



The Year's Best Science Fiction: Twenty-Seventh Annual Collection

Gardner Dozois (Editor) , Robert Charles Wilson (Contributor) , Vandana Singh (Contributor) , John Barnes (Contributor) , Jay Lake (Contributor) , Peter Watts (Contributor) , Lavie Tidhar (Contributor) , Mary Rosenblum (Contributor) , more... Jo Walton (Contributor) , Rand B. Lee (Contributor) , Sarah Monette (Contributor) , Elizabeth Bear (Contributor) , Steven Gould (Contributor) , Albert E. Cowdrey (Contributor) , Nicola Griffith (Contributor) , Geoff Ryman (Contributor) , James Van Pelt (Contributor) , Nancy Kress (Contributor) , John C. Wright (Contributor) , Michael Poore (Contributor) , Ted Kosmatka (Contributor) , Damien Broderick (Contributor) , Adam Roberts (Contributor) , Karl Bunker (Contributor) , Robert Reed (Contributor) , Paul Cornell (Contributor) , Chris Roberson (Contributor) , Ian Creasey (Contributor) , Ian McDonald (Contributor) , John Kessel (Contributor) , Maureen F. McHugh (Contributor) , Bruce Sterling (Contributor) , Paul McAuley (Contributor) , Alexander C. Irvine (Contributor) , Dominic Green (Contributor) ...less

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From Reader Review The Year's Best Science Fiction: Twenty-Seventh Annual Collection for online ebook

Tim Pollard says

On the whole I wasn't impressed with this. Out of 32 stories, there was one 5-star story (John C. Wright's "Twilight of the Gods"), six 4-star stories ("Mongoose" by Elizabeth Bear & Sarah Monette was the best of these, and almost made the 5-stars), eight 3-star stories, six 2-star stories, two 1-star stories, and nine stories I didn't finish (they were probably 1- & 2-star stories), and one of the 4-star stories, "Useless Things" by Maureen F. McHugh, was only debatably Science Fiction rather than simply drama. This 17 out of 32 (53%) below average, and the majority of the rest being merely average.

"Twilight of the Gods" and "Mongoose" were both quite good, and certainly deserving of the title of "Best New SF", and several others weren't acceptable candidates. But by the end of anthology I was impatient to finish so that I could move on to something else.

Megan says

While the first few stories lag in interest and quality, most of this anthology is of excellent writing and thoughtfulness. The stories are written by a diverse group of authors, and to my pleasure the protagonists stretch across the range of human experience: women, women of color, men of color, and sexual minorities narrate and star alongside the straight white male staples of science fiction. This attention to diverse viewpoints offers an enriching and engaging spread of fiction for the modern reader.

Highlights of the anthology:

Useless Things, by Maureen F. McHugh

Butterfly Bomb, by Dominic Green

Infinites, by Vandana Singh

The Island, by Peter Watts

Lion Walk, by Mary Rosenblum

Three Leaves of Aloe, by Rand B. Lee

It Takes Two, by Nicola Griffith

Solace, by James Van Pelt

Hair, by Adam Roberts

Brit Mandelo says

The first thing I will say is that this is one big bastard of a book. The second is that I enjoyed it a great deal over a long period of time because of that--it's hard to go short story to short story with no breaks in between, and so this took longer than your average novel to read. As usual, Dozois picks some good stuff, and I skipped only one story (John C. Wright) in the whole thing. (That one for personal ethical reasons.)

So, also as usual, I'd recommend this collection for a huge honking bunch of science fiction short stories.

Dave says

Took me a while to get through this one, but I'm glad I did. It was like reading a science fiction magazine in which almost all of the stories were *good*!

Here were my favorites:

Vandana Singh: "Infinites"

Peter Watts: "The Island"

Elizabeth Bear & Sarah Monette: "Mongoose"

Albert E. Cowdrey: "Paradiso Lost"

James Van Pelt: "Solace"

Ian McDonald: "Vishnu at the Cat Circus"

Robert Charles Wilson: "Utriusque Cosmi"

John Kessel: "Events Preceding the Helvetican Revolution"

Ted Kosmatka & Michael Poore: "Blood Dauber"

Ian Creasey: "Erosion"

The best was "Infinites" and the most fun to read was "Mongoose".

The Worst Chemistry award goes to the cyberpunk "Edison's Frankenstein", featuring an alien substance called "Promethium" which sets water to boil, and converts charcoal to more Promethium. Promethium revolutionizes industry in the alternate Earth of this story by providing limitless fuel for steam engines.

Let's ignore for the moment the fact that there is an actual chemical element called Promethium (in fairness, not discovered until after the time of this story) which decidedly lacks these properties. How might Promethium set water to boil? There are two possibilities. The first would be that Promethium and water result in an exothermic reaction when brought into contact, liberating heat to boil the water.

We can rule out this possibility, however, because we are also told that Promethium converts charcoal into more Promethium. Although I know of no analogous chemical or nuclear process, let's suppose one exists. Thermodynamics demands that it would have to obey the Conservation of Energy Law, which states that you can't get something for nothing. Consequently, we can conclude that alien Promethium cannot have intrinsically more energy than charcoal.

Which means that alien Promethium must cause water to boil not by liberating heat, but rather by reducing its boiling point below room temperature. The problem is, you couldn't actually power a steam engine with water boiled in this manner, because it would generate no more pressure than dew. Steam engines work because the steam that drives them is hot, not because it is gaseous. Otherwise, you could run an engine with ordinary air.

Stephen Thomas says

Mammoth but woolly

When I was a kid, way back in the 70s, I devoured hundreds of SF novels. I loved the genre and still have a huge affection for it. But today I find it difficult to find contemporary SF writers that fill me with the sense of wonder achieved by the old masters (Dick, Delany, Farmer, Zelazny, to name but a few). So when I saw this I thought I'd give it a go in the hope that I might discover some new talent. It proved something of a disappointment. Although there are some good stories in here the majority are uninspiring and in some cases downright dull. It's not possible to review them all here so I'll just mention the ones I liked. My favourite was Crimes and Glory by Paul J. McAuley, a writer I've heard of but never read before. It's an interplanetary mystery that's both entertaining and inventive. Other notable stories are Events Preceding the Helvetican Renaissance by John Kessel, Things Undone by John Barnes, Mongoose by Elizabeth Bear and Sarah Monette, Solace by James Van Pelt, and Twilight of the Gods by John C. Wright. All of the above were interesting in their own particular ways and I will seek out more work by the authors. Of the rest there are a few reasonably good reads (Butterfly Bomb by Dominic Green, Blocked by Geoff Ryman, One of Our Bastards is Missing by Paul Cornell) alongside a dozen or more duds. I guess the fact that I've discovered a handful of new authors is a good result; it's just a shame that so many of the stories failed to impress.

Janet Jay says

I've truly never in my life read a book with anywhere near this many errors. I stopped counting at a dozen and there were quite a few more. Near the end it got super sloppy, with multiple times where 2 on one page were wrong, or three typos in a story, and just... wow. Pay your editors for the right amount of time or get some to do the job right, but this is absolutely embarrassing. (Actual review? A very mixed bag, as I'd expect for one this big, but I mostly enjoyed it. "Act One" by Nancy Kees was especially good.)

Magnus Itland says

I bought this (well, the Kindle edition) to read the story "Infinites" by Vandana Singh. It had impressed a close online friend to the point of "wow".

To be honest, I don't feel this particular story was science fiction, as the only extraordinary part was the mathematician visiting the realm of mathematics physically (or so he believes) on two occasions. In the context, this is a religious experience more than anything, the character even compares it briefly to the Prophet being given a tour of Heaven. It is also as a tale of the soul that the story resonates with me (and my friend, it seems).

I have not read the other stories and probably won't. Thus, no rating.

Kim says

Gardner Dozois' YBSF compilations are some of the best short story collections out there. I'm a huge fan of short fiction and of sci fi short fiction in particular and have been a long-time reader of this series. However, the past several years, I've fallen behind on reading YBSF collections because they're so giant and I can't easily cart them around with me. Hooray for e-books! I read through this from cover to cover and, although not every story was to my personal taste, I really enjoyed it. I'm very glad to get back to reading YBSF.

Dozois always had a fine touch as editor of Asimov's Science Fiction magazine and, although he retired from Asimov's several years ago, his fantastic skills at story selection and compilation are well displayed by this collection.

Sarah Giacomo says

Stories were okay--the editing was terrible, especially toward the end.

Ron Henry says

As usual, the annual Dozois "best of" anthology has lots of great stories in it. I tend to pick and choose which stories to read in this annual series, since Dozois collects a wide range of sf stories, not all of which are to my taste; even so, there were over a dozen I thought were excellent, and a number more I considered very good. For a full table of contents, see its Wikipedia pg.

James says

every single one of these collections is essential reading for true fans of science fiction short stories... each lengthy volume has a stellar array of all mini-genres and areas of powerfully influential science fiction: hard science, speculative, steampunk, alien invasions, apocalyptic/post-apocalyptic, space opera, fantasy, aliens, monsters, horror-ish, space travel, time travel, eco-science, evolutionary, pre-historic, parallel universes, extraterrestrials... in each successive volume in the series the tales have advanced and grown in imagination and detail with our ability to envision greater concepts and possibilities... Rod Serling said, "...fantasy is the impossible made probable. science fiction is the improbable made possible..." and in the pages of these books is the absolute best the vastness of science fiction writing has to offer... sit back, relax, and dream...

Robert Day says

This huuuge book took me nearly 2 years to read (off and on) but it was well worth the effort. I coughed up the full admission price for this one, which is rare for me, but it was good value for the £9.99 I paid. Anything else I say would mean talking about individual stories, but because there are about 30 of them I just ain't gonna do that, but there's a good range - something for pretty much everyone. Read it yourself!

Peter Tillman says

Partial reread of Dozois #27. Go-to review is Mark Watson's,
<http://bestsf.net/the-years-best-scie...>

Standout stories:

***Elizabeth Bear and Sarah Monette. Mongoose. Deliciously creepy critters infest a space station. 5/5

**John Kessel. Events Preceding the Helvetican Renaissance. 4.5/5; not reread this time.

Dominic Green. Butterfly Bomb. Even though I had no idea what was going on.... 4/5

Ian McDonald. Vishnu at the Cat Circus. In his 'River of Gods' and 'Cyberabad Days' future history.

Reading the reviews, it's interesting how different readers pick different favorites. About the only story loved by (almost) everyone was "Mongoose".

2/18/16 note: I can't get too interested in rereading many of these, but may just be my bad mood.

Didn't much care for Paul McAuley. Crimes and Glory, a Jackaroo story.

Ted Kosmatka and Michael Poore. Blood Dauber. Eh. Violent trailer-trash zoo story. Has moments.

Eric says

Some very good stories in here; among my favorites is Maureen McHugh's "Useless Things" -- an understated and somewhat grim story about things we do to get by. She's a good writer.

The solecisms strewn through the book are distracting. "Fair" for "fare"; multiple misuses of the possessive nominative pronoun -- it's for its. These stories deserve more respect, especially from an editor who, as the book jacket boasts, has received a Hugo Award for Best Editor "fifteen times".

On the other hand, editor Gardner Dozois has written a lovely summation of the condition of fantasy and SF publishing as of 2009 -- the year these stories were gathered. He's a good writer and a good editor. I think he needs to pay a little more attention to close editing of copy -- this is my only, small criticism.

There are fewer readers, it seems, every year. Writers must read if they are to write well. If you want to write stories, you should seek stories you love, and read them, and then read more and more. Readers should read because they find joy in doing so. Back when I was a kid, this joy in reading felt natural. I wonder what has happened to the love of reading good stories?

I look forward to reading more of the books in this series. I have a lot of gratitude for Mr. Dozois for reading these stories, selecting them, and presenting them in these books.

Clay Brown says

I've been reading Gardner Dozois' Years Best of Science Fiction tomes for a number of years. The truth is I believe I've missed the last two years of the series.

Well it appears that a lot can happen in two years. In this 27th Collection I was somewhat surprised by the

tone and subject matter of Dozois' collection.

Lately I've been hearing about a 'sea change' in science fiction writing. Young writers are coming into the field and they aren't writing about space or robots as such. In many of the new tales told here in the 27th edition I was left at times wondering when it was going to 'kick-in' Indeed I didn't really find much to interest me until about half way through. Seems to me that too many of these tales from these writers (many of them unknown to me and young) were more about fantasy fiction and the psychology of upper 'Chick-Lit' considerations!

There are one or two standouts which I will get to soon... but on the way out of the book I'm scrolling through about a million honorable mentions that Mr. Dozois decided NOT to let into the book. I was thinking, boy I sure wish I could read some of those. This collection just isn't up to Gardner's high standards! As a Science Fiction reader from the past I was looking for a bit more Imagination from these tales and much, much more bite.

I was very impressed, however with Elizabeth Bear and Sarah Monettes' story MONGOOSE, these two ladies are from the old school and very powerful writers! In their story about a man and his mongoose, cleaning out multi-dimensional critters. I found much to cheer about!

To be honest Mongoose was perhaps the only story in the entire collection that to me is even memorable.

True that I'm personally not taking it well this 'sea change' that seems to be happening. I don't want you to skip this book as it is the top in the science fiction kingdom as far as anthologies go. Yet I musn't fear to speak honestly about my own understanding of matters! And perhaps steer you to a more preferred collection of Dozios' about as I said 2 years ago!

I'd love for you, however, to buy this latest collection and place some of your views here in this post someday. Not because I'm unsure, only that you may disagree.
