



The Del Rey Book of Science Fiction and Fantasy: Sixteen Original Works by Speculative Fiction's Finest Voices

Ellen Datlow (Editor) , Margo Lanagan (Contributor)

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With original stories by Jeffrey Ford, Pat Cadigan, Elizabeth Bear, Margo Lanagan, and others

From Del Rey Books and award-winning editor Ellen Datlow, two of the most respected names in science fiction and fantasy, comes a collection of fifteen all-new short stories, plus a science fiction novella, that could count as a virtual “best of the year” anthology. Here you will find slyly twisted alternate histories, fractured fairy tales, topical science fiction, and edgy urban fantasy.

In “Daltharee,” World Fantasy Award-winning author Jeffrey Ford spins a chilling tale of a city in a bottle—and the demented genius who put it there. In “Sonny Liston Takes the Fall,” John W. Campbell Award-winning author Elizabeth Bear pens a poignant and eerie requiem for the heavyweight forever associated with his controversial loss to Cassius Clay. From hot new writer Margo Lanagan comes “The Goosle,” a dark, astonishing take on Hansel and Gretel. In the novella “Prisoners of the Action,” Paul McAuley and Kim Newman take a trip down a rabbit hole that leads to a Guantanamo-like prison whose inmates are not just illegal but extraterrestrial.

Many of the writers you’ll recognize. Others you may not. But one thing is certain: These stars of today and tomorrow demonstrate that the field of speculative fiction is not only alive and well—it’s better than ever.

The Elephant Ironclads • shortfiction by Jason Stoddard

Ardent clouds • shortfiction by Lucy Sussex

Gather • shortfiction by Christopher Rowe

Sonny Liston Takes the Fall • shortfiction by Elizabeth Bear

North American Lake Monsters • shortfiction by Nathan Ballingrud

All Washed Up While Looking for a Better World • shortfiction by Carol Emshwiller

Special Economics • novelette by Maureen F. McHugh

Aka St. Mark's Place • shortfiction by Richard Bowes

The Goosle • shortfiction by Margo Lanagan

Shira • shortfiction by Lavie Tidhar

The Passion of Azazel • shortfiction by Barry N. Malzberg

The Lagersta?tte • shortfiction by Laird Barron

Gladiolu Exposed • shortfiction by Anna Tambour

Daltharee • shortfiction by Jeffrey Ford

Jimmy • shortfiction by Pat Cadigan

Prisoners of the Action • shortfiction by Paul J. McAuley and Kim Newman [as by Paul McAuley and Kim Newman]

The Del Rey Book of Science Fiction and Fantasy: Sixteen Original Works by Speculative Fiction's Finest Voices Details

Date : Published April 29th 2008 by Del Rey (first published January 1st 2008)

ISBN : 9780345496324

Author : Ellen Datlow (Editor) , Margo Lanagan (Contributor)

Format : Paperback 400 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Short Stories, Science Fiction, Fiction, Anthologies



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From Reader Review The Del Rey Book of Science Fiction and Fantasy: Sixteen Original Works by Speculative Fiction's Finest Voices for online ebook

Garrett Mccutcheon says

As with most short story anthologies there are hits and there are misses. In my opinion, this collection was mostly misses. A number of the stories, while well written, didn't really capture my attention or make a whole lot of impact. Maybe I just didn't "get it" with those stories, but in the end it wasn't entirely enjoyable.

Susan says

There were only two stories I halfway liked, and at least one I'd like to erase from my brain forever. Meh.

Dave says

Del Ray offers a decent collection of science fiction and fantasy tales in this book. The majority of the 16 stories collected herein were okay -- nothing truly memorable or entertaining. There are a few gems in the book, however. "Elephant Ironclads" envisions a 1950s America that shares its border with an independent American Indian nation, in which elephants are a mainstay of transportation. "Sonny Liston Takes the Fall" is a fascinating look at the "truth" behind his famous loss to Cassius Clay. "The Goosle" is a grotesque "sequel" to the Hansel and Gretel fairy tale. And "Prisoners of the Action" imagines what it would be like if the US Army held a group of extraterrestrials captive after a failed invasion of Earth. (Perhaps not surprisingly, three of the four stories I've mentioned are highlighted on the back of the book.) Overall "The Del Ray Book of Science Fiction and Fantasy" has its moments; unfortunately, there aren't many of them.

Kevin says

The stories were just OK nothing here that will really hit you over the head and say "This is great stuff!"

Gwen says

If you want to read science fiction or fantasy novels then Del Ray is the publisher to look at. Most of the sixteen short stories carried within this book were science fiction so I didn't find them as compelling as if they were purely works of fantasy. It did introduce authors I had never heard of before so I would tell you to check this out.

Kate says

I didn't care for any of the stories in this anthology. The story that was supposed to be funny I found mildly insulting. I'm not entirely sure why at least one of the stories was labeled science fiction/fantasy. Basically, I didn't get the stories. None of them clicked. I was left feeling puzzled (but not in a good way). Not my cuppa tea.

John E says

It took me a long time to slog my way through these stories. While there was almost no science at all and very limited amounts of fantasy, horror was well represented. Maybe the definitions of science fiction and fantasy have changed, but I think that old Mr. Del Rey would be upset with the use of this name on this book. I know that the fad of open-ended stories has a place, but I'd like at least one story with some closure. It seems that open-endedness is just a cheap way to not wanting to write a conclusion or maybe the author couldn't figure one out. Deeply disappointing book.

Kelly says

You had me at “Maureen F. McHugh”!

I first picked up this book because it contains a piece by one of my favorite writers, Maureen F. McHugh – “Special Economics” which, as it just so happens, I'd already read (it appears in 2011's *After the Apocalypse: Stories*) – but ultimately enjoyed all but one of the sixteen essays in this diverse collection. With elements of horror, fantasy, post-apocalyptic fiction, alternate history, and the supernatural, *The Del Rey Book of Science Fiction and Fantasy* – masterfully curated by Ellen Datlow – has a little bit of something for everyone. Especially if you prefer your speculative fiction on the dark side.

In addition to Maureen McHugh's “Special Economics,” an arguably feminist tale which takes place in a future China devastated by the bird flu, my favorites include:

* “Jimmy” (Pat Cadigan), whose eponymous (anti?-) hero is a young boy coming of age in the 1960s (the bulk of story takes place the day JFK was assassinated). Granted “enlightenment” by an alien species, Jimmy is shunned by those who can sense his difference – and want nothing to do with it. Ignorance is bliss, or so the saying goes.

* “The Passion of Azazel” (Barry N. Malzberg), a revenge story told from the point of view of a goat, sacrificed to the gods one long-ago Day of Atonement and then reincarnated as a (human) rabbinical student who fashions a golem who is quite possibly his long-dead brother goat.

* “The Goosle” (Margo Lanagan), a fittingly bleak retelling of/sequel to “Hansel and Gretel,” in which lone survivor Hansel escapes from the witch's cage only to find a world more brutal than the one he left behind. (Strong trigger warning for rape.)

Some of the stories – most notably “The Passion of Azazel” – can be interpreted from an anti-oppressive vegan perspective, which I especially appreciate.

For what it's worth, I just discovered Ellen Datlow's adult fairy tale anthology series. Wishlist ALL the books!

<http://www.easyvegan.info/2012/05/14/...>

Alex Telander says

The Del Rey Book of Science Fiction and Fantasy: Sixteen Works by Speculative Fiction's Finest Voices edited by Ellen Datlow: One of the most important and prolific editors of science fiction and fantasy anthologies today returns with The Del Rey Book of Science Fiction and Fantasy: Sixteen Works by Speculative Fiction's Finest Voices. The key term here is speculative, for while most of these shorts lack the science fiction and fantasy elements that have come to define such stories for genre readers, they are all set in seemingly ordinary worlds with outlandish and incredible plots that defy the imagination.

After an inspiring introduction from Datlow on the importance of short stories in the genre of fantastical fiction, the collection begins with The Elephant Ironclads, set in an alternate 20th century world, where a Navajo nation aims to become a recognized world power, but at the same time wants to maintain its unique culture. Pat Cadigan's Jimmy is a supernatural story set just a short time after the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Elizabeth Bear's Sonny Liston Takes the Fall takes readers on an emotional and moving journey about the famous heavyweight fighter's life and death. The high point of the collection is Margo Lanagan's The Goosle, a dark and twisted Hansel and Gretel retelling, involving mass murder, the bubonic plague, and sexual slavery.

The perfect choice for science fiction and fantasy fans looking for new authors and truly original ideas, The Del Rey Book of Science Fiction and Fantasy offers up sixteen special stories from today's freshest voices.

For more book reviews, and author interviews, go to BookBanter.

Rebecca says

Returned this one to the library after reading Margo Lanagan's devastating Goosle. Tried to continue on several times with the other stories but none seemed to stick. Five stars for Margo alone though.

Carole says

An underwhelming collection, but I go to the library and get collections like this just to find a couple of interesting and unfamiliar authors, and I did find two. These are Lucy Sussex and Carol Emshwiller. Emshwiller's "All Washed Up While Looking for a Better World" was the most amusing story in the whole collection. Sussex's "Ardent Clouds" was the most surprising one. (Of course I also liked Maureen McHugh's "Special Economics", but since I already read this in her own collection (After the Apocalypse, it doesn't count as new and unfamiliar.) These three stories stood out, but I didn't care much for the others, hence the two stars.

Kim says

I've only read the first 2 stories so far. The first was definitely speculative/alternative history, so maybe fits into "fantasy". The second... was a nice story that my reading of "When Science Goes Wrong" tells me was probably inspired by a true story, but is neither sci-fi or fantasy imho.

Still an interesting read, but I'm waiting for the sci-fi/fantasy to start.

ETA: Ok, I finished finally. The last story was probably the best. Still had an ambiguous ending, but that seemed to be the type of story Datlow likes. It was at least sci-fi, and very interesting. Also had hints of current events mixed in.

Amy says

This collection was weird. It was as if the authors were told to write regular fiction - not F, SF, or SpecFic - and just throw a tiny bit of something off/odd in at random. That's it. A very unsatisfying, if not boring, collection.

The Goosle was the best one.

Nathan says

This anthology is very uneven - some very good stories, particularly those by Lanagan & Bear, but some very average stories as well. The stories in the middle section, in particular, were quite weak. Overall, a bit disappointing. I'd hoped for more.

carol. says

Uneven collection--the three star rating is on writing skill alone. I myself rarely venture into horror fiction, so my personal taste is a two star "it was okay." If you are looking for true sci-fi/fantasy and dislike horror, this is probably not the best collection. "Speculative" is a much better description, since a couple of these stories have neither fantasy nor science fiction. One way unique aspect is that many take on issues of race/nationality, somewhat unusual in the alternative fiction fields. Most of the time the horror/discomfort is built slowly, building on an uncomfortable and eerie tone. A couple involve abuse and violence. It's clear why Ellen Datlow is a horror editor and that she is gifted at finding talented horror writers.

"The Elephant Ironclads" an interesting revision of American West history; it appears elephants have taken on the role of horses in opening the west.

"Ardent Clouds" pure fiction. Volcano chasing camerawoman flies to a vulcanists' conference.

"Gather" an alternative world fiction of a fundamentalist like society. The main character seems to be somewhat simple--a "Lennie" in Of Mice and Men.

"Sonny Liston Takes the Fall" an alternative re-imaging of a great boxing match. Again, not really fantasy or sci-fi, but it was a very interesting story. A rare focus on African-Americans.

"North American Lake Monsters" a troubled family goes on a vacation and discovers a carcass on the beach.

"All Washed Up While Looking For a Better World" a woman washes up on an island and hopes for rescue, but the island is populated by non-humans. Things change when a human man is marooned as well.

"Special Economics" a Chinese girl looks for a job in the big city. Unfortunately, the job she takes is in a factory where it's easier to become indentured than earn money.

"Aka St. Mark's Place" another odd one, with more of a horror twist. A street boy, a girl with protective parents and another runaway cross paths.

"The Goosle" a horrific re-imagining of Hansel and Gretel. Well done and creepy.

"Shira" a graduate student at the University of Damascus searches for works by a poet who described "The Small Holocaust" before it happened, and has an unusual encounter. Sweet and enjoyable.

"The Passion of Azazel" a golem comes to life. Layered with many Jewish and Kabbalist cultural and religious references that would resonate more if I understood them. Felt like I was missing a lot of this story.

"The Lagerstatte" another fiction/horror story about a woman who is forgetting.

"Gladiolus Exposed" interesting, subtle fiction that bridges on horror. Pure fiction. A urologist and his wife take a weekend retreat where he finds a gladiolus.

"Daltharee" a very interesting sci-fi tale about worlds created in bottles, and the scientists that develop them. One of the most interesting concepts of the bunch.

"Jimmy" reminded me a little of "All Summer In a Day;" an outcast boy goes missing, and the only one who seems to be able to find him is his only friend.

"Prisoners of the Action" Guantanamo Bay for a type of alien being post-"hostile action.". One of the central plot points of the story is ripped from real-life POW photos. A lawyer attempts to investigate.
