

authors are Jewish, but we will be focusing on stories which have Jewish themes. The best-known collection of these is W_a_n_d_e_r_i_n_g S_t_a_r_s, edited by Jack Dann, and its sequel, M_o_r_e W_a_n_d_e_r_i_n_g S_t_a_r_s. Though the club doesn't have these, they should be readily available in your local public library. These stories deal with

THE MT VOID

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questions of how Jewish law would apply in space, what implications Jewish philosophy will have in the future, and similar topics. Come join us even if you haven't read the book, as there will be questions and ideas presented for discussion independently of the stories. [-ecl]

2. There's an old chart that rates employees on a scale. The highest rating is "leaps tall buildings with a single bound." Next is "leaps short buildings with a running start." Going on down the list we get to "argues with himself." Lowest rating is "loses these arguments." Well, confession time is here. I am not sure if it is a reflection on my work, but I do lose arguments with myself. What's more, I do it all the time. Just yesterday I was hearing on the radio about how Dayton-Hudson Company stopped funding Planned Parenthood and was boycotted by pro-choice groups, then restored funding and was boycotted by pro-life groups.

MARK: I guess you can't win [chuckling].

SELF: Oh, you think that's funny, huh?

MARK: Are you back? Why don't you go pester Saddam Hussein or something?

SELF: Sorry, you're stuck with me. Now what's so funny about all this boycotting? You think boycotting is a laughing matter?

MARK: What's the matter with boycotting? It's a free country. You should be allowed to buy from whomever you want.

SELF: You really think that is a reasonable hiring practice?

MARK: You lost me. What does boycotting have to do with hiring practices?

SELF: Okay, I'm going to spell it out for you 'cause you can be really dense at times. When you work for AT&T they are buying a commodity from you: your labor. And the money they pay you is your livelihood. That's called "hiring you." When you buy a commodity such as a shirt or a quart of milk, aren't you also exchanging money for a commodity? Isn't that money also the provider's

livelihood? When you buy a shirt, aren't you essentially hiring people to perform a service for you?

MARK: Okay, I grant you there are parallels. So what is your point?

SELF: Now what if AT&T suddenly announced that it was going to refuse to buy labor from anyone who legally participated in pro-life activities ...~or pro-choice? Wouldn't that be a boycott also?

MARK: I guess it would sort of be the same thing.

SELF: Now didn't you just say that people should be allowed to but from whomever they want? Does that or doesn't it apply to AT&T's hiring practices?

MARK: Uh, no. But if AT&T hired by politics that would be illegal. Boycotting is n_o_t illegal.

SELF: Sure, because big corporations are much easier targets than a whole lot of individuals participating in a boycott. Also, if you turn a corporation upside-down and shake the money out of its

pockets you get more than if you shake a single person.

MARK: Well, there you are. Boycotting is legal, discriminatory hiring practices are not. That's the difference.

SELF: But is boycotting based on politics ethical?

MARK: The law says it is. Or at least says nothing and it does say discriminatory hiring practices are illegal.

SELF: I hate to be the one to break it to you, but what the law says is legal and what is ethical are not always precisely the same thing. The law may not be able to do anything about boycotts, but that doesn't make them ethical.

MARK: Didn't a film executive once say, "If people are not going to go to a film, you can't stop them"? You can't force people to buy a product.

SELF: We aren't talking about forcing anyone to buy a product. We are talking about what are ethical reasons for buying decisions. If you say, "Don't buy from a Korean grocer," you are saying, "In hiring it is okay to discriminate based on race." Because in fact that is precisely what you are doing. You are refusing to hire this grocer on the very short term as a provider because he is Korean. If you don't hire AT&T or Dayton-Hudson because they take legal political action you disagree with, you justify them taking your political actions into account in their decision to hire you.

This sort of thing happens to me all the time. Maybe that's why it takes me two bounds to leap a tall building.

3. Note that the peripatetic Holmdel SF Library has moved again.
[-ecl]

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Passion and prejudice govern the world, only under the name of reason.

-- John Wesley

RITNYM'S DAUGHTER: A Fantasy Novel by Sheila Gilluly
A book review Frank R. Leisti
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The story of R_i_t_n_y_m'_s_D_a_u_g_h_t_e_r is the final part of a trilogy. Of course, being the last, it has built upon the adventures in the prior two books -- both of which remain unread at this time.

This story concerns itself with reflections of nobler lives impacting on less fortunate ones - all around the Greenbriar Queen. It tells the story of family deceit, to open warfare. Within plots are subplots, and plots within them, twisting the sense of a story into fantasy. The lives of the main characters are intertwined considerably, considering that one of the players is an immortal who, out of a sense of living and duty guards and protects the Greenbriar Queen, even when banished from the kingdom. The story tells of friendship flying in the face of death, and of abilities to seek the truth and to let it be known. It covers the growth of a young prince as he comes to his day of reckoning, reconciling himself to know the man who killed his father in a fit of rage. This fantasy even brings together the sense of Christmas when at the darkest of times, hope and salvation come running in.

Peewit is the Littleman. Often referred to as Captain, he is part of a group of tinkerers and stumbles across a shallow grave of his own kind. A jewel is the only remainder amongst the bones and it carries an importance in Peewit's life -- that is discovered later. Kursh Korimson, previously known as the First Watchman, sees his old friend, Peewit in his glass works. The old friendship is warmly renewed and the adventure begins when disaster strikes in the house of the Master Glassmaker. From here, forces of evil -- shadows and the skinwalker seek the end of civilization. In a land where demons can strip the skin off of a man, to a magical land beyond the land, the fight for right is on. When the day light dims, the shadows rule and when the healing crystal is stolen on a day of celebration, the children begin to die. All events bear terrible stress on the kingdom of the Greenbriar Queen -- as we find war coming to her lands when the disaster overcomes her people. We seek the answers to dreams and history made, following Peewit in search of answers and the sacrifice that he must do -- which started when he was born.

This fantasy tale draws together many rich ideas from other authors and brings a sweet flavor to the story of a protector of right over wrong. An enjoyable, yet lighthearted book.

Yet Another Batch of Skran Mini-Reviews.

by Dale L. Skran Jr.

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R_e_a_c_h
by Edward Gibson

Gibson, a former Skylab astronaut has some favorable jacket blurbs from his astronaut buddies and P_u_b_l_i_s_h_e_r's_W_e_e_k_l_y, but I couldn't generate enough interest to get past page 104 of this turgid tale. This isn't the worst writing, but the story lacks interest, at least for me.

A_g_v_i_q
by Michael Armstrong

Excellent post-nuclear fiction! One of the best after-the-bomb stories of all. There are four main things to survive in a nuclear war, and very few authors handle them all with any degree of realism. The first is surviving the immediate blast effects. Armstrong does this by placing his main character, a female anthropologist, in a remote corner of Alaska. The second is the radiation effects over the first month or so. Armstrong solves this by having Claudia (the anthropologist) and a co-worker, Rob, use Dean Ing's shelter handbook, P_u_l_l_i_n_g_T_h_r_o_u_g_h, to build a sealed, positive air pressure shelter with a filter in an underground Inuit house.

The third problem is surviving the other survivors, and the deadly environment. Rob doesn't. Claudia does, in part because she is highly trained as a survivalist by her years in the backcountry, and in part since the "Inupiaq," or native Alaskans, are trying to rebuild the old ways, and she may be the only living person who actually knows what they are. An appropriately large number of characters die before order is established, many in an ideological struggle over whether to attempt to rebuild the old ways or leech off the remains of civilization.

The fourth, and toughest, problem is surviving the inevitable nuclear winter. Armstrong solves rather neatly by placing the story in one of the few places where people a_r_e equipped to live through an extended winter. The only thing I found a bit stretched was the survival of enough radiation-free whales and seals to allow a hunting economy to be re-established.

Overall, this is a cleanly written, fast-paced, yet evocative book. There is a lot here, and I hope to hear more from Armstrong in the future.

N_o_r_t_h_w_o_r_l_d
by David Drake

Forgettable space adventure, but more readable than some of the recent "Hammer's Slammers" that focus on small group action.

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T_h_e_S_w_o_r_d_b_e_a_r_e_r
by Glen Cook

If you like the "Dread Empire" and the Black Company stories, you'll like this sword-and-sorcery pastiche. It explores in some depth the idea that having a magic sword might not be all it's been cracked up to be, and ends with a promise of more action to come (what else?). I can't help it -- I'm a sucker for Cook's brand of dark fantasy.

W_i_l_d_C_a_r_d_s:_D_e_a_d_M_a_n's_H_a_n_d
Volume VII
edited by George R. R. Martin and John J. Miller

At this point, it is no longer possible to recommend a new book in this series to anyone who isn't reading the entire thing. I find it hard to believe that any newcomer could follow this complex story without a long briefing on all the characters. Basically, it follows Jay Ackroyd (a projecting teleport) and Jack Brennan (Yoeman -- a Batman/Green Arrow/Ninja type hero) as they hunt Chrysalis's killer. It's a fair read -- Brennan is one of the more interesting characters in the series.

S_u_p_p_o_r_t_Y_o_u_r_L_o_c_a_l_W_i_z_a_r_d
(S_o_Y_o_u_W_a_n_t_t_o_B_e_a_W_i_z_a_r_d)
by Diane Duane

I've wanted to read Diane Duane's childrens series ever since I heard a reading from it at a convention. Recently the SF Book Club published three of the books in a single volume, and I immediately ordered a copy. Alas, I only got through the first one. There are many cute touches, but you may have to be a kid to really like this series.

R_a_m_a_I_I
by Arther C. Clarke and Gentry Lee

Avoid this book -- it is not worth your time to read. Gentry Lee has taken about 20 pages worth of plot skeleton and stretched it over 406 pages, with the threat of two more volumes to come. Quit while you are ahead -- don't start.

F_o_u_c_a_u_l_t's_P_e_n_d_u_l_u_m
by Umberto Eco

We've all heard about weird conspiracy theories involving the Catholic Church, the Templars, Roger Bacon, Voltaire, the Unknown Superiors, and so on. Suppose that after receiving a report of an unusual message, a group of Italian vanity-press editors began to create a "might-be" story that threaded all history into one vast pattern of struggle over a mystic secret. Suppose that people started disappearing. Suppose that bodies started appearing. Suppose that behind all that superstition there was a deadly truth. This is the premise of F_o_u_c_a_u_l_t'_s_P_e_n_d_u_l_u_m, an absorbing, even brilliant book that takes the reader on a journey into ever stranger realms.

In the end, P_e_n_d_u_l_u_m is about a lot more than an ancient plot. Eco weaves a web with the lives of his characters, and indeed, with reality itself. Enjoy this excellent book. Be warned that it demands a bit more intelligence from the reader than the average best-seller.