



## **The Norton Book of Science Fiction: North American Science Fiction, 1960-90**

*Ursula K. Le Guin (Editor), Karen Joy Fowler (Consultant Editor), Brian Attebery (Editor)*

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In the tradition of other groundbreaking Norton anthologies, Ursula K. Le Guin and Brian Attebery's *Norton Book of Science Fiction* provided the first truly comprehensive and coherent look at the best of contemporary science fiction. Its 67 stories, all published since 1960, offer compelling evidence that science fiction is the source of the most thoughtful, imaginative - indeed literary - fiction being written today.

Aficionados will find rarely anthologized gems by their favorite authors - Poul Anderson, Margaret Atwood, Octavia Butler, Samuel R. Delany, Philip K. Dick, William Gibson, Joanna Russ, Theodore Sturgeon, James Tiptree, Jr., Gene Wolf, Roger Zelazny - as well as startling work by today's rising stars. Newcomers will delight in the sophisticated range of voices probing the nature of reality and the condition of the human spirit. And readers of all stripes will enjoy Ms. Le Guin's robust and insightful introduction.

## **The Norton Book of Science Fiction: North American Science Fiction, 1960-90 Details**

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Author : Ursula K. Le Guin (Editor) , Karen Joy Fowler (Consultant Editor) , Brian Attebery (Editor)

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## **From Reader Review The Norton Book of Science Fiction: North American Science Fiction, 1960-90 for online ebook**

### **Laura says**

Some great, great stuff is contained in these pages. Even better the second time around—seven years later! Part of what made it fun this time was the notes I'd written about the stories last time—and how different my perspective was on them now.

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### **Matt says**

It took me nearly two years to finish this book. I rated this book highly because of the shear expanse of it. It has short stories from 1960 until 1990, and while I did not enjoy all of them, I found having the author information present to be very helpful. This actually made the reading a bit slower because I would put down the book for awhile to read some of the books I found in the author descriptions. Some of the stories hardly qualify as science fiction but it is ok. There is a large variation in length too. This book belongs in my library at some point.

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### **Jamie says**

It has a wide range of stories, but the book is hard to get through. I skipped about a handful of them that I just couldn't get into. I'm fairly certain some of the stories weren't even in the science fiction genre.

If caught I recommend Tandy's Story by Theodore Sturgeon, Balanced Ecology by James Schmitz, For the Sake of Grace by Suzette Elgin, and Tauf Aleph by Phyllis Gotlieb.

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### **John says**

Worth a read merely for the robust introduction by Le Guin. Like many anthologies, not every story is equal in quality. Le Guin, Atteberry, and Fowler's definition of "science fiction" is more in line with mine than Dozois.

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### **Arwen says**

This was the book for my Science Fiction literature class. I marked which stories we read in class, and then just came back and finished up the other ones. Of course as a book of Science Fiction short stories you'll love some and hate others. I'm not really a fan of gender-bender sci-fi, so those stories were especially hard to slog through. But others like "2064, or Thereabouts" by David R. Bunch are still on my mind. It does have a lot of famous names in science fiction everyone for Ursula K. Le Guin and Brian Atterberry who where the

editors to James Blish (an author probably in my top 10), and Poul Anderson, and Samuel Delany, James Triptree Jr, Harlan Ellison, P K Dick (definitely in my top 10 authors), and Orson Scott Card to name a few.

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### **bluetyson says**

The Norton Book of Science Fiction: North American Science Fiction, 1960-1990 (Norton Book Of...) by Ursula K. Le Guin (1999)

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### **Werner says**

Back in 2002 or 2003, when I was interested in developing a college course in science fiction, I borrowed this book by interlibrary loan to examine it as a possible textbook, knowing that Norton had a reputation for producing quality anthologies. This one was a distinct disappointment, however. Le Guin, who apparently dominated the editing process though she did have assistance from a couple of academics, confined her selection to American and Canadian works written after 1960 (the period of the genre's "maturity," according to her), which excluded a sizeable body of worthwhile material from consideration. While the subtitle suggests that this was by the publisher's design, as I recall the copy I read did NOT yet have the subtitle, indicating that it was originally intended to be one of Norton's usual broad-based anthologies, and that the limited actual scope was probably Le Guin's own decision, based on what part of the SF field she deemed *worth* covering (and her introduction also suggested that interpretation). Her tastes also ran heavily to "New Wave" and "experimental" works that I don't care for and wouldn't have selected. Out of 67 selections, I've determined by going over the contents note in World Catalog that I remember reading 20 of them (two of them I'd actually read before) in full, and I didn't like even all of those, though I did like --or at least appreciate; some aren't meant to be the kind of thing you "like"-- most of them. A number of others I started and quit, or skimmed and wasn't impressed with; some I didn't examine at all (and some didn't stay in my memory). For some time, I've had the book sitting on my "being-read-intermittently" shelf, intending to go back and read it so I could review it here. But I've recently concluded that going to the trouble of getting it by interlibrary loan, and going through the time and torture of reading the amount of verbiage here that I wouldn't enjoy, simply isn't worth it! So, it's going to the "started-not-finished" shelf.

BUT, there are some absolute masterpieces of the SF genre here, that deserve to be known and read by serious readers anywhere; so I thought it might be appropriate to share this review of what I did read from this collection. One of the most outstanding was the late Octavia Butler's "Speech Sounds," a unique post-apocalyptic scenario: here, civilization has been destroyed by a virus that causes damage to the part of the brain that processes speech and writing, eliminating all verbal communication. Some readers might fixate on the more sensationalistic aspects of the story, which has some violence (the heroine packs a pistol, and knows how to use it) and unmarried sex --though in fairness to the characters, one might ask how people who can't communicate verbally *could* exchange married vows-- but the more significant aspect of the story is its positive message and thought-provoking content. In "Lucky Strike," Kim Stanley Robinson delivers a powerful alternate-world vision of the Hiroshima bombing mission in World War II, which ought to be required reading for every American who mouths shibboleths about how the mass slaughter was "necessary" so as to "save American lives." Canadian Jewish writer Phyllis Gottlieb's "Tauf Aleph" is another masterpiece, a wonderful testimony to enduring faith that can be appreciated by Christians as well as by Jews. Also, Poul Anderson's "Kyrie" is a haunting story with deliberate religious overtones --Kyrie is New Testament Greek for "Lord," and the convent setting at the end isn't accidental. (Personally, I'm not

convinced that the supposed "hard" science of black holes here is valid --but it doesn't have to be for me to enjoy the story, since I'm more into "soft" SF anyway. :-) ) I'm not generally a fan of Suzette Haden Elgin, but "For the Sake of Grace," set on an an Islamic-like world, is a wonderful story that expresses her strong feminist message without the male-bashing she exhibits elsewhere. Though they're very dark tales, Howard Waldrop's "The World, as We Know 't," Avram Davidson's grim vision of xenophobia and mindless traditionalism, "The House the Blakeney's Built," and Mike Resnick's "Kirinyaga," (ultimately the title story of an interrelated story collection exploring the same social experiment) are extremely well-written, hard-hitting, evocative stories. (I'm not too sure of the scientific basis underlying Waldrop's story either, however.)

Other favorites here include "Balanced Ecology" by James H. Schmitz (a writer I've got to read more of sometime!); Simak's "Over the River and Through the Woods," which well illustrates the "pastoral" quality of much of his writing; Andrew Weiner's "Distant Signals;" Nancy Kress' "Out of All Them Bright Stars;" and R. A. Lafferty's wryly humorous "Nine Hundred Grandmothers." Sturgeon's "Tandy's Story" is a good enough piece of fiction, but not as substantial as his "Thunder and Roses," which would have made a better selection --but which was written back in the benighted pre-1960 period that Le Guin dismissed. Orson Scott Card is represented by a story from his The Folk of the Fringe collection, "America," and Zenna Henderson by one of her non-People stories, "As Simple as That" (which isn't a bad story in itself, but there's a reason why the People stories are more popular). Greg Bear's "Schrodinger's Plague," IMO, mainly serves to demonstrate why Schrodinger's theory is absurd --though that's almost certainly not why Bear wrote it. :-) Silverberg's "Good News from the Vatican" is well-written, but fails to understand the crucial distinction between artificial intelligence and human response to God which a Catholic writer (or any Christian writer, probably) would make, and which Anthony Boucher, for instance, does make in "The Quest for St. Aquin."

Two stories I didn't get into here were Damon Knight's "Handler" and one of Joanna Russ' Whileaway stories (though here at least she refrains from referring to males as "apes with human faces" and "ten-foot toads," as she does in "When It Changed").

In summation, if anyone reads this book, these comments might at least provide a sort of preliminary map for exploration. As a shorter, but much better, general collection of work in the genre, though, I'd recommend The Oxford Book of Science Fiction Stories.

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## **Matt says**

A mixed bag for sure, but I still loved a lot of the stories in here. I admit, 'North American science fiction from 1960 to 1990' is a very arbitrary limit on the range of SF, but no anthology could summarize the entire genre. These stories definitely appeal to the 'literary science fiction' movement, which I wholeheartedly support even if some of results are lackluster. As Le Guin says herself in the introduction, there aren't any Mighty Whitey spacemen roaming the galaxy with their robot companions to shoot up some aliens who are uncomfortably close to being disguised racist stereotypes. These stories are generally more cerebral. A lot of them carry feminist themes, which I adore. But some of them hardly feel like SF at all; a few are only science fiction by virtue of being fiction about scientists, for instance; others could easily be at home in a 'magical realism' fantasy anthology. But, I have to admire them for trying to expand the boundaries of what SF is.

### Five Stars: My Favorites

Alpha Ralpha Boulevard

Kyrie  
Gather Blue Roses  
The Mountains of Sunset, the Mountains of Dawn  
A Few Things I Know About Whileaway  
Lollipop and the Tar Baby  
Tauf Aleph  
Speech Sounds  
The Lucky Strike  
America  
Kirinyaga  
A Midwinter's Tale  
Invaders

Four Stars: Great, but Not Quite as Great as My Favorites

Tandy's Story  
Over the River and Through the Woods  
Nine Hundred Grandmothers  
Comes Now the Power  
Day Million  
High Weir  
For the Sake of Grace  
The Women Men Don't See  
The Private War of Private Jacobs  
The Warlord of Saturn's Moons  
Exposures  
"...The World, as we Know 't"  
Snow  
The Brain of Rats  
Out of All Them Bright Stars  
We See Things Differently  
Homelanding

Three Stars: Good, but Something Wasn't Quite There

The Handler  
How Beautiful with Banners  
When I Was Miss Dow  
Night-Rise  
Elbow Room  
The Gernsback Continuum  
The Bryds  
Interlocking Pieces  
The Lake Was Full of Artifical Things  
After the Days of Dead-Eye 'Dee  
Schwarzschild Radius  
Midnight News

Two Stars: Something Didn't Click for Me Here

2064, or Thereabouts  
Balanced Ecology

The Winter Flies  
As Simple As That  
Good News from the Vatican  
Strange Wine  
Frozen Journey  
The Start of the End of It All  
Schrodinger's Plague  
Distant Signals  
The Life of Anybody  
His Vegetable Wife  
Rat  
(Learning About) Machine Sex  
Half-Life  
And the Angels Sing

One Star: Either Bad, or I Just didn't 'Get It'

The House the Blakeneys Built  
Feather Tigers  
Making It All the Way into the Future on Gaxton Falls of the Red Planet  
The New Atlantis  
Precession  
The War at Home  
The Bob Dylan Tambourine Software & Satori Support Services Consortium, Ltd.  
Stable Strategies for Middle Management  
Aunt Parnetta's Electric Blisters

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**Gabriel says**

This kind of collection is a terrific antithesis to the perception of science fiction as a less-than-literary, nerd-wish-fulfillment genre. Instead, we get a number of stories that span such diverse writing styles, morals, plots, and moods, that one might at first be at a loss to find the common thread — what defines “science fiction?” — until you realize that more than anything, all of these authors use fantastically creative fictional devices (future worlds, strange abilities, alien characters) to explore realistic human nature and psychology. Naturally some stories will appeal more to certain people than others, but there should be something for everyone in here. It is especially great for the bored scifi enthusiast who just wants to browse for a great short story or two without committing to any specific author/novel.

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**Lisa says**

This is a book I would like to own one day. It's a packed-full treasure of short stories from many authors I was familiar with but hadn't read and others whom I didn't know existed but well in love with. I initially picked it up from the library because it contained an Octavia Butler story I hadn't yet read (she did not disappoint) but I was surprised by how many other stories pulled me in. I know I like sci-fi as a genre (and Le Guin's introduction to how and why the stories were chosen go a long way in explaining why); but I feel more connected to the genre now (which sounds weird, I know). Thank you to both editors for compiling

such varied, rich stories - some of which are still haunting me.

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### **Paul Bryant says**

This collection kicks off with a favourite of mine, "The Handler" by Damon Knight. Pete, the big man, steps into a room where a showbiz apres-show party is in mid-swing and everyone lights up like neon, now he's here. The whole place is really jumpin and jivin, Pete is ladling out the praise for everyone involved and they're all loving him right back. He was the star of the show and it's a hit. The love is flowing like the champagne. Then he says "Now, I'd like you to meet my handler" and he .. stops moving. There's a kind of interior quiver and his dinner jacket splits right up the back, and a little man climbs out of him - "almost a dwarf, stoop-shouldered and round-backed in a sweaty brown singlet and shorts". He closes up the big man's back and asks for a beer. He starts to come out with the same kind of smooth-talking glad-handing bonhomie that Pete was, a few minutes previously. But now the words fall flat. There's a hush, everyone's a bit embarrassed. People begin looking at watches, getting their coats. One guy leans forward and says "Listen Harry, why don't you get back inside?" Everyone watches unsmilingly as he finishes his beer and unzips the big man's back and climbs back in. After a moment Pete suddenly snaps back into life - "Well hey there, whatsa matter with this party anyhow? Let's see some action - what I mean is, are we alive or are we just waiting for the wagon to pick us up? How's that again? Can't hear you!" and of course there's a roar and everyone is suddenly right back in the swing of it, having the greatest time.

This is a great little companion fable to Kit Reed's story "Automatic Tiger" which Manny describes here

<http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...>

I believe a lot of stories comment on or complement each other, either consciously or otherwise - popular songs do it too, all the time.

As for this SF collection, it ran into a lot of flak because Ursula Le Guin was perceived to be performing some affirmative action program on behalf of feminism, by including so many stories by female writers - there's actually a whopping 42% of the total stories written by females - how about that. Outrageous. Everyone knows that women only write 7% of science fiction.

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### **Michael says**

Variable, with sudden gusts.

It was difficult to see how some of the stoires in the anthology could be called Science Fiction.

Some were simply poor.

However, some fine examples of the genre from this time and place.

Of much greater interest is Attebury's 'Teacher's Guide to Accompany the Norton Book of Science Fiction'. Recommended to teachers!

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### **Jeff says**

Bought during attempt to quantify The Science Fiction Canon in late 90s. Read ~50% then; determined to

read all in order now.

### 6 July 2009

The Handler \*\*1/2 -- We meet Pete, the star, & his handler. If it worked on metaphorical AND realistic levels, i'd rate it higher.

Alpha Ralpha Boulevard \*\*\* -- Super-future Earth decides to revert to simpler times. Shoulda been longer? Nice that everything isn't TOLD AT us along w/sense of full world history lurking beneath it all; sense of Myth. Resolution = pat?

Tandy's Story \*\*\* -- What's up w/her doll Brownie? Sturgeon's obsessed w/children...as aliens/others...again/still. Issues similar to prev. story: free will & happiness.

### 7 July

2064, or Thereabouts \*\*\*\* -- The future of hospitality. Theme similar to "Alpha Ralpha Blvd" but overly cynical view of humanity; see Simak's "Huddling Place" too.

Balanced Ecology \*\*\*\* -- The diamondwood farms of Wrake. Very enjoyable. Disagree w/stated solution: actual solution = on Wrake, Nature possesses active self-interest & logical self-awareness.

House the Blakeneys Built \*\*\*1/2 -- Interstellar pioneers crashland on a weird planet. Is Davidson prejudis agin hillbillies?...just me?! As w/most tales that hinge on Language Influences Mind premise, i RESPECTFULLY disagree. Enjoyed set-up & middle; not payoff.

Over the River and Through the Woods \*\*\*1/2 -- 2 children sent to visit their gramma. Like an elaborate anecdote, but a very nice one to hear. Too bad gramma's decision is so easily reached; a lot more depth to plumb.

How Beautiful with Banners \*\*\*\*1/2 -- Female dr's encounter on Titan (1 of Saturn's moons). Disch's prose is my cup o'tea. Neat idea, plot, setting; attempt to depict female character, difficult to go deep in such a short work. Consolation in her Act for reader? We're never to know who "I" is (p.136)? Makes this the rare STORY (esp. SF) for which The Narrative Purpose Question = a big one: all others so far are written cuz author wanted to tell a story so s/he wrote it omnisciently or as voice inside character's head.

Nine Hundred Grandmothers \*\*1/2 -- Special agent investigates a race of immortals. Joke w/out punchline = not funny & a story w/out payoff = not satisfying. File this w/"Nine-Billion Names of God" & "First Contact."

### 8 July

When I Was Miss Dow \*\*\*\* -- Extraterrestrial human-alien commerce & relations and alien coming-of-age tale. Wrote no notes originally! Apropos of this anthology. Think Alien *Tootsie* or *Victor/Victoria*.

Comes Now the Power \*\*\*\* -- A telepath yearns for the return of his ability. Zelazny's pompous prose; recognizable as Hemingway's laconic prose; i like former. Fear Milt will become a complete asshole (again?) or raving lunatic adds to ending's lyrical & emotional high.

Day Million \*\* -- Love c.2775 AD. All kinds of intellectual objections; i cannot enjoy it. Like an insult. Won't accept/believe implication that "symbol-manipulator" could fully & satisfactorily substitute for human-human interaction, even accepting Arthur Clarke's "3rd Law"! eg, emotional tension in "Miss Dow"

due to the "given" that HUMANS want authentic relationships.

Winter Flies \*\*\*\* -- An evening w/a dysfunctional/typical nuclear family. Again, end seems too simple & pat but, as w/"Over the River," this feels right. Boy's perspective shift had a more distanced(?) tone than that of parents' perspective shifts until near end; not sure why. Don't qualify as SF.

[Overall impression of story selection thus far = colored by reading sexism debate-through-comments between SF SQRL & Robert linked w/SF SQRL's review? Clear emphasis on stories w/gender issues? Were 60s really that devoted to such? I thought 70s = "women's lib" became more widespread.]

### 9 July

High Weir \*\*\*\*1/2 -- Science expedition investigates strange Martian relics. Intriguing (not convincing) theory re memory & sanity. Realized i really LOVE Mars exploration stories (esp Weinbaum's "A Martian Odyssey"; + "A Rose for Ecclesiastes"). & i always admire Delany's prose.

Kyrie \*\*\*\*1/2 -- Language expert Eloise Waggoner, a flamebeing named Lucifer from Epsilon Lyrae, & crew approach a black hole. Idea of love worthy of consideration + concept of humanness. Soul & "spirituality" not really important (imo). As if Anderson thought, "What would i need in order to be able to 'narrate' the experience of a supernova-to-black-hole?" & nailed answer.

For the Sake of Grace \*\*\*1/2 -- An Islamic patriarch's young daughter applies to take The Poetry Examinations. Little tension re final result because WE know it's not inconceivable that she pass nor is it desirable for the story that she fail. & once characters mention 7th level & its rarity.... Title says rest. Nevertheless, it's enjoyable. As usual, more interesting story answers "What happens next?" Father = focus. Better(?) focus = daughter's or mother's or aunt's experience OR even 2nd-rate Anna-Mary!

As Simple As That \*\*\* -- Gradeschool postapocalypse. Again, title says it. Good structure & choice of narrative device for reeling out story line at proper pace. Nice PTSD depiction & communal coming together.

Good News from the Vatican \*\*\*1/2 -- Pilgrims, tourists, & journalists sit & wait for election of new pope. Listening to Catholic radio daily commuting home = they'd never allow nonhumans. Is that Silverberg's point? Robots = souled creatures? Then is ending reverence for big-G God or for big-M Man's talents? Boils down to another tale about prejudice--& faith. Great build-up; so good that ending = let-down. Should Sixtus the 7th mean something? Compare w/"Quest for St Aquin." In conclusion, WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

### 11 July

Gather Blue Roses \*\*\* -- A daughter reminisces on her mother & her childhood. "...and with the strongest loves, one can still sense the more violent undercurrents of fear, hate and jealousy." Even for speaker = ~ harshest indictment of human emotion imaginable unless judgment is turned upon speaker. I like neither the straightforward interpretation nor this twisted version. Writing's tremendous & evokes true, horrible loneliness; yet a half-sentence undermines all positives. More vignette than story. If not in an SF anthology, would i have guessed, deduced, noticed The Secret so quickly?

Women Men Don't See \*\*\*\*\* -- Plane crash in Mexico & first contact. Best in the anthology. DESERVED its Hugo, Nebula (both?). Male voice = convincing & authentic + great insights re women from that fictive male perspective--how they see us & how they imagine themselves through our eyes especially. Plot set-up = exactly necessary.

Feather Tigers \*\*\*\* -- Alien scientists explore a nearly animal-free Earth (no humans even). Wolfe @ perfect (prose) density (eg, not as obscure or allusive as w/Severian). Love feeling of alien scientists' language having been translated into English for reader. Best build-ups => higher probability of Ending Dissatisfaction. Oh well. I just ain't grasped all implications? <=common self-reflection upon finishing one of Wolfe's works.

Mountains of Sunset, the Mountains of Dawn \*\*\*\*1/2 -- Race of flying beings traverse stars for new home. Very touching story about importance of Change: personal, cultural, psychological, emotional, physical.

Private War of Private Jacob \*\*\* -- Coming-of-age war story. I wrote no notes. "Joke's on us," i guess? Why did he take it "over to the ENEMY'S crapper" [emphasis mine]?

Warlord of Saturn's Moons \*\*\*1/2 -- Middle-aged female writer provides insight into her work. Immediately thought of Blind Assassin. Ending=that's what we tell ourselves. We're in pretty bleak times but when has that NOT been case from perspective of world's thinkers? Still, we believe in hope; it is the best we can believe.

### 18 July

Making It All the Way into the Future on Gaxton Falls of the Red Planet \*\*1/2 -- Earth couple vacation to Mars on the cheap. Title's too damned long! :-) I dunno what to make of this story. Just too impatient or inattentive to Get It? Don't "work" for me.

New Atlantis \*\*\*\* -- Musician's mathematician husband returns home after years of incarceration by totalitarian state (for thinking?). Read this WAY too disjointedly to appreciate/receive it fully. LeGuin pokes fun at an insanely Liberal Govt. Liked poetic interludes about...Atlantis? She gots it goin on--what else is knew?

Few Things I Know About Whileaway \*\* -- Notes about future Earth colony where all male humans died 900 years ago. Again: i'm not catching on. "Complete" undermining of preceding narrative at very end = postmodernist, sure, but...why give a single fetid ratshit about this then? Liked it when it was sincere effort at science fiction.

Strange Wine \*\*\*\* -- A man's identity crisis. Just plain fun. Very Twilight Zoney.

Lollipop and the Tar Baby \*\*\*\*1/2 -- Dangers of prospecting for black holes. A great madness or a great mystery? Highly enjoyable &, again, perfect Twilight Zone candidate! Explores nature of identity & i always seem to dig that.

Night-Rise \*\*1/2 -- Drunk reporter works on story of new cult that worships Dark Christ. NOT clever enough for Twilight Zone. Cooler would be that Tom=Dark Christ--but that's a story idea i've been pondering for myself.

Frozen Journey \*\*\*\* -- Victor's cryonic tank slightly malfunctions during 10yr interstellar commute. So much easier to digest Dick's reality-warping in STORY-sized bits! Sanity, neurosis; gotta admire his ability to render it & sympathize w/apparent underlying self-loathing.

Precession \*\*\*\* -- Love story akin to The Time Traveler's Wife. Beginning tested my patience but he pulled it off. Beautiful portrait of The Fear of Death?

Elbow Room \*\*\*\* -- Loneliness of the captain of Checkout, station at one end of a space Vortex. After "Precession"=easy pickins. Like it more than the 1 dragon story of hers i ever read. I wouldn't suspect underlying "feminist agenda" if not in THIS anthology.

Tauf Aleph \*\*\*\* -- Last Jew in universe prepares for death on lonely planet. Easily comparable w/"Vatican" story but much more enjoyable. How could you ever root against Og or the Cnidori?

Exposures \*\*1/2 -- Astronomer's strange, surprise discovery unfolds. Terribly tiresome beginning. Attempt @ lyrical conclusion that synthesizes Little Human Lifebits w/Big Scientific Infobits doesn't mesh OR sing.

Gernsback Continuum \*\*1/2 -- Photographer's otherworldly experience. Only barely qualifies as SF--pnelly just cuz it's by Gibson. I'm no fan of Neuromancer & was grateful this story differed from it greatly. Nothing much happens but provides some interesting commentary on current times.

Start of the End of It All \*\*\* -- Aliens recruit divorced housewife for Operation Restoration Day. If i'd known of this story before, i would've been SHOCKED had it not been included. Really like narrator's reaction to the flying. Reminiscent of TV commercials & sitcoms that poke fun at men, but overall amusing metaphor for gender relations.

Schrödinger's Plague \*\*\* -- Epistolary story about Schrödinger's Cat & Wigner's Friend *gedankenversuchen* ad absurdum (how's that for oblique glossing!). Sadly, turns the famed thought experiments into proof of Magik or something like it. The cat IS an observer (too homocentric to think otherwise) & the threat is absurd.

...the World, as We Know 't \*\*\*1/2 -- 18th century American Philosophers attempt to isolate phlogiston (look it up: i did). Explores the danger of science. Though this outcome = silly, at least based on a known-to-be-silly what-if (cf. prev story).

The Byrds \*\*\*1/2 -- Gran becomes a Rufous-necked Hornbill to rebel against totalitarian state. Funny stuff. Stereotype of The Conformist never(?) fails to amuse me. Also the Glory Seeking Hypocrite.

Speech Sounds \*\*\*\* -- Plague wipes out human language & literacy. (Terrible title.) Pretty sweet idea; see also Blindness of course. A bit hasty the intro, "love," & death of Obsidian--manipulative? Ending's a no-brainer. But trust me, i LIKED it.

Distant Signals \*\*\* -- Reviving & shooting culminating season of 60s TV show *Stranger in Town*. Inspired by *The Fugitive*? Nothing great or bad. Ending=kinda telegraphed...cuz i'd read it before?

Lucky Strike \*\*\*\* -- Alternate history of WWII. Just cuz it's an alternate history don't autoqualify as SF, THIS story especially. It's SO straight-up realistic that i didn't feel the "tension between what 'really' happened and what happens in the story."

## 25 July

Life of Anybody \*\*\* -- Ultimate reality TV show. Amusing, but not enough. Doesn't even qualify as a story.

Interlocking Pieces \*\*\*\*1/2 -- Hospital patient's night-before-surgery adventure. Fantastic ideas that deserve further exploration. IS there more to be said?

War at Home \*\*\* -- Vietnam war's effects on America. Dunno. Strange. Pnelly hits home better for children

of the 'nam era--eg, LeGuin.

The Lake Was Full of Artificial Things \*\*\*\* -- Post Vietnam War experimental psych treatment. *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*-ish. Good set-up & execution & resolution. Rightsized build-up for the payoff.

Snow \*\*\*1/2 -- Ultimate home video/memoir system. "Indictment" of technology's too harsh, but almost right. cf Day Million. Good story about love & memory.

After the Days of Dead-Eye 'Dee \*\*\*1/2 -- Lone, rural housewife's first contact story. VERY like "Start of the End of It All" & perfect for this anthology. Great suspense. Also reminiscent of *Signs*.

Bob Dylan Tambourine Software... \*\*\*1/2 -- What if Dylan became the ultimate software developer? Is this really a way to commune w/big G God? Could anybody really believe that? Dylan?

His Vegetable Wife \*\*\*1/2 -- Farmer's mail-order bride. Ugh. So grim, w/a hint of "explanation" for his terrible behavior--abandonment issues + paranoia/loneliness. Quite an affecting portrait of abuse.

Brains of Rats \*\*\* -- Scientist's thoughts on his work & gender ramifications. Could NOT be excluded from THIS anthology. Selection is definitely "skewed" toward gender issues--as others are skewed toward..? No doubt this'll be considered a Feminist Anthology. Oh, the story...not much "story" to it. A diary-ish collection of gender issues. Very Hemingway in style/tone? Is that accurate? "Ironic" style because it's considered übermenschy.

Out of All Them Bright Stars \*\*\* -- Diner waitress meets one of The Blue Men. You of throwed me for a loop w/ending Ms Kress! Now i gotta go and THINK through all o the implications & nuances. It's easier to just see men as annoyingly simple children who do NOT care for/about women & that's why it annoys her that the ALIEN is the nice man (ie, that NICE men are aliens).

Rat \*\*1/2 -- Superdrug smuggler's adventure. Not a happy story but how could it be? Drugs're bad, m'kay?

America \*\*\*1/2 -- How to turn the Eurocentric social order of the Americas upsidedown. Does Card really believe in Word Magic? Blech. Feels like an insulting view of non-honkies but if LeGuin didn't see it that way then i must be misreading.

Scwarzschild Radius \*\*\* -- Schwarzschild's unit's experience on the Russian front during WWI. Another that's hard to qualify as SF. Hard not to think of Muller as a personality INSIDE of Rottschieben, though.

Stable Strategies for Middle Management \*\* -- Genetic bioengineering's role in reshaping corporate life. Bah. All that for the jokey metaphor-turned-literal "biting someone's head off"!?

Kirinyaga \*\*\* -- Culture on the artificial world of Kirinyaga ("Kenya"). The end's too allusive for me. Now i gotta look up Uhuru & Jomo Kenyatta? What do i care? I disagree w/the cultural relativism inherent in the story & arrogance of faith in one's system & culture. I suspect the bio-bit re his formal Euro Higher Education is spozed to sway me that maybe he IS right.

A Midwinter's Tale \*\*\*\* -- Alien "dogs" (Larls) & their relations w/human invaders. Deserves another & closer reading--sign of a good (or maybe BAD) one. Fun intellectual experience at very least. I hoped Flip had eaten Larl brains & wrote to preserve what little he could.

(Learning About) Machine Sex \*\*1/2 -- Feminist twist on überhacker myth. REALLY don't dig cyberpunk.

Yet again. It don't touch me.

We See Things Differently \*1/2 -- Future where the Caliphate (Arab peoples) are THE global power. Shaking my head & sighing in disbelief. As w/"America," i read it differently than LeGuin.

Half-Life \* -- Marie Curie's final daze/days. As boring as the worst literary biographies, not SF, an essay against science, not a story, blech.

Homelanding \*\*\*1/2 -- First contact switcheroo. Again! not much for story. Is LeGuin biased against it?! Atwood's prose=great, esp since it's "this halfway language" (or translation from it into English for this book). I like conclusion of creative essay so more praise for IT than for prior efforts in this anthology.

And the Angels Sing \*\*\* -- Small-town reporter makes first contact. Don't agree w/Mary Beth's theory why nobody likes Eddie--crux of the story?

Aunt Parnetta's Electric Blisters \*\* -- Native American woman's battle w/a refrigerator?! Mkay. Attempt to depict Indian Way? *Happy Days* method of resolution: the magical perfect epiphany=happily ever after (not!).

Midnight News \*\*1/2 -- Aliens appoint 84-yr-old Helena Johnson to decide Earth's fate. Yeah, what if...? True incentive! Not. What a letdown after her decision. As lame as comic books--intentionally? Goldstein's poking fun at this common SF thought experiment? Compelling, but irritating in the end=disappointment.

Invaders \*\*\*\* -- Spaniards v Aztecs & aliens v Western civ. Best metafiction in book. Decent metaphor for SF. Parallel stories=good together.

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### **Megan says**

I thought the majority of these stories were quite good, though a few I didn't think fit very well into sci-fi, even the way the editors defined it. But overall I liked it a lot and now I need to track down more stories by some of the authors I liked the best.

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### **JT says**

Some Excellent stories. Some less so.

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