human race that had been studying their planet, and find that there was an intelligent race already on the planet. They also found a symbiosis in the life forms living in the deep forest that they believe Rauth disappeared in a hundred years before that almost cost them their lives.

A well thought out conclusion to the trilogy.

THE SAGA OF ERIK THE VIKING, text by Terry Jones, illustrated by Michael Foreman. Puffin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books Aust. (C) 1983. 144pp most in full colour. 20x28 cm. A\$9.95. On sale now.

This volume is a modern day version of an old viking adventure. The whole book is continuous, though each chapter is usually a story in its own right. Eric, the captain of the dragonship Golden Dragon, talks himself and his men into going to the land where the sun goes when it sets. They set out and meet many adventures, some with the Old Man of the Sea, some with monsters, both on land and sea, some with dragons and giant birds in the air, some with talking animals, plants and rocks, and eventually they are forced over the edge of the world when they are caught in the ocean as it plunges over the edge. How they get back to their homes with three things of great value makes good reading.

The book has obviously been written for the young; however an adult will not find that he or she will lose anything in reading it — it is an entertaining experience. What the book actually is is a new fantasy of the like of the Brothers Grimm. The illustrations are of that type that remind me of those in THE WATER BABIES. It helps to keep alive the Sense of Wonder.

Recommended for those both young and old and in-between.

REBEL PLANET by Robin Waterfield, illustrated by Gary Mayes. Puffin pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books Aust Ltd. (C) 1985. A\$4.95. On sale now.

Penguin also issue games books, in this case it is book 18 in the Fighting Fantasy series. I received this book because it is sf rather than fantasy, of which there are volumes too numerous to name.

This is a fairly complicated 'novel'. The Contents Page lists the books contents as: History; MIssion Background; Contact With Aliens; Abilities; Combat; Equipment and Money; Adventure Sheet; and Rebel Planet. It seems, from the Background information, that all went well with human expansion into space until the exploring ships came into contact with the planet Arcadia. The native Arcadians were three species, united when one conquered the others. They were less advanced than the terrans, but quickly built fleets of ships copied from their visitors. They struck swiftly and succeeded in taking all the human planets, including Earth. Time passed and the aliens built a powerful organic computer on their home planet and linked all their minds to it. Humans were not able to.

The human undercover organisation, SAROS, decided that now was the best time to strike and destroy the computer and throw the aliens into chaos. They picked the reader as the best agent likely to succeed and sent him/her out.

Tim loved it.

YOU CAN BE THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT by Harry Harrison. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1985. A\$5.95. On sale now.

You may not have noticed it, but these games books don't have numbered pages, only numbered paragraphs. Anyway, it looks as though the 'professional' sf authors have seen the light and have started writing these 'interactive' books. Harrison is probably the first (the first, at least, that \underline{I} have seen). He has started off well, in fact, using his Stainless Steel Rat's world. The SS Rat introduced the 'new recruit' to his assignment and then, through a mind-reading helmet, acts as the voice of the author in telling the reader what to do and passing on humorous remarks: "Have a drink, I'll join you — what? — you don't drink reconstituted Jovian Lynxbat sweat? What \underline{is} the Corps coming to...?"

The reader, as agent, is given the task of capturing a missing professor and bringing him back safely to headquarters. Naturally there are all the choices one may make, with Harrisons.. whups, Jim's remarks to help him along and help with the Esperanto. Scattered throughout are full page illustrations which not only make the book thicker, are also well executed. Giving this book a quick going through, I would say that Harrison wrote several short novelettes and cut them up into paragraphs and scattered the paragraphs and then put them in haphazardly.

Still, a humorous read.

SETTING GENES TO WORK - THE INDUSTRIAL ERA OF BIOTECHNOLOGY by Stephanie Yanchinski. Pelican pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books Aust. (C) 1985. 149pp. A\$7.95. On sale now.

Both biotechnology and genetic engineering have been in the news for the last couple of years. This volume sets forth to give, in a simplified form, the background, present form and future of both these endeavours.

The Chapter Headings give some indication of how the author goes about this: Introduction; Unravelling the Gene; The Biotechnology Sunrise; Probing for Human Disease; The First Companies; How Safe is Safe?; Pandora's Box. There is a Glossary, Reading List and Index. Yanchinski writes clearly and knowledgeable of the background in the eighteenth century that laid down the groundwork for the explosion of biotechnology. She explains the difference in terms and techniques, from the brewing of yeasts to antibiotics and human serum. I found that the material was very interesting and the author manages to make the material palatable without being too dense or writing down. A very good introduction to biotechnology and genetic engineering. Being written in only 1984, probably as up to date as you can get in a paperback.

THE MIND by Anthony Smith. Pelican pb, dist in Aust by Penguin Books Aust. (C) 1984. 346pp. A\$7.95. On sale now.

This is quite a lengthy book. It took me nearly a week to read it - the time taken not being because of the length in the number of pages, but rather the fact that it is rather more textbook. That is not to say the writing is boring or dense - the author gives the subject matter the correct weighing to enable to reader to read deeply, but not enough to get bogged down.

The Chapter Headings give some idea of the areas covered: EVOLUTION; AUTONOMIC; GROWTH: ANATOMY; THE PHYSIOLOGY; DOMINANCE: ANIMAL ANATOMY: CONSCIOUSNESS; ABILITY; MEMORY; SENSES; ABNORMAL ABILITY; MALFORMATION; DAMAGE; THE OLD BRAIN and POSTSCRIPT. Naturally there are medical terms used throughout - these are defined in the early chapters. One of the interesting things (to me as an sf reader) was one of the definitions of a certain phase of schizophrenia: "It varies greatly in duration and is characterised by.... metaphorical speech, odd or magical thinking (e.g. clairvoyance, telepathy, or 'sixth sense'), and unusual perceptual experience." So now we know where all those Homo Novis are. An excellent book for reference and for 'knowing yourself'. It also gives the odds of you getting some of the more common disorders.

MENACE UNDER MARSWOOD by Sterling E. Lanier. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1983. 255pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

It isn't often that you come across an old-fashioned sf adventure. MENACE UNDER MARSWOOD is one such. The tale is fast and furious with the novel one long adventure. The cover is by Richard Clifton-Dey, and it is obvious that he has read the novel before he did the artwork.

The Marswood of the title is the result of the "terraforming" some two centuries before, of Mars. The Soviets and North Americans had small colonies on Mars and set about introducing a terran ecology in stages, the first stage being setting an iron-converting bacteria loose on the iron-rich terrain. Things were going smoothly till the Mainland Chinese became miffed that they had been left out and sent rocket-loads of obnoxious life forms which proceeded to breed and take over the (now) steamy Martian landscape. Over the years criminals had escaped and created their own society, against which the UN forces only just held their own in their colonising attempts. The story begins at a UN post when an ore convoy is wiped out by the criminals. A team sets out, along with some of the more civilized of the gone-native terrans, to find who was uniting the 'tribes'. A pleasant read, give one to any youngster you know who likes sf.

A QUEST FOR SIMBILIS by Michael Shea. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1974. 204pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

This is a Dying Earth novel - and is not by Jack Vance. The lead character is again Cugel, who is still trying to get back at Iouconnou.

The story starts as Mumber Sull is thrown out of the village of which he is Harbour Thane. Sull is determine to seek revenge and sets out to find the archwizard Simbilis who departed the area some thousands of years before. He meets up with Cugel who has built a raft to escape the area where he found himself and they joined forces. Many adventures followed, including a brush with cannibals in their Keep, who the pair seemingly managed to send down a road to ruin and a fate in which they themselves would be a meal for their underlings. Further along they meet a fat wizard whose grasp of spells is not all that it could be and who joins their party in order to obtain more loot. They eventually meet the archwizard, and get their just desserts — at least as far as Simbilis is concerned. Shea has managed to catch the essence of Vance's writing. He uses plot and arcane wordage in nearly the same way as Vance — in some passages it would be hard to tell them apart. This is apparently the first appearance of this novel in the UK. I don't know why it took twelve years to do it. The novel is quite good.

National Lampoon's DOON by Ellis Weiner. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1984. 176pp. A\$6.95. On sale now.

The cover of this spoof of DUNE is done by the same artist who did the cover for DUNE MESSIAH and is of the same scene, though he has changed several of the objects illustrated slightly...

As far as I can remember Weiner has most of the main plot points of the longer novel in this shorter version. In which the planet Doon is well known, not for its spice, but for its beer. In place of the worms are the pretzels.Of course, even with spice the whole idea of the Boni Moroni, with its centuries old genetic planning for the best cook, would have gone down well. Pall needed a name when the Freedmenmen found him, and he picked the name Mavue'Bib (named after the purple bibs they wore). Another of his names was the Kumkwat Haagendasz, and lastly but not least, Assol.

The book itself is a gem. At times it becomes a little irrelevant, but most of the time the ideas Frank Herbert are followed through. I hope Herbert read and enjoyed this novel before he died, I'm sure he would have appreciated it. Here is an example of the Boni Moroni speech: "Jazzica's eyes gleamed with her sudden appreciation of Pall's words. 'Then -'

'Yes,' he said.

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'So therefore -'
'Exactly, Mother'.
Her eyes widened in horror. 'You cannot!' she hissed."

SUNRISE ON MERCURY by Robert Silverberg. Pan pb, dist in Aust by Pan Books (Aust). (C) 1954-74. 176pp. A\$5.95. On sale now.

The anthologists are having to dig pretty deep nowadays for Silverberg's short stories. In this collection 9 out of the thirteen stories are copyright 1957-8, right in the middle of his 'hack' period, when he literally churned them out. Surprisingly, reading through them, it is hard sometimes to pick out which ones were written earlier - some of his earlier stories, such as THE MAN WHO NEVER FORGOT and THERE WAS AN OLD WOMAN - could have been written during the last few years.

The full list of contents are: SUNRISE ON MERCURY; WHY?; THERE WAS AN OLD WOMAN; ALAREE; GOING DOWN SMOOTH; THE MAN WHO NEVER FORGOT; WORLD OF A THOUSAND COLOURS; THE DAY THE FOUNDER DIED; THE ARTIFACT BUSINESS; THE SILENT COLONY; THE FOUR; PRECEDENT and AFTER THE MYTHS WENT HOME. If you like Silverbob's newer works, say from the early 1970's, then these from his earlier period (they read like the typical ASTOUNDING/GALAXY school) may show to the reader that his writings of the twenty years spanned by this collection are, though uneven, nevertheless of some note. Worth buying for completists.

WE CAN BUILD YOU by Philip K. Dick. Grafton pb, dist in Aust by William Collins. (C) 1972. 252pp. A\$6.95. On sale now.

The cover illustration shows an Adolf Hitler simulacra in the foreground. I think this is an example of advertising going for the local populace. As the reader finds out, the lead figure is Lincoln; Hitler is not mentioned - however I would say that the British publisher decided that Lincoln would not sell as good as Hitler. So it goes.

Dick wrote several novels dealing with simulacra; in WE CAN BUILD YOU he uses that as a plot device to delve even deeper into insanity, in this case, schizophrenia. The protagonist (again with a German/Jewish name - Louis Rosen) is a partner in an organ building company. His partner decides to branch into robotics and builds a simulacra. He has his daughter, Pris, build the casing. It isn't too long before the world of Big Business hears of it (in fact they approach the millionaire, Barrows, in order to try to get some capital together to manufacture them. In no time at all Louis comes to believe people are out to get him and ends up in a Mental Health hospital. I thought previously that I had read WCBY, but upon reading through it, I found I had not. *Recommended*.

COUNT ZERO by William Gibson. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1986. 269pp. A\$30.95. On sale now.

COUNT ZERO is set in the same world as his Hugo winning NEUROMANCER, but several years later and with different characters. The world is still grimy and the novel shows how both people and events are still being manipulated by the rich and powerful.

There are four subplots woven together to form a gestalt. One concerns the activities of a man who arranges for the 'defection' of key men from multinational (mainly Japanese) organisations. He is one of the best at his trade and his latest assignment is to 'life' someone from an organisation which is pioneering biochips. The second line concerns a young woman who, because she has a background in art, is hired to find the whereabouts of a piece of art which is in the form of a box. The last follows the gropings of a young computer 'bandit' who, while trying to find his way into a companies data vault, is nearly killed when the defensive switches are activated.

Gibson's style needs careful reading or the reader can miss points — it is not something one can scan. The world of Neuromancer was much bleaker in outlook than this latest book — though not much. I found it a good read.

RSCAPE FROM NEW YORK, novel by Mike McQuay, based on a screenplay by John Carpenter and Nick Castle. (C) 1981. 181pp. A\$4.95. On sale now.

I wonder when the advent of cheap video movies will kill these ex-screenplay novels. When the movies are \$20 are they now are, it may not be long (though I notice that this was reprinted in July 1981, October 1981 and December 1983).

I suppose most fans have seen the movie by now on television — the President's jet came down in the maximum security prison that was now New York and because there was a tape therein that had details of a new bomb — the authorities had to go in and get it. The trouble was that the men and women in New York were killers and had been most of their lives. So it was decided to sent in one man — taken from a prison, and hope that he would be able to bring out the booty. The tape, not necessarily the President, whom it was presumed, was dead in the crash. This is nearly present—day adventure. I did like the name of the head of the organisation keeping the killers in — Bob Hauk.*

THE DAY OF FOREVER by J.G. Ballard. Gollancz h/c, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1967. 126pp. A\$30.95. On sale now.

There can't be many of Ballard's works that haven't been published recently. This is a collection that has not been in hardcover before. Though the copyright date is 1967, there is no indication of the magazine dates (if any) wherein the stories were first published.

The first paragraph of the title story, THE DAY OF FOREVER, sets the mood: "At Columbine Sept Heures it was always dusk. Here Halliday's beautiful neighbour, Gabrielle Szabo, walked through the evening, her silk robe stirring the fine sand into cerise clouds. From the balcony of the empty hotel near the artist's colony, Halliday would look out over the drained river at the unmoving shadows across the desert floor, the twilight of Africa, endless and unbroken, that beckoned to him with the promise of his lost dreams. The dark dunes, their crests touched by the spectral light, receded like the waves of a midnight sea."

The other stories making up this collection are: PRISONER OF THE CORAL DEEP; TOMORROW IS A MILLION YEARS; THE MAN ON THE 99TH FLOOR; THE WAITING GROUNDS; THE LAST WORLD OF MR GODDARD; THE GENTLE ASSASSIN; THE SUDDEN AFTERNOON; THE INSANE ONES and his well known THE ASSASSINATION OF JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY CONSIDERED AS A DOWNHILL MOTOR RACE. Prime Ballard.*

MORE THAN HUMAN by Theodore Sturgeon. Gollancz SF Classic pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1953. 233pp. A\$6.95. On sale now.

Gollancz, the British hardcover publisher, are venturing into the quality paperback field with re-issued classics. The books are standard paperback size, but have top quality paper and what appears to be the hardcover plates reduced in size (the printing in very clear). The cover has a score near the spine so that it creases there on opening and does not put a strain on the binding.

MORE THAN HUMAN is the second classic that Gollancz picked to start off their series and they could not have picked a better novel to to so. This novel of Sturgeon's detailing the coming together and functioning of a gestalt human organism is truly one of the classics of the field. If you haven't read it then now is the time to buy. At \$6.95 this book, and the others in the series, are bargains. If you do have a paperback version of it, and it is become tattered with re-reading, then this is again a good opportunity to buy a replacement copy. *Highly Recommended*.

THE SIRENS OF TITAN by Kurt Vonnegut. Gollancz SF Classic pb, dist in Aust by Century Hutchinson. (C) 1959. 224pp. A\$6.95. On sale now.

THE SIRENS OF TITAN is the first classic that Gollancz chose to head their paperback of line. I consider that MORE THAN HUMAN would have been the better novel to head it. However...

As I mentioned when I first reviewed CAT'S CRADLE, I did not think much of that book. SIRENS OF TITAN is Vonnegut's second novel and I found that this tale of poor Winston Niles Rumfoord as he goes, all unintentionally, through a chrono-synclastic infundibulum and finds himself passing through time and space as a waveform. He meets strange adventures along the way, not the least is having a pad out Saturn way.

Vonnegut has a slight hint of Ballard in his writing, but is much more readable in an adventure-type way. Another edition that is a must for the library.

BOOKS RELEASES BY BANTAM IS THE USA AND WHICH MAY BE RELEASED BY CORGI & BANTAM BOOKS IN AUSTRALIA:

CHALLENGE OF THE CLANS Kenneth C. Flint. 323pp. US\$3.50. Another Celtic hero worship book, this time about Finn MacCunhal. It tells of his early years. A stirring book, if you have a yearn for Celtic things of the far past (and I thought most Celts have black hair...)

DEVIL ON MY BACK by Monica Hughes. 196pp. US\$2.75. Something along the lines of the film LOGAN'S RUN. The early story is set in a city under a dome; said city run by computers and governed by high-technology in the form of an 'infopak'. Then a rebellion finds him in the wilds outside.

VENUS OF DREAMS by Pamela Sargent. 536pp. US\$3.95. On sale now. Set some six hundred years in the future, this long novel follows the lives of three persons in the terraforming of Venus: Iris Angharads — driven and driving; Liang Chen — mate of Iris and with a dark past; and Benzi Liangharad — a man who loved deep space.

IN OTHER WORLDS by A.A. Attanasio. 211pp. US\$3.50. A new novel by the author of Radix. A man from the present is transported to a world billions of years in the future. Here he meets a strange entity and is given the task of going back to complete a task that could endanger his old world.

OTHER CURRENT RELEASES:

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JUNE RELEASES:

CENTURY HUTCHINSON:

A TIME OF CHANGES by Silverberg NOVA by Samuel Delany.