



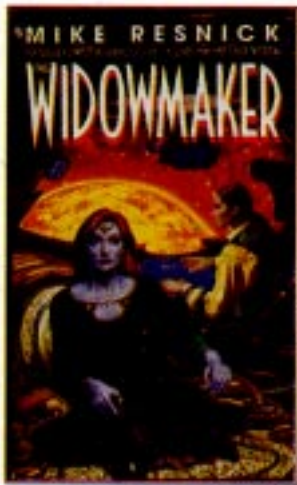
We've been reading some good books lately, and here are the ones we recommend. To give us a tip about a good recent book, drop us a line at "Bookwyrms," DRAGON® Magazine, 201 Sheridan Springs Road, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.

west of the future, once again filled with colorful characters, gun fights, and more excitement than a John Wayne movie. The added ethical question of cloning for profit is a nice twist, and both *Widowmakers* (the infirm and the clone) are wonderfully interesting characters. B.T.

feuding Creators have polarized into two groups. One group is headed by Aten, the other by Anya. Both sides use human and alien pawns to achieve their ends. The feud escalates into interstellar war, and Orion finds himself in charge of a squad of a hundred artificially bred soldiers. With them, he must obey Aten and survive the deadly enemy long enough to find Anya.

Ben Bova is a master of military and political science fiction, and this book moves at breakneck pace as Orion works to thwart Aten, find Anya, and discover the hidden goals of the creators, all while trying to keep himself and his troops alive.

Orion Among the Stars is a splendid new chapter in the Orion saga, one that will have old readers impatient for more and new readers searching for the earlier novels. P.W.



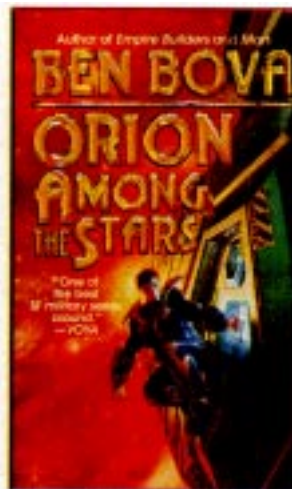
The Widowmaker

by Mike Resnick
Bantam Spectra

\$5.99

About ten years ago, Mike Resnick wrote a science-fiction novel called *Santiago*, which told the story of the search among the stars for a legendary outlaw (in the vein of Pancho Villa). The galactic frontier was a perfect futuristic old west, complete with native guides, bounty hunters, and numerous larger-than-life heroes and villains. Mike has set other stories in this future frontier, and his most recent is *The Widowmaker*.

The plot in a nutshell is that a legendary gunslinger, "the Widowmaker," has been cryogenically frozen to forestall the lethal outcome of a deadly disease in hopes of a cure being discovered. When his bank account begins to run out, he is temporarily unfrozen so that he can be cloned, and a new Widowmaker can earn a bounty to continue to pay the bills. As with *Santiago*, this is the wild



Orion Among the stars

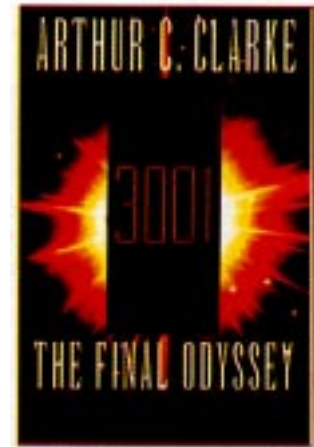
by Ben Bova
Tor

\$5.99

Orion Among the Stars is the newest addition to Ben Bova's Orion saga, in which god-like beings known as the Creators travel through time, trying to change history to their benefit. One of the mightiest of these Creators is Aten, who created Orion to serve as his tool. Throughout the saga, the reader travels with Orion to many historical or legendary times and places, where Orion must alter history to suit Aten's goals.

Orion has powers of his own, however, and he is not always as malleable as Aten would wish. Hopelessly in love with Anya, another of the Creators, Orion sometimes ignores Aten's orders to make Anya happy — and sometimes, Orion dies.

Orion Among the Stars differs from most of the other books in the saga, since it is set in the future, when the



3001: The Final Odyssey

Arthur C. Clarke
Del Rey Books

\$25.00

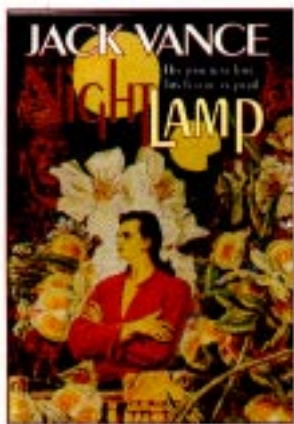
2007: *A Space Odyssey* was the first movie that I can remember seeing where I realized that I didn't really understand everything that was going on and therefore had to read the book in search of answers. After close to 30 years, Clarke has chosen to bring the *Odyssey* series to a close (if one is to believe the title) and answer a few more of the questions that have kept readers coming back through 2070: *Odyssey Two* and 2067: *Odyssey Three*, while leaving ample room open for further explorations within this time line, as every answer leads to new questions and possibilities.

Roy Poole, the astronaut set adrift by Hal, the run-amok computer of the first chapter in the series, is brought back and the riddle of the monoliths and an impending crisis of world-destroying import is resolved. That's the basic plot,

and it's definitely okay even if it isn't the breathtaking climax many of us have been waiting for. If this is indeed the Final Odyssey, it's an okay place to stop.

Where the book really succeeds, however, is as wonderfully convincing vision of the future, illustrating the evolution of socio-political thought (religion, prison reform, etc.), scientific innovation, and integration into everyday life (VR tech as the principle means of education and communication, terraforming, etc.), and a future history of space travel, research, and innovation.

Just as Roy Poole is treated to a street level view of the world a century beyond his "death," we are allowed to go along for the ride, and its a ride worth taking. B.T.



Nightlamp

by Jack Vance
Tor

\$23.95

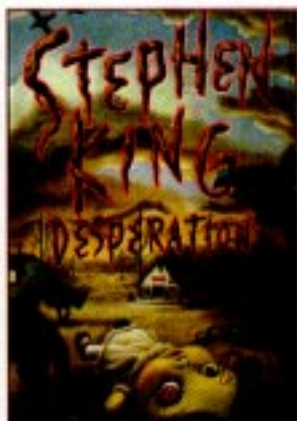
In many of his novels, Jack Vance presents the peculiar human culture of one of countless settled planets. Those farthest from the "Gaeen Reach," the center of humankind, are the most distinct and unusual. Vance's stories show the conflict between these cultures or between an individual and the status quo.

In *Nightlamp*, Jaro is a young boy who has endured hardships to the extent of losing his memory of certain important events. He grows and learns under the care of foster parents on the world of Gallingle. There, the majority of the population strives for social advancement, or "comporture." Membership in social clubs such as the Tattermen, the Clam Muffins, and the Quantorsi is the most desirable. Jaro himself seeks no status, so he is shunned as a "nimp." He is tolerated so long as he does not become a "schmeltzer," pretending to have more status than he deserves.

Throughout the story, Jaro searches for the truth about his early life while

struggling to maintain his individuality on a world in which status is everything. As he gains his majority, he searches for his past, aided by two spacemen, former policemen, and a down-on-her-luck Clam Muffin. The quest leads them all to the star Nightlamp and the world called Fader, Jaro's birthplace. On Fader, Jaro and his companions must deal with the strange culture of the Roum while seeking the answers to Jaro's questions.

For fans of Jack Vance's other work, *Nightlamp* tickles in all the right places. For new readers, it offers glimpses of strange and wonderful worlds. The societies of Gallingle and Fader, for all their strangeness, remind us that our own cultures are no less strange when viewed from the outside. While watching the mystery of Jaro's past unfold is enjoyable, the real delight of *Nightlamp* is the trip through the worlds of Jack Vance. P.W.



Desperation

by Stephen King
Viking

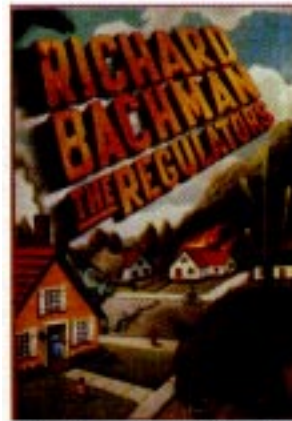
\$27.95

King is back in terrifying top form with a tale set in one those isolated desert hamlets that exist just off the main drag of any one of America's roadways (in this case Highway 50). It all starts with a family on vacation who are pulled over for speeding by a monstrous cop who decides to bring the family in for questioning on a possible drug charge. The cop is, of course, more of a monster than anyone could have imagined, and from that point on the tension doesn't stop as a disparate group of characters struggle to escape an all-powerful evil presence that seems to have escaped from the bowels of the earth.

Peopled with the King archetypes fans have come to know and love (the writer, the mother, the precocious kid, etc.), *Desperation* barrels forward leaving no character unscathed as the ranks of the good are winnowed away in the wake of

the evil presence known as "Tak." In addition to keeping the surprises coming, King also manages to explore man's relationship with God, family, and temptation in a masterfully involving page-turner that ranks up their with the best of this storyteller's previous work.

Note: The "writer character" in *Desperation* is on an author tour via motorcycle, not unlike the one King did himself, and it is a mark of King's powers of storytelling that this author-character identification never gets in the way. B.T.



The Regulators

by Richard Bachman
Dutton

\$24.95

The character names are the same (though playing different roles), the evil presence's name and source are the same, and the overall themes are the same — yet this is a very different book from *Desperation*, as further evidenced by King's choosing to publish this volume under his Bachman pseudonym.

The action of the book takes place during a typical summer in Wentworth, Ohio, when the peace and tranquility of an average neighborhood street is violently disrupted by the arrival of several otherworldly vans whose occupants open fire on the blocks unsuspecting inhabitants. Thus begins a surreal tale of terror and the unknown where the deadly threat to the neighborhood seems to be derived from an old western film named *The Regulators* and a weekday afternoon children's program à la The Power Rangers.

Reminiscent of Dan Simmon's *The Hollow Man*, *The Regulators* is more akin to Kings *The Langoliers* and *Insomnia* than to his more traditional works of contemporary gothic horror. Nonetheless, it too is a page-turner and a marvelous companion piece to *Desperation*. B.T.



The Sandman: Book of Dreams

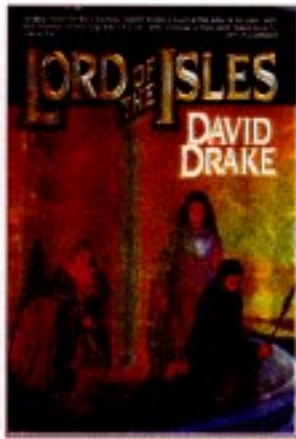
edited by Neil Gaiman and Ed Kramer
Warner Books **\$22.00**

I was a little bit worried when I first picked up *The Sandman: Book of Dreams*. I didn't think the editors could put together an anthology that would be consistent with the quality of the comics. Gaiman and Kramer have done just that. I have always thought that the art was necessary to the story, but I was wrong. The stories are exceptional. Each is another peek into the realm of the Dreaming, with more understanding of the mythology that Gaiman has created.

Delirium is one of the more popular siblings of Dream. George Alec Effinger writes a fairy tale from a child's point of view, where Delirium is a playmate. Karen Haber makes Delirium a savior of sorts. Tad Williams and Mark Kreighbaum write about teddy bears and why we should all have one. Caitlin R. Kiernan writes about one of my personal favorite characters, a raven named Matthew, in a very sad story about friendship and loss.

They are all inviting tales, but two stand out in my memory because of their uniqueness. "The Witch's Heart" by Delia Sherman is a tragic love story with a massive dose of heartbreak and a lot of soul. The second story just plain scared the wits out of me; "Splatter" takes the reader back to a familiar story from Gaiman's *The Doll's House* collection. Be sure to read this one during the day with all of the lights on — and whatever you do, don't take a nap afterward.

Overall, I am pleasantly surprised with this anthology and highly recommend it. You don't need to be familiar with the comic in order to enjoy *The Sandman: Book of Dreams*. L.B.



Lord of the Isles

by David Drake
Tor Books **\$25.95**

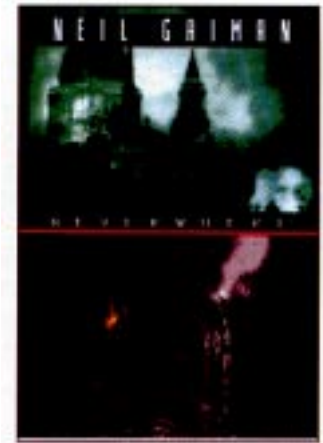
Though it is always a thrill to discover a new author of exceptional talent (such as a Terry Goodkind or a J.V. Jones), it is equally exciting to revisit an old pro, particularly when he is trying something new. For the past few years I have been pleasantly surprised by superlative change-of-pace books by some of my favorite authors. Fantasy world-builder Tracy Hickman changed gears with his extraordinary science-fiction novel *The Immortals*. Horror/SF star George R.R. Martin outdid himself with the first book in his fantasy series, *A Game of Thrones*. Now, the undisputed master of military science fiction, David Drake, author of the Hammers Slammers series, has tickled my taste-buds with another unexpected delicacy.

Lord of the Isles is a BFF, "a big fat fantasy." BFFs are noted for their bulk (way over 400 pages), their fully realized world (e.g., Krynn), and a gradually unfolding plot that only partially resolves itself in a single volume so as to allow numerous revisitations to the same world (e.g., Raymond Feist's *Magician*, Robert Jordan's *The Eye of the World*). Drake's latest work succeeds on all of these accounts, and it is a winner.

Lord of the Isles is set on a classical fantasy world where political and elemental forces are on the verge of colliding. Two young people pursue separate quests for identity, during which the scope of their own powers are made clearer, as are their distinct roles in their world, as the elemental forces empower new heights of magic that both threaten and defend not just their world and lives but also those that exist on other planes as well. Secret lineages, lost heirs, scheming politicians, and a shadowy figure known as the Hooded One all come into play in a novel that is a marvelous

page-turner and an enchanting masterpiece of epic fantasy.

Lord of the Isles (available in hardcover in July) is the new BFF of 1997. Accept no substitutes. B.T.



Neverwhere

by Neil Gaiman
Avon **\$23.99**

By stopping to help an injured girl named Door, Richard Mayhew falls helplessly away from his comfortable if rather dull life into the grotesque, fantastic world under London. There he encounters oddities ranging from disgusting rat-speakers to noble lords of subway cars. His only hope of returning to his previous life lies in helping Door in her, quest to survive the killers who murdered her family and in learning why they were sent.

Like Arthur C. Clarke's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Neverwhere* is a novel written after its screenplay. In this case, the novel follows its BBC mini-series of the same name. While both have been available in the U.K. for some time, *Neverwhere* has been tantalizing Gaiman's American fans ever since. (It appears in its US. hardcover edition in July.)

Readers of Gaiman's previous work will be familiar with the novel's crisp and clever dialogue, as quick to conjure smiles as shudders. The imagery is as vivid as in any issue of *The Sandman*, proving yet again that naked prose can be as evocative as any illustration.

The most obvious pleasures of *Neverwhere* lie in the bizarre cast of secondary characters and villains, but its soul lies in the inept but decent protagonist. Richards endurance and ultimate transformation echo the simple moral prophesied by an old woman upon Richard's departure for London: "You've a good heart. Sometimes that's enough to see you safe wherever you go." D.G.