



THE
SCIENCE FICTION
YEARBOOK

THE BOOK THAT DEFINES
STATE-OF-THE-ART IN SCIENCE FICTION

EDITED BY

JERRY POURNELLE

WITH

JIM BACH AND JOHN F. CARR

THE YEAR'S TOP STORIES—PLUS PENETRATING ESSAYS ON THE
FASCINATING WORLD OF SCIENCE FICTION—BY WRITERS INCLUDING
GREGORY BENFORD • DAVID BRIN • ROBERT SILVERBERG

THE
SCIENCE FICTION
YEARBOOK



Copyright © 1985 by Baen Enterprises

All rights reserved, including the right to reproduce this book or portions thereof in any form.

A Baen Book
Distributed by Simon and Schuster
Simon & Schuster Building
Rockefeller Center
1230 Avenue of the Americas
New York, New York 10020

Cover art by David Egge.

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

ISBN: 0-671-55983-4

This is primarily a work of fiction. All the story characters and events portrayed in this book are fictional, and any resemblance to real people or incidents is purely coincidental.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Main entry under title:

The Science fiction yearbook.

"A Baen book."

1. Science fiction, American. 2. Science fiction—

History and criticism—Addresses, essays, lectures.

I. Pournelle, Jerry, 1933— II. Baen, Jim.

III. Carr, John F.

PS648.S3S3 1985 813'.0876'08 85-7511

ISBN 0-671-55983-4

1984, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and Other SF Novels, Signs, and Portents, © 1985 by Algis Budrys

Hard Science in the Real World, © 1984 by Abbenford Associates

The Strange Journey: 1984, © 1985 by James Gunn

1984: The Fifty-Candle Blowout, © 1985 by Michael Glyer

New Rose Hotel, © 1984 by Omni Publications International Ltd.

Me and My Shadow, from *Unauthorized Autobiographies and Other Curiosities*, © 1984 by Michael Resnick

Me/Days, from *Universe 14*, © 1984 by Terry Carr

Silicon Muse, © 1984 by Davis Publications, Inc.

The Dominus Demonstration, © 1984 by Davis Publications, Inc.

The Crystal Spheres, © 1984 by Davis Publications, Inc.

A Day in the Life of a Classics Professor, © 1984 by Mercury Press, Inc.

The Picture Man, © 1984 by Mercury Press, Inc.

The Weigher, © 1984 by Davis Publications, Inc.

Demon Lover, © 1984 by Mercury Press, Inc.

Tourist Trade, © 1984 by *Playboy*

Editorial introductions © 1985 by Jerry Pournelle

Contents

Nonfiction

PREFACE	1
1984, <i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i> , and Other SF Novels, Signs, and Portents, Algis Budrys	4
Hard Science in the Real World, Gregory Benford	52
The Strange Journey: 1984, James Gunn	156
1984: The Fifty-Candle Blowout, Michael Glycer	328

Fiction

New Rose Hotel, William Gibson	21
Me and My Shadow, Michael Resnick	35
Me/Days, Gregory Benford	73
Silicon Muse, Hilbert Schenck	85
The Dominus Demonstration, Charles Sheffield	109
The Crystal Spheres, David Brin	134
A Day in the Life of a Classics Professor, Stan Dryer	166
The Picture Man, John Dalmas	188
The Weigher, Eric Vinicoff and Marcia Martin	210
Demon Lover, M. Sargent Mackay	261
Tourist Trade, Robert Silverberg	302

PREFACE

Jerry Pournelle

There are "best of the year" anthologies in plenty; why another? The obvious reason, to make money, is insufficient. Anthologies are never best sellers, and story collections, even "best" story collections, never sell as well as theme anthologies (such as *Imperial Stars*). Still, Jim Baen and I work well together. We have similar views on where the science fiction field—and Western civilization, for that matter—should be going. We endured the bleak times of "national malaise"; now things are different, and it's time to enjoy. The main reason we decided to do yet another "best" anthology was for the sheer fun of it.

Of course we then got so busy that it became work; but that's not so bad. It's work we enjoy. It's also useful.

Then, too, this is no bad year to begin a new series of books of science fiction. The world has been waiting for 1984 since 1948; and if the real 1984 doesn't much resemble Orwell's fictional *Nineteen Eighty-four* we may, in all seriousness, thank science fiction writers, including Orwell. Heinlein, Kornbluth and Pohl, Anderson, and a score of others not only sounded warnings whenever the society seemed headed for a cliff, but did it so amusingly that many *listened* to what they were saying.

More: 1984 marks a year in which science fiction is becoming a reality. It is the year in which the President of the United States won reelection by pledging to turn the nation from one political philosophy back to another. It was a year in which scientists and politicians alike decided, in all seriousness, to begin work to make the ICBM "obsolete and irrelevant." Meanwhile, exploitation of the space environment continued, small but significant breakthroughs were achieved in developing fusion power, and the computer revolution raced ahead. The frightening part of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was that nothing changed nor ever could. The real 1984 was much more hopeful. What better year to launch a new "best of the year" series?

Even so, this isn't precisely a "best of the year" anthology. Most of the stories in this volume probably won't win

awards, and even if they do it's likely to be coincidence. We didn't select stories for the *Yearbook* because we thought they were "best" in some abstract literary sense. I'm not at all sure what "best" in that context means, and I'm quite certain that neither I nor anyone I know has the ability to choose such works.

Our selection criteria are simple. Stories are in this book because John Carr, Jim Baen, and I all like them, and we're pretty sure that most readers will. They may not win awards. Alas, when science fiction readers vote awards, they don't always vote for the stories they like to read; often they vote for the stories they think they *ought* to like; a different proposition entirely.

The result hasn't always been beneficial. More than one story has, by winning awards, influenced editors to buy more of that kind of thing. The editor later discovers that "literary quality" doesn't insure sales. Some editors have made that an excuse and a slogan. "Quality doesn't sell." Critics eager to prove that America stinks make much of it. The public has neither judgment nor taste. You cannot write for the masses and yet write literature. Shakespeare and Dickens and Samuel Clemens might have had different views, but they're not available for comment.

John W. Campbell, Jr., was famous for his editorials. In one of his better ones Campbell put forth the proposition that the essential difference between Eastern and Western Civilization is an attitude toward teachers. In the Eastern traditions, it is the student's responsibility to understand what the teacher is saying, and thus the student's fault if the teacher isn't communicating. The West reverses that. It's the teacher's job to be understood.

As a result, according to Campbell, Eastern cultures are elitist and regimented, while the West enjoys equality and freedom. You don't have to swallow all of that to see that the concept is worth considering. I'd be the last to deny that there are worthwhile literary works that deserve survival no matter how poorly they do in the marketplace—but I'd hate to make that a rule. Readability and a good story line never harmed a work of literature.

There has to be more than that, of course. There are plenty of "good stories" that you read once and then forget. This isn't to disparage them. The world needs solid

entertainments. It also needs art and literature, whatever those are. Tolstoy said that art without moral purpose is not art at all. I think I agree with that. If you don't, read his "What Is Art?" and "An Essay on Art" before making up your mind.

Entertainment sounds frivolous. Talk of a story's "message" makes it sound dull, yet stories without some kind of message—without something to say—are never memorable, and certainly ought not be included in a yearbook. Of course all messages aren't equal. Cultural relativism, the view that all belief systems are equally valid, that all cultures are worthwhile, leads to results whose absurdity is obvious to everyone not sheltered in a university environment.

The ideal story would be entertaining and at the same time inspiring; be both diverting and educational. Such stories aren't easy to find, but here are enough to make a book.

Editor's Introduction to "1984, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and Other SF Novels, Signs, and Portents," by Algis Budrys

It was easy to select the lead essayist for this book. Science fiction writers agree on very little, but most agree that Algis Budrys is our leading critical writer.

Algis Budrys was born in interesting times. His family held high positions in the Lithuanian diplomatic corps; eventually they were posted to the United States, where his father was the representative of the government in exile during World War II. After the war ended the Soviets stole many lands; some, like Poland and Hungary, became puppet states—for many years the Minister of Defense of Poland was a Russian general—but the Baltic Republics were not granted even that much dignity. They were formally incorporated into the Russian Federated Soviet Republic.

The United States has never recognized the extinction of the Baltic Republics. Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania are, in theory, independent lands temporarily under the occupation of their Soviet masters. There was a time when we annually proclaimed "Captive Nations Week" in memory of those and other victims of Soviet conquest.

Alas, the United States has now signed the Helsinki accords, which as a practical matter end any possibility of

U.S. support to what were once known as the captive nations. In theory, in exchange for U.S. acceptance of existing borders in Eastern Europe the Helsinki agreements were to grant "human rights" to the citizens and subjects of the Soviet Empire; in practice, of course, any Soviet citizen who seeks to inquire about Soviet adherence to this agreement which the Soviet Union signed and ratified is locked in a madhouse or jailed as a traitor. So much for diplomacy.

A. J. Budrys for some years assisted his father in diplomatic work, and he continues to be interested in eastern European affairs. If anyone could make sense of 1984, he would.

1984, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and Other SF Novels, Signs, and Portents

Algis Budrys

It was the Orwellian year, and with a striking intensity it served to remind us that prediction is in the eye of the beholder. From late 1983 onward into January and February, persons on either side of the Iron Curtain who had never heard the term "speculative fiction" were assuring themselves and us that the gray era of Big Brother had indeed/indeed had not arrived on schedule over There, or over Here; that it had come, as foretold in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, from the left/right; that the late George Orwell, publishing his magnum opus in 1949, had been a seer—no, not a seer, an allegorist—no, a satirist—no, a philosopher—well, absolutely, certainly, dead wrong/right or somewhere in between, just ask the Authorities of the right/left.

By March, it was apparently felt that enough mastic of one sort or another had been spread over the subject, for it rarely arose again. There was a rather nice, probably dull, possibly accurate enough biographical piece broadcast on national public television—something brought over from the BBC—and that, of course, was the signal that the last word had been registered and we could screw the lid back down again.

It had been instructive to watch the social coping process

at work, from the first ritualistic opening of the topic—in the pretense that Orwell's thirty-five-year-old observations were only going to go/not go into effect at midnight, December 31—to its eventual subsidence under the concerted shovel blades of the entire community. So that as midnight struck again, three hundred sixty-six days later, there were only the last few ceremonialized words to be spoken at the end of the exorcism, and then *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was as safely over as the year itself.

So don't you ever believe again that the world at large invariably ignores and dismisses SF. On the other hand, if you were Orwell's ghost, you might very well wish it did. But whatever else you make of all that, the plain fact is the distinction between SF and the rest of the world has been in the process of breaking down irreparably, and it's only fitting that 1984 should have been the year in which the signal was so blatantly given. Call the job done. Large parts of the world may as yet continue to despise SF, and some may stubbornly continue to deny that they ever breathe of it. O.K., some of it always has been, and very likely always will be, as worthless as human ingenuity can make it. And the capacity to deny the obvious is ultimately the thing that separates humankind from the animals. But SF is, it is in the air, it permeates the fabric of our lives, and if it doesn't always terrify us into such grotesque posturings as *Nineteen Eighty-Four* occasioned in that year, still it tickles us, often enough, year 'round, year in and year out, where we live.

What other tickles occurred in that leap year? What did they say about us? In a year peculiarly dominated by a novel, it so happened that the most innovative work appeared in book-length form, and in various ways it was often strikingly innovative. At other times, it was not. A number of 1984 SF novels struck me as impressively competent, and what this means among other things—some of those things being quite desirable, mind you—is that there was nothing in them that improved on any aspect of SF as it stood at midnight, December 31, 1983. It was, in short, a paradoxical year, particularly when one realizes that some of the innovation came from distinctly unexpected quarters. But, then, innovation will do that, won't it, and ultimately what the paradoxes of 1984 apparently add up

to is some sign that something important, full of promise and vigor, is stirring around underneath it all, putting up pufflets of steam and/or heavier vapors through random cracks sprung up in the suddenly quivering ground. SF will do that, just about every five years. Next year, will the full irruption come? Let us see if we can tell what the new shape of the terrain might then be:

To my mind, the significant new speculative fiction novels published in 1984 were Larry Niven's *The Integral Trees*, Kim Stanley Robinson's *The Wild Shore*, Brian Aldiss' *Helliconia Summer*, Lucius Shepard's *Green Eyes*, Frederik Pohl's *Heechee Rendezvous*, Frank Herbert's *Heretics of Dune*, Frederik Pohl's *The Years of The City*, Harry Harrison's *West of Eden*, Frederik Pohl's *The Merchant's War*, Robert A. Heinlein's *Job: A Comedy of Justice*, William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, Jack Williamson's *Lifeburst*, Robert L. Forward's *The Flight of the Dragonfly* and John Varley's *Demon*, listed here in no systematic order.

Note that there is not a single outright fantasy novel on this list. Jody Scott's *I, Vampire* was a deft, interesting, often breathtakingly clever piece of work, but it is primarily a Viennese light opera of a book, just as K. W. Jeter's *Dr. Adder* is off-Broadway Grand Guignol far more than it is science fiction. Thomas M. Disch's *The Businessman* is horror/social satire; books like these are products of cross-currents, eddies, and random gusts—spume and spindrift, while down under the continental plates, far below the leaping waters, hotter, more profound upwellings stir through the molten core. You get my drift?

At any rate, while nearly innumerable fantasy titles appeared within the SF purview, there was nothing in them to match 1983's *Tea With the Black Dragon*. In 1984, fantasy novels consisted almost entirely of volumes in innumerable fantasy-adventure series that were being miscalled trilogies or tetralogies, owed altogether too much to each other's plotlines, casts of characters, and vocabularies, and in general, created the sort of soup you get from putting all the leftovers in one pot of boiling water. There were few exceptions to this pervasion of literary white-noise; none of those exceptions was skillful. In 1984, those in SF who love fantasy most—the supporters of Charles Grant's and Stuart Schiff's anthologies, the organizers of and at-

tendees at the annual World Fantasy Convention—were forced to sustain themselves by paying overweighted attention to the Stephen King genre of horror stories with inclusions of fantasy images but no integral fantasy rationale. That's an awkward posture offering dubious long-term comfort. Except as a marketplace staple—and as a database for games—the fantasy side of SF was in a spell of creative reticence during this year, whereas science fiction was volubly energetic.

Even among the anthologies, the most dramatic was Michael Bishop's *Light Years and Dark*, a book combining reprint material with hitherto unpublished stories, and published as three things: [A] A hefty collection of excellent SF short work (including some poetry, indicative of a growing trend within trends), [B] a volume to place in one's library beside *Adventures in Time and Space* (1946) and the first book in the *Science Fiction Hall of Fame* series (1970), and [C] a manifesto to the effect that the days represented in the other two books were over; there were new names, new ways of doing, new masters. Hardly an unviable proposition, although Bishop will find, if he doesn't know already, that SF through the years has easily accommodated all its generations simultaneously. Critics and other community insiders may decree that some mode or another is *passe*, but the whole body of work simply expands, only rarely and slowly expunging anything that was once at its forefront, and the readership only gains and grows with it.

But—1984; what of it? It was the year in whose waning days Jack Williamson published *Lifeburst*, a novel whose crisp, in fact brittle opening chapter announced an easy, sophisticated view of international and corporate realpolitik that had previously been the province only of Graham Greene's or Eric Ambler's sort of world view. This tone was taken with the sort of story most recently deployed by Gregory Benford (in a 1984 edition, with *Across the Sea of Suns*) and in some ways reminiscent of Fred Saberhagen's venerable *Berserker* series. But these evocations are made fully conformable to Williamson's traditional, romantic galaxy-encompassing *geist*, at whose subtlest capillary ends we find the same thing the mythopoeic visions of Abe

Merritt evoked. But Williamson is Greene's and Ambler's contemporary, Merritt's apprentice, and Saberhagen's and Benford's precursor; it is all in fact organic with him, it worked, it intrigued, it propelled. A person whose first published fiction appeared in 1928 in a scientifiction magazine has written a considerable contemporary SF novel.

What is striking is that it could have happened decades ago. The novel is in a sense a companion piece to the June publication of Williamson's extraordinary autobiography, *Wonder Child*. In that account Williamson, and Williamson's major acquaintances in the SF world before, during, and after the "Golden Age" that preceded the 1950s, are shown to be unusual people in many ways, but most of them—certainly Williamson—are in quite good contact with the realities of the world, glorious and inglorious. They are well read in the classics, fully aware of literary history, and also conversant with styles in other forms of contemporary writing. Dashiell Hammett is cited by Williamson as a model, and Williamson's own hard-scramble early life, as well as his hard-scramble middle years, thoroughly equipped him to see quite clearly into the genuine bitter experience that more comfortable readers of Hammett take to be a patina of exaggeration for effect. But none of this ever showed up in Williamson's work, any more than it did in the work of Robert A. Heinlein, Williamson's host at meetings of the pre-World War II Mañana Literary Society. Nor did it appear in the writing or the editorial influence of his acquaintance, the young Futurian, Frederik Pohl, child of the Depression streets, or in any "modern" science fiction of the Golden Age, or, for that matter, of any later age. (The exceptions are ludicrously few, and for all practical purposes they are T.L. Sherred, author of "E for Effort," a story shoe-horned into *Astounding Science Fiction* magazine by L. Jerome Stanton, briefly and heretically an assistant to editor John W. Campbell, Jr., keeper of the Golden Age.)

What makes *Lifeburst* such a peculiarly noteworthy novel—apart from its prima facie merits—is who it comes from; Jack Williamson, surely the Dean of Science Fiction at this point, and recent pitiless autobiographer. If it happened to him, it happened in some sense to all the others

who worked in science fiction and newsstand fantasy during the long years after Hugo Gernsback's 1926 *Amazing Stories* both launched and ghettoized their genre, making them despicable from the days of their youth until they were all well past mid-life. Williamson was 62 in 1970, which was about when it became possible to introduce oneself as an SF writer in respectable company, if one chose it sagaciously. The people who were galvanized into SF writing by their readership of Gernsbackian fiction made us out of whatever had made them. The SF we read and follow today owes everything to them, directly or at very close second hand. They are primeval influences, buried so deep in our substance that no one could fully trace their courses, their force, or their side-currents and welling eddies; they form our Cordilleras, our geology. Yet some of them are still with us, quite bright-eyed; some of what we do is now redounding into fresh effects on them, and in looking at them we are studying ourselves. An outstanding feature of 1984, then, is the signal opportunity it afforded us to do this.

It has long been suspected that writers like the late Edmond ("World-Wrecker") Hamilton—to name the archetype, and Williamson's closest friend—were considerably more sophisticated than superficial readings of *Captain Future* stories might indicate. Williamson's account documents this truth. It also documents the fact that in many cases—Hamilton's among them—forms of SF were promulgated by their authors' peonage to formula-ridden publishers, who were practiced in the art of paying their contributors just enough to keep them going long enough to produce the next piece. But it documents something else—that this simple trap did not enclose all writers of SF during that time. The traps that enclosed the ones who still generally hold popular respect were less simple, and operated through workings we still do not fully understand, leaving chafe marks and contusions that their victims are not always conscious of, even yet; some of them have not healed.

Williamson's autobiography visibly grapples with this; speaks movingly of Hamilton's predicament while I think unconsciously contrasting it to Williamson's willingness to scrape and sometimes literally starve rather than work

to Mort Wiesinger's editorial strictures at *Standard Magazines*; details Williamson's long, interrupted but faithful engagement with psychoanalysis in an attempt to resolve his confusions. At this distance, they seem very understandable confusions: A man with a first-class intellect, a thirst for knowledge and culture, and a track record of enormous mental and physical perseverance in the face of a Southwest dryland farmer's childhood and adolescence, found himself able to sell sciencefiction magazine cover stories with impressive frequency, but somehow could not get into contact with the real world that enclosed him. He could not cope with it unaided, could not directly articulate his reactions to it, could speak of it only in allegorical terms. Nor could even the famed Menninger Clinic help him break through his reticence.

If Williamson was one of the few SF classicists to frankly seek structured therapy, he was hardly the only one to sense a need for it. Henry Kuttner and Catherine Moore, man and wife, plunged into an earnest fascination with psychology and psychiatry that lasted as long as Kuttner's life; A.E. van Vogt was only the frankest practitioner of an ongoing SF effort to find the road to freedom from human difficulties, and of course he and John W. Campbell, Jr., were among the earliest to seize upon the promise offered when L. Ron Hubbard formulated *Dianetics*. Heinlein's lifelong fascination with religion, and his fiercely channelled idealization of troubleshooting competence, are readily seeable as a reflection of this same turmoil. And so forth—forth, for many, into alcoholism and near-deliberate suicide.

So far as I can recall, none outright borrowed the shotgun example of Ernest Hemingway from the mundane, respectable world, preferring the hazes and liver-eating habits of F. Scott Fitzgerald and William Faulkner. (Faulkner's Hollywood work in his waning days had to be rescued into coherence by Leigh Brackett, who twinged Williamson's heart when she married Ed Hamilton.) Some—like Brackett and Hamilton, and many others—simply were not that deeply troubled at any level they would show, and many, like Williamson himself and like any number of artists and non-artists anywhere, continued to function well up to the standards of the "normal"