

country with whom there are delicate, on-going negotiations over nuclear weapons is the kind of mistake anybody could make? This was a training mission and people being trained make these little mistakes. I do, I am sure you do. Here we are training pilots *not* to stray into enemy airspace. You would think that is what

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the North Koreans would want, right? Well to train people not to stray over a hostile border, you need a hostile border for them not to stray over, don't you? They probably had already trained on non-hostile borders, like Nevada. But you can only do so much non-straying over a peaceful border. The time comes when you want to non-stray over a hostile border and if you don't have the training, how are you going to non-stray? So we thought that our two pilots were ready to try it with a "live" border. And they were wrong by a simple matter of ten little measly miles. And with one little slip-up the North Koreans build it into an International Incident! It is not like we do a whole lot of spying. We *never* spy on anyone, do we? I think we can all rest a bit easier knowing that in those big buildings of the CIA in Washington the people inside are planning out things like monetary policy. And the armed guards are just trying to make sure that they are not disturbed in planning their monetary policy. And you can be darn sure those armed guards would be loving and understanding if you accidentally strayed into their territory.

But I am sure this was not spying. It could not have been intentional. It is important to train our pilots not to stray over sensitive borders and expect a certain percentage of failures. That isn't what worries me. This was just a few headlines over the Christmas season. One pilot killed and another could not be home for the holidays. What scares me is the people who were training these pilots is the same military who are training people not to fire nuclear missiles. I'm sure the error rate in training fliers not to stray is no worse than the training of folks not to fire nuclear missiles. Uh, I think I would almost rather believe the straying was intentional. [-mrl]

2. It has been a long hard holiday season. I am now getting errors in my corrections. In the last issue I corrected a review from the previous issue. In it I mis-spelled "JUNGLE" as "JUMGLE" and said that the SECOND JUNGLE BOOK was published in 1985, not 1895. Well, you get what you pay for with the MT VOID. [-mrl]

3. WHITE QUEEN by Gwyneth Jones (Orb, ISBN 0-312-89013-3, 1994, 316pp, \$12.95) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Fans have complained about the peculiar practices of the book-publishing and selling industry that result in the ecologically wasteful practice of stripping books and result in books going out of print too soon. Well, Tor's Orb line is trying to do something about that. Whether the fans respond positively remains to be

seen, because there is a price to pay.

The price is that it is not practical to bring some books out in mass market editions, so Orb is a line of trade paperbacks on acid-free paper which are reprints of works that the publishers believe should stay in print even though their market is not the size of, say, the "Star Trek" novels. Tom Doherty has said that all he needs to bring something back into print as an Orb book (other than the ability to get the rights, of course) is the belief that it will sell a thousand copies over an eighteen-month period.

Which brings us to WHITE QUEEN by Gwyneth Jones. This is definitely not a book that would sell at the "Star Trek" level, but certainly would appeal to the literary segment of science fiction fandom. It is definitely British, with a much more global view than one finds in (most) American science fiction.

It begins, for example, in a fictionalized West African capital with an exiled American electronic journalist who makes contact with aliens who have arrived in Africa, the Aleutian Islands, and Thailand. (In Thailand, they go to a conference on women's issues, thinking that this is where Earth's leaders are.) The aliens seem

to be all-powerful and all-benevolent, but we can't seem to understand them. And they can't seem to understand us. One result is that an underground organization, "White Queen," has sprung up to resist the aliens. Unlike the straight-forward "first contact" stories of the past, WHITE QUEEN is a more realistic look at what a first contact might really be like.

I have a few of minor nits: The proof-reading could be better. (It appears that whenever the word "for" is followed by a word starting with "ever," the two are joined, e.g., "forevery foreigner.") The cover art is uncredited, which means I don't know whom to berate for putting blue lipstick on someone whose lips were clearly described as "wet ruby" in the same passage as the accurately portrayed armor-petal dress. And will people still be quoting Cole Porter songs in 2038?

As I said, this book isn't for everyone. (I still haven't decided if it's for me.) The writing is convoluted at times, and the machinations and misunderstandings are not easy to follow, especially since the aliens are telepathic and hence communicate on two different levels. But White Queen should appeal to "first contact" readers. (It also won the James Tiptree Award, given to stories which deal with gender issues.) [-ecl]

4. SUPERHEROES edited by John Varley and Ricia Mainhardt (Ace, ISBN 0-441-00137-8, January 1995, 373pp, \$12) (a book review by Evelyn

C. Leeper):

Well, I looked and looked, but I couldn't find Martin H. Greenberg's name on this anywhere.

But that doesn't mean this is radically different from an anthology that Greenberg *would* edit. It's quite similar to the original anthologies DAW is putting out these days: twenty-five new stories, all on a single theme (in this case superheroes), mostly by relatively unknown authors, with a few familiar names thrown in.

(In this case, some of the "unknowns" may be known in the comics field, at least according to the brief biographies in the back of the book.)

As is also common with these anthologies, the idea is to put a modern spin on the old ideas. So there are no "traditional" superhero stories. Instead, there are stories about superheroes with trivial talents, superheroes who aren't really superheroes, superheroes who have to deal with lawyers and the media, superheroes who fight child abuse, superheroes who are politically correct, and superheroes who are politically incorrect--in the literal sense, in Varley's own "Truth, Justice and the Politically Correct Socialist Path." The latter was apparently the inspiration for this volume, but has in the meantime become somewhat dated. I suppose the superhero aspect makes it an alternate history anyway, but still....

The problem with all this terribly 90s stuff is that it becomes predictable after a while. (The blurbs at the beginnings of the stories make this even easier.) There are a couple of above-average stories, such as Paul Kupperberg's "Reflected Glory" and Roger Zelazny's "Long Crawl of Hugh Glass," although strictly speaking, I don't think the latter belongs in this anthology. Varley's story is amusing in a nostalgic sort of way. (What will people do now that they can't make jokes about a road named the "Praise And Honor To The Glorious Heroes Who Stormed The Winter Palace In Petrograd On November 7, 1917 Expressway" or the "Let's All Shout *Khorosho!* To Celebrate The Fifth Party Congress Gulag And Orphanage"?) The others, though, tend to run in fairly predictable and unremarkable paths. While they were at times entertaining enough while I was reading them, they didn't have much in them to dwell upon when they're done.

If you are a comics fan, you will probably enjoy this anthology. For the non-comics fan, however, I suspect it would be disappointing. I'm not sure why Ace chose to bring it out in trade paperback format, though, especially since it is not illustrated. (I mention that only because it seems like the sort of book that *would* be illustrated.) Whether there will be a mass market paperback remains to be seen. [-ecl]

5. THE DYKE & THE DYBBUK by Ellen Galford (Seal, ISBN 1-878067-51-6, 1994 (1993c), 248pp, \$10.95) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

In a Polish shtetl two hundred years ago, Anya and Gittel were close friends. They talked about traveling to foreign lands and spending their lives together. But Gittel abandoned Anya to marry a scholar, so Anya cursed her and the first-born daughters of her female line down to the thirty-third generation with the curse that they should be possessed by the dybbuk Kokos. Kokos is "exorcised" from Gittel, however, by a pious rabbi who traps Kokos in a tree until a bolt of lightning frees her in the present. Naturally, she needs to find the current recipient of the curse, Gittel's great(7)-granddaughter, one Rainbow Rosenblum, London taxi driver and the other eponymous character.

Now in a situation like this, the obvious approach to take is to show the clash of cultures between a dybbuk out of touch with the world for two hundred years, and a trendy London lesbian. Or you could have had a very up-to-date dybbuk with a much more traditional victim. Galford decides to combine these, however, and the result is a bit jarring. Kokos comes back to discover that her group is now part of Mephistco Industries and run as a modern corporation, but there is no problem, no clash: she slips right into place. Nor is there any sort of clash between Kokos and Rainbow (whom Kokos is, after all, supposed to be tormenting). In fact, they get buddy-buddy almost immediately. The conflict has to come from the fact that if Kokos doesn't get Rainbow on the way to producing Gittel's great(8)-granddaughter in very short order, her assignment will be terminated and she will be demoted, and also from the fact that Rainbow has decided to fall for a good-looking, but apparently unattainable Chasidic woman.

In spite of the somewhat chaotic and illogical plot (why *is* Kokos so benign a dybbuk?), there are some funny moments and interesting side comments. (My favorite is Kokos's comment regarding a lesbian dance club: "I don't see what the big fuss is all about. Women dancing with women. Men with men. Big deal. It's the same at any respectable Chasidic wedding.")

I can give only a lukewarm recommendation to this book. Much of the humor is "ethnic," meaning its appeal to non-Jewish readers is somewhat limited, yet its depiction of dybbuks strays considerably from Jewish tradition for those looking for a story based in Jewish tradition. Still, it has some interest for what it attempts to do.

If you can't find this book at your local general or science fiction bookstore, try your local gay and lesbian bookstore. For those in the hinterlands who have neither of these resources, there

are several science fiction or gay and lesbian bookstores that do mail-order (the SF Shop in New York; Uncle Hugo's in Minneapolis; Other Change of Hobbit in Berkeley; A Different Light in New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco; Lambda Rising in Washington, etc.), or you can order it direct from Seal Press, 3131 Western Avenue, Suite 410, Seattle WA 98121 (include \$1.65 for shipping and handling). [-ecl]

6. TOURISTS by Lisa Goldstein (Orb, ISBN 0-312-89011-7, 1994, 239pp, \$11.95) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

I can best describe TOURISTS by Lisa Goldstein as "Borgesian," and anyone who knows my tastes realizes that is high praise indeed. If I am asked to name my three favorite speculative fiction writers (why is it always three?), my answer is, "Borges, Stapledon, and I don't know who the third one is." So to compare TOURISTS to such works of Jorge Luis Borges as "The Babylon Lottery," "The Garden of Forking Paths," and "Tlon, Uqbar, and Orbis Tertius" indicates that I think it is a wonderful book.

In speculative fiction, people talk about a "sense of wonder," but how often does one actually find it? Near-future science fiction, in fact, wins praises for being "realistic" and "believable"--in other words, specifically for *not* having a sense of wonder. But in magical realism (or fantasy, which might be an even better label), one can still occasionally find flashes of it, and Goldstein's city of Amaz is full of wonder--of streets that rearrange themselves, and strange customs, and strange people with strange histories, and of a hundred things that are not what they appear to be. This begins early on--a group of turbaned people are keeping a vigil outside the house of the main characters, there is a mysterious bronze statue of a man contemplating an egg, and when the newly-arrived Casey meets her pen-pal Rafiz, neither is what the other person pictured them to be.

Into Amaz come the Parmenters: Mitchell, who is working on a translation of the national epic; his wife Claire, who spends her

time drinking and reading trashy novels; their fourteen-year-old somewhat precocious daughter Casey; and their sixteen-year-old daughter Angie, who spends most of her time living in the fantasy kingdoms of Borol and Marol.

In regard to the latter, this book bears more than passing resemblance to the film HEAVENLY CREATURES, so it is worth noting that Goldstein's book predates the film by five years. Of course, it is possible that Goldstein knew of the original story. But I suspect it's more likely that there is a universality to the ideas, and that they are both representations of archetypes. Indeed, that is part of the idea of the book in the first place.

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One might also wonder at the title. After all, the Parmenters have come to live in Amaz, even if only for a year, so aren't they more than mere tourists? But you soon realize that though they may nominally be residents, they are still tourists--they understand almost nothing of the city around them, and they remain outsiders to the people of Amaz. But they are also outsiders to each other, and part of what the story is about is how we are often just tourists in the domains of our family members; we have only a superficial knowledge of them and think of them as a place to visit rather than a place to live.

Goldstein's first novel, THE RED MAGICIAN, won the American Book Award. Her next two (THE DREAM YEARS and A MASK FOR THE GENERAL) were also highly acclaimed. TOURISTS continues that high standard of remarkable works, and I strongly recommend it.

[Goldstein also had previously written a short story using the same setting and many of the ideas and places that TOURISTS uses. The story, which was published in 1985, was also called "tourists." In the afterword to the short story in her new collection TRAVELLERS IN MAGIC, she says, "I gave them the same title because I liked it, and because I wanted to confuse bibliographers, but bibliographers turn out not to be as easily confused as one would wish." She also has two other stories set in Amaz, "Death Is Different" and "A Game of Cards," but they are not in a series.] [-ecl]

7. TRAVELLERS IN MAGIC by Lisa Goldstein (Tor, ISBN 0-312-85790-X, 1994, 285pp, \$21.95) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Lisa Goldstein has won wide acclaim for her novels, but this is her first short story collection, comprising fifteen stories written over the last decade. And an exceptional collection it is.

Many of the stories can be grouped around common themes. Some have their basis in Jewish culture and history. It used to be that most authors who used a Jewish background used it for humorous effect, but lately that trend is changing. This may be because readers are more willing to accept a Jewish background as serious rather than merely quaint, though even now Faren Miller in LOCUS can write that Goldstein is "heir to 'exotic' traditional folklore (by WASP standards)." And Goldstein is part of this new wave of serious Jewish fantasy, with stories such as "Alfred," "A Traveller at Passover," "Breadcrumbs and Stones," and "Split Night." (The latter appears here for the first time, since according to Goldstein there is still no real market for a speculative fiction story about Shabbetai Zevi. If you don't know who Shabbetai Zevi is, I guess that supports her theory.) Her use of Jewish themes in a serious fashion, and particularly in her use of the Holocaust as

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a force behind many of them is no doubt related to the fact that her parents were themselves survivors of the Holocaust, and this may be what gives her the ability to write with such depth and meaning.

Other stories are set in Goldstein's fictional land of Amaz (also the setting for Goldstein's novel TOURISTS): "Tourists" (Goldstein said she liked the title and wanted to confuse bibliographers), "Death Is Different," and "A Game of Cards." And besides the "Amaz" stories, Goldstein has used the idea of the strange people and places in "Preliminary Notes on the Jang" about a strange tribe of people living in Los Angeles, "Infinite Riches" about Sir Walter Raleigh's quest for El Dorado, and "Rites of Spring" about a woman's search for her daughter that takes an unusual turn.

Many of Goldstein's stories deal with control and, conversely, the

unexpected. Certainly the "Amaz" stories are about how people cope with the unexpected. But there are also such gems as "Cassandra's Photographs," in which the main character tries to live a life laid out for him by the photographs of the title. "Daily Voices" is about a woman who is constantly told what to do ("Find the next piece to the jigsaw puzzle and press the button"). "Ever After" is another story about a woman who seems to have everything except control of her life, and that is what she wants the most. "Midnight News," on the other hand, is about a woman who suddenly has more power she ever imagined.

The one remaining story, "The Woman in the Painting," doesn't fit any of these descriptions, but seems to be a relative of Karen Joy Fowler's SARAH CANARY: the mysterious woman who comes from nowhere, doesn't seem to be able to communicate, and has a strange effect on everyone she meets.

I've used the term "speculative fiction" to describe Goldstein's work, because it's more accurate than "science fiction" (only one story here is really science fiction), or "fantasy" (which may be accurate, but sets up all sorts of expectations that the stories wouldn't fulfill). But whatever you call them, these stories have a lot to say--if you're willing to listen. This is certainly one of the best collections of short fiction I have seen recently, and worthy of note. [-ecl]

8. With this issue we hope to get back to a more reasonable size. That is, until Boskone, when undoubtedly the Boskone convention report will bloat it again. [-ecl]

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Revolution, n. In politics, an abrupt change in the form of misgovernment.

--Ambrose Bierce