

explore the ruminations over sex, adultery, guilt, and responsibility in the troubled--even mad--mind of the woman of strict Catholic upbringing (**The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne, I Am Mary Dunne, The Doctor's Wife, The Temptation of Eileen Hughes**). His occasional ventures into the fantastic have not been departures from this essaying but enlargements of perspective, as in his fantasy, **The Great Victorian Collection** (1975), and his futuristic **Catholics**, which featured a demythologized Church at peace with Marxism and Third World social objectives.

In **Cold Heaven**, Moore again considers a troubled heroine, Marie Davenport, but with the occult-realist premise of Blatty's **Exorcist**: there are indeed More Things in Earth and Heaven, and not all of them will be cute or comforting on the dashboard of your car. **Cold Heaven's** God is a fierce thunderer who makes a golem of Marie's husband in order to force her attention to a miraculous appearance of the Blessed Virgin who, in turn, would be more at home in a Stephen King novel than the **Song of Bernadette**. What hath Moore wrought? Is this an allegory? A fancy hook for the rationalist non-believer? A study of guilt and paranoia? Perhaps Moore wanted to write a Miracle of the Virgin without an ounce of smarm; but his success in doing so entails a risk of cheapening what for many are still Holy Things.

-- Thom Dunn

Minor Norton Lacks Admirable Heroine

Norton, Andre. **Wheel of Stars**. Wallaby/Simon & Schuster, New York, March 1983. 318 p. \$7.95, paper. ISBN 0-671-47001-9.

Runes, standing stones, mirrors, crystals, pendants, gates, alien beasts, realistic dreams, visions, places of power, unique scents, passages between worlds--devices characteristic of Norton's fantasy writing surface in this occult novel. What is missing is the admirable heroine who, by her own will and desire, achieves her quest and/or attains completeness.

Despite her reluctance, Gwennan, a young librarian, does become involved in the age-long quarrel of whether humans should be educated to improve the state of all or whether they should be subservient to the descendants of those who have retained knowledge of pre-cataclysmic time. It is only her own heritage, her connection with the older race, and a few protective artifacts that nullify the evil attempting her possession. Thus, as the stars move once again into the position similar to that held when the battle began, Gwennan is the tool. For the reader unable to make a commitment to the heroine, the events, the actions of the characters, and, ultimately, the resolution of the story remain unbelievable. Minor Norton.

-- Muriel Rogow Becker

Horror Tale Lacks Focus

Pape, Sharon B. **Ghostfire**. Pocket Books, New York, September 1983. 254 p. \$2.95, paper. ISBN 0-671-43350-4.

Ghostfire could be any of several kinds of books: the romantic ghost story, the supermarket gothic, or the horror novel it is purported to be. It is, sadly, none of them--because it is to some degree all of them, with the last chapter set 28 years in the future hinting at something apocalyptic a la **The Omen** or **The Stand**. Pape evidently was unsure what kind of tale she wanted to tell, and tried too many angles in too short a span; the story merely dangles at the end. Such tales of small-town horror have been done often before, and done better, by writers like Charles Grant, Peter Straub, and Stephen King; it is not a tradition to be emulated casually. Not recommended.

-- Michael E. Stamm

Cutter's Quest Continued

Pini, Wendy and Richard Pini. **Elfquest: Book 3. Starblaze**/Donning, Norfolk, VA, October 1983. 160 p. \$10.95. ISBN 0-89865-329-0. \$40, "limited" (4000 copy),

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signed, hardcover edition. ISBN 0-89865-328-2.

Cutter and his Wolfriders, still seeking the Pal High Ones, arrive at Blue Mountain where they meet of flying Elves ruled by Lord Voll. They meet Winnowill, who utilizes her healer's powers for eventually win the support of Lord Voll, who t leadership in the quest. But as they travel toward he as well as several Wolfriders are killed by troll by an unidentified group of reindeer riders paves t the conclusion of the quest in volume 4.

"Words and pictures--in this case neith perfectly without the other," the Pini's say Afterword. The quality and vigor of the graphics a rather powerful support for the storyline. But th novel," which originally appeared in issues 11. **Quest**, does not have the significant plot and characterization one would expect from a moderate novel. Recommended only for comic book fans.

-- Rot

Vintage Reynolds Radicalism

Reynolds, Mack. **The Lagrangists**, ed. by I Tor/Pinnacle, New York, December 1983. 287 p paper. ISBN 0-812-55125-7.

When Mac Reynolds died on January 30, 1983 several unpublished books. Though apparently helped bring this fiction into print, the effect i Reynolds radicalism. In fact, I would go so far as that this novel has both the strengths and the wea B. F. Skinner's **Walden Two**. The reader can primarily a thesis novel when the genre expectatio down. Set in the near future, the story seems to superpower espionage translated into a bloody colonization supremacy at the Lagrange points. A p tective is hired to bodyguard the mastermind profes L-5 project, and sinister Soviets appear. But not that complication never dominate the action, the themselves by the end of the book are swept into th enthusiasm for mankind's progress in space. The ree who are easily dispatched, are a few isolated idiots incapable of participating in the inevitable Godwin toward the future.

In other words, the plot here seems sup Reynolds's writing only comes alive (and I am not shares these views, or that it matters) when his cl are touring the wonderful L-5 colony under constru when they discuss among themselves the changes organization and the near infinite potential for more human development. In this sense, superpower pol indeed transcended and the plot perhaps not superflu as I read I kept thinking of the tours of Walden Tw long discussions of a sensibly managed utopia (Skin enough to eliminate plot almost entirely); and I hope of Reynolds yet to be published will be e Recommended.

-- Donald M

Ryan's Latest Horror Engrossing

Ryan, Alan. **Dead White**. Tor/Pinnacle, New York, 1983. 351 p. \$3.50, paper. ISBN 0-812-052541-8

It is winter in Deacons Kill, a small rural town. A savage storm is howling down on T effectively isolating it from the outside world. And Stokely's Stupendous Circus, which boasts the "fi funniest clowns in all the land," has just rolled into an abandoned railroad line. As the storm rages, the The Kill hunker down and prepare for the wo gradually realizing that the killer blizzard is the their problems, and that clowns are not always fun

Like its predecessor (**The Kill, SF&FBR 18**), shows strong affinities with the work of Charle (There is even an explicit nod to Grant's Oxrun Stati in this book.) Thus, Ryan's horrors are not gibberin but rather the stuff of more subtle nightmares. Grant, Ryan is skilled at the delineation of credi motivated characters.