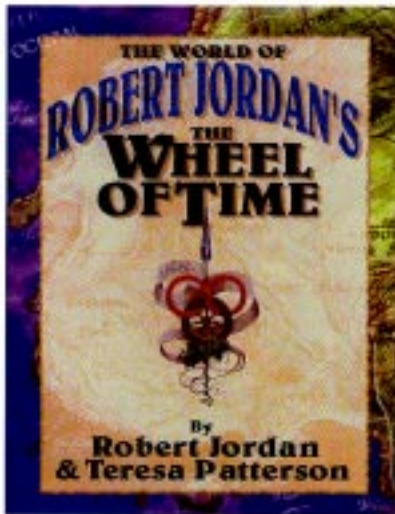




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## The World of Robert Jordan's *Wheel of Time*

by Robert Jordan and Teresa Patterson  
Tor \$39.95/HC

Any fan of fantasy literature who is not at least familiar with Robert Jordan's *The Wheel of Time* series should be. Jordan's sales alone guarantee that he'll have a major impact on the genre. Fans will enjoy his latest release, *The World of Robert Jordan's Wheel of Time*, which describes the history and geography of his fantasy setting.

The oversized hardcover book is divided into six sections that vary greatly in their effectiveness. They are in order: "The Wheel and the Power," "The Age of Legends," "The World Since the Breaking," "Some Narrative Paintings," "The World of the Wheel," and "Within

the Land." Only the "Age of Legends" and the "World Since the Breaking" sections contain new information for those most likely to buy this book—the devoted Jordan fan. Happily, these two sections comprise more than half of the book and make it well worth the price.

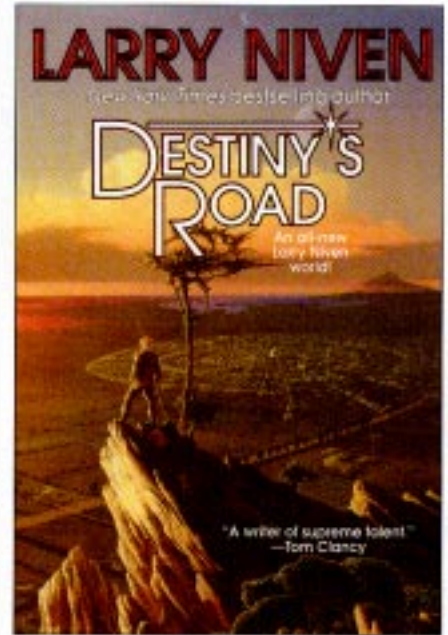
The clarified history of the world found in sections two and three are excellent. The descriptions of The Forsaken, the premier villains of the series, are also interesting. Finally, the book offers fans of this involved series a list of the thirteen major villains, a chronicle of the War of the Shadow, and detailed information on Artur Hawkwing.

The last two sections are, regrettably, nothing more than a brief rehash of what anyone who has read the books knows about the world. There are a few rare gems, like a continent that has yet to be mentioned in the series, and a closer look at the Seanchan. Neither of these two sections has enough detail to be useful to a fan, however; most of the material covered is clear from the books themselves. Additionally there should have been a brief list of all the minor characters and a description of where they are found in the books.

Anyone interested in gaming in the world of *The Wheel of Time* should have this book. Although it isn't a role-playing game book, it's an invaluable reference to the setting and characters.

It would have been too easy for Jordan to turn this out as a quick way to hold his fans' interest between novels and make some extra cash. Instead, the book adds enough detail to the history of the world to be well worth any Jordan fan's time. The novels are a better starting point for the series, but those already familiar with *The Wheel of Time* will enjoy this exploration of the world.

—JESSE DECKER



## Destiny's Road

by Larry Niven

Tor

\$24.95/HC

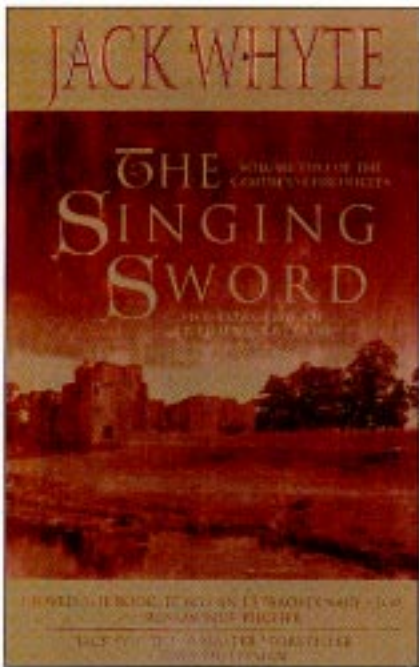
Larry Niven heads a short list of science-fiction writers who excel at creating new worlds. Of these, Ringworld is probably the best known. Now Niven gives us the planet called Destiny.

The Earth settlers of Spiral Town live at one end of *Destiny's Road*, a path of melted rock created by the Cavorite, one of two landers in which the colonists descended to the planet. The colonists struggle to maintain earthlife on their new planet. Cavorite helped, using its fusion drive to sterilize the "Crab," a peninsula jutting out from the mainland. With reduced competition from native life, earthlife has spread, providing sustenance. Even so, the colony is threatened by the lack of a necessary element that is available only in the form of "speckles," a food supplement sold only by the caravans, humans from another settlement.

*Destiny's Road* is part travelogue and part mystery, with adventure all along the way. Jemmy Boochee, a Spiral Town youth, gets into trouble and must leave the safe confines of home. He follows the "Road," determined to see its end. Along the way he encounters chugs, sharks, and the Otterfolk. The mysterious origin of speckles threatens his life.

As is often the case in Niven's novels, the world of *Destiny's Road* is so well-developed that the story seems too short. The pacing is good, however, and the journey of Jemmy Bloochee becomes an end in itself.

—PIERCE WATTERS



## The Singing Sword

by Jack Whyte

Forge

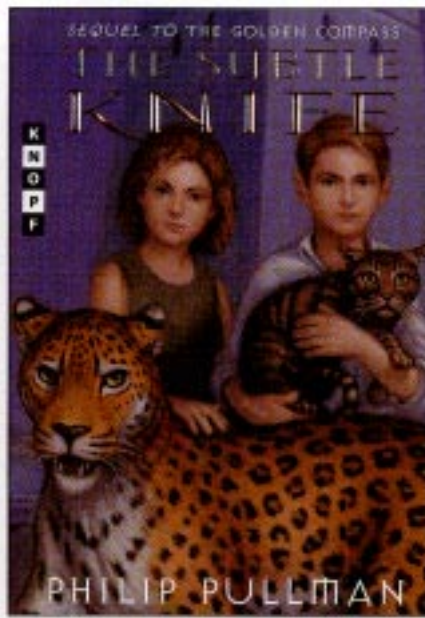
\$23.95/HC

Jack Whyte's version of Arthurian legend rises from a foundation in Roman history, with an emphasis on plausible science and military matters. You'll find no spellcasting wizards nor fire-breathing dragons in this distinctly masculine version of the rise of Camelot.

Publius Varro is the protagonist, and deciding whether he is Whyte's version of Merlin is one of the series' early pleasures. It's clear that Varro's friend Caius is the Arthurian Kay, and only in the second generation of the primary characters do we discover Uther, Arthur's sire. The story thus far concerns the evolution of Arthur's Britain rather than the famous characters of legend, and so the books are aptly called *The Camulod Chronicles*. If there is a protagonist other than Varro, it is the ideal of Camulod, a republican state rebelling against Imperial Rome.

Where *The Skystone* introduced a somewhat awkward sequence of sex scenes and polarized portrayals of women, *The Singing Sword* uses both of these elements to marry Roman history with British legend. Whyte's most successful achievements are his treatment of magic as science and his emphasis on action combined with military and political intrigue. The first two volumes promise a continually engaging and original addition to the canon of Arthurian variations.

—DAVE GROSS



## The Subtle Knife

by Philip Pullman

Knopf

\$20.00/HC

The first volume of His Dark Materials, *The Golden Compass* introduced us to Lyra Silvertongue, the clever heroine of a subtly magical Victorian earth. In Lyra's world, all humans have magical animal companions, familiars. The familiars of children Lyra's age can change shape at will, but at puberty each familiar takes its permanent form. Lyra's adventures in the first novel reveal much about the nature of familiars and the world-shaking ambitions of her scientist father, Lord Asriel.

In *The Subtle Knife*, we meet Will Parry, a boy from our own, modern Earth. As cunning and brave as Lyra, Will also must survive the dangers of his father's mysterious past. Together, Will and Lyra begin to discover how their separate quests are related—and how each leads ultimately to the most terrible of conflicts.

The most brilliant element of *The Subtle Knife* and its predecessor is the characterization of the children. These are not the innocent darlings of most fiction, but real characters, capable of both good and wicked acts. The moral choices of the protagonists are meaningful and compelling, and their quest becomes truly epic as the story unfolds.

While its virtues invite comparisons to Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, Philip Pullman has created a truly original work. No lover of fantasy fiction should miss these inevitable classics.

—DAVE GROSS

“The characters are rich, vibrant, and full of life. The storyline is quick-paced and flowing.”  
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