



Other Worlds Than These

John Joseph Adams (Editor) , Stephen Baxter , Vandana Singh , Paul Melko , Kelly Link , Ian McDonald , Simon McCaffery , E. Catherine Tobler , more... Alastair Reynolds , Ursula K. Le Guin , Stephen King , David Barr Kirtley , Mercurio D. Rivera , Jeff VanderMeer , George R.R. Martin , Carrie Vaughn , Tim Pratt , Robert Reed , Catherynne M. Valente , Yoon Ha Lee , Orson Scott Card , Christie Yant , Seanan McGuire , Robert Silverberg , Ross E. Lockhart (Contributor) , Lev Grossman (Contributor) , Michael Swanwick , Gregory Benford , William Alexander , Pat Cadigan , Joyce Carol Oates , John R. Fultz ...less

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What if you could not only travel any location in the world, but to any *possible* world?

We can all imagine such “other worlds”—be they worlds just slightly different than our own or worlds full of magic and wonder—but it is only in fiction that we can travel to them. From *The Wizard of Oz* to *The Dark Tower*, from Philip Pullman’s *The Golden Compass* to C. S. Lewis’s *The Chronicles of Narnia*, there is a rich tradition of this kind of fiction, but never before have the best parallel world stories and portal fantasies been collected in a single volume—until now.

Other Worlds Than These Details

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From Reader Review Other Worlds Than These for online ebook

Midu Hadi says

Moon Six: ★★★

An astronaut lands on the moon, only to find out it didn't belong to the Earth he comes from.

A Brief Guide to Other Histories: ★★★

Meeting your doppelganger can't be good for you.

Crystal Halloway & the Forgotten Passage:★★★

We've all been there as kids, we just don't remember.

An Empty House with Many Doors: ★★★

Living without your other half when you have other worlds where they still might be alive. Who'd ever want that?

Twenty-Two Centimeters: ★★★

Your world & others are just 22 cm apart.

Ana's Tag: ★★★

A brother & sister who look out for each other...in every universe.

Nothing Personal: ★★★

All the what-its and could've-beens can drive anybody towards crime.

The Rose Wall: ★

A little girl decides to go "out there".

The Thirteen Texts of Arthyria: ★

A man finds 12 books which lead him to the True World.

Ruminations in an Alien Tongue: ★★

An alien machine that changes probabilities so people can travel to other worlds.

Ten Sigmas: ★★★★

He isn't like anybody else, he's many.

Magic for Beginners: ★

A tv serial that may not be of this world.

A Ghost Samba: ★

A music album left incomplete because the artist dies in one world but does he live in others?

The Cristoal Effect: ★★

Someone tries to change their future in a world other than their own.

Beyond Porch & Portal: ★★★

The Fae loved their writers...a little too much!

Signal to Noise: ★★

Mick's wife died in a car accident. He travels to a parallel world to see her for the last time.

Porridge on Islac: ★★★★

Genetic experiments were banned in this world but not before people had all been turned into chimeras.

Mrs. Todd's Shortcut: ★★

Mrs. Todd liked her shortcuts, only the roads she took weren't part of this world.

The Ontological Factor: ★★★

The O.F. determines how "real" each world is.

Dear Annabehls: ★★★

Annabehls answer all your queries.

The Goat Variations: ★★★

A Puritanical government imprisons people who have visions.

The Lonely Songs of Laren Dorr: ★★★

The girl who traveled between worlds meets the loneliest man in one such world.

Of Swords & Horses: ★★★

A little girl spends half her life preparing for the time her prince would come to take her to his world.

Impossible Dreams: ★★★

A video store from another world appears in this one every night.

Like Minds: ★★

The Authority takes three "gifts" & fulfills three wishes.

The City of Blind Delight: ★★

A girl with a heart of gold likes to collect train tickets.

Flower, Mercy, Needle, Chain: ★★★

An ancient gun that destroys not only the person who is shot but his line.

Angles: ★★★★

The Japanese want to live in a world where Japan still exists. A man promises to take them there.

The Magician & the Maid & Other Stories: ★★★

The lovers separated & stranded on another world finally come together.

Trips: ★★

The story of a man who wants to travel to every possible world there is.

Violet Laflamme says

Continuing on with the trend from last year of just sort of letting books find me, I trawled through my boyfriend's ebook collection for things to put on the kindle. We don't read very similar things, but I still loaded quite a few on, hoping to get an experience by reading things outside of the genre I normally would.

For starters, I don't usually read anthologies.

I found this one to be very good. I'd say some of the stories were only three star stories, but some of them I absolutely loved. I think what I liked most was how the same concept was executed so completely differently by all of the authors. I'd recommend this one, for sure.

Milo? Dumbraci says

2,5 but closer to 2 (a 6-6.5/10). Almost all the stories are good(ish), but none memorable enough to remember 3 days later.

Plenty of great names on the cover, no great story inside - not even King's or Martin's; it is obvious the editor chose the names with selling power, not the texts, so we get a very forgettable collection.

Also, the anthology is too big for its own good - about 30 stories on just 2 subjects (parallel worlds, portals), so it gets rather boring to read after half.

Not really a waste of time, but not a book to recommend, either.

FM says

I good collection of alternate world stories, including one by Ursula K. LeGuin (sadly, recently departed) that I had never read before. (I'll have to get her book "Changing Planes" where this story came from.) It was a mixed bag of stories, some I liked more than others, but that's a good thing--shows the breadth of stories chosen and how writers can be so creative in playing with the idea of "other worlds." Very enjoyable.

Mike says

John Joseph Adams' taste in stories and mine don't always coincide, but when I saw this on \$1.99 sale and checked the authors in the table of contents, I thought there would probably be enough stories I enjoyed to make it worth buying. I was pleasantly surprised to end up enjoying almost all of them.

I've always liked portal fantasy, which is coming back into vogue again (after a break while everyone sorted

out the whole colonialist aspect). I also enjoy, to a lesser extent, alternate-worlds stories. This volume collects both types and intermixes them.

A word about the copy editing before I start in on the individual stories. I know that some authors, even well-known ones, make a lot of errors and are therefore hard to copy edit, but this particular copy editor seems to have a couple of mistaken beliefs. One is that "two hundred" requires a hyphen, and another is that "a few days' R&R" doesn't require an apostrophe. There are other missing apostrophes, comma splices, "Ok" when it should be either "OK" or "okay," an uncaught inconsistency in one story between "Life-giver" and "Light-giver," "peeling" as a homonym error for "pealing," "the Mura's front lawn" when Mura is the name of the family and it should be "Muras'," "however" and "whatever" each written as two words, some missing question marks, and numerous other little errors (missing punctuation, mostly). Then there are couple of sentences of dialog that have been rephrased, but the following sentence of dialog is still replying to the original phrasing, and now makes no sense. Overall, I marked sixty issues, which is far too many even for a book as long as this one, especially given the reputation of the (acquiring) editor and the authors.

Leaving all of that aside, how were the stories? They were, mostly, excellent. I'll briefly summarize and comment, and rate them out of ten.

"Moon Six," Stephen Baxter (7/10): alternate-world SF around the moon landings. A downer ending, in part because, in keeping with the hard-SF tradition, the protagonist is mostly an observer of significant events rather than someone who makes a difference to them.

"A Brief Guide to Other Histories," Paul McAuley (7/10): a parable of occupied Iraq, but it's one version of America occupied by another. About as dark as you'd expect.

"Crystal Halloway and the Forgotten Passage," Seanan McGuire (7/10): portal fantasy, with a Chosen One from our world battling to balance her two lives. Downer ending.

"An Empty House with Many Doors," Michael Swanwick: no rating, because I skipped this one, reading only far enough to confirm that it was Swanwick's usual depressing nihilism.

"Twenty-Two Centimeters," Gregory Benford (7/10): a first-contact alternate-Earth story, with an Earth so alternate it might as well just be any alien planet.

"Ana's Tag," William Alexander (8/10): a strong sense of place (impoverished rural America) in this tale, where the alternate world is the fae realm.

"Nothing Personal," Pat Cadigan (6/10): I found this slow-moving; it took a long time to get anywhere, and when it got there the destination wasn't, perhaps, completely worth the trip.

"The Rose Wall," Joyce Carol Oates (6/10): an inconclusive ending made this feel like the beginning of a story rather than a complete story. Well told, but I found it unsatisfying.

"The Thirteen Texts of Arthyria," John R. Fultz (7/10): reminiscent of sword-and-sorcery and at the same time of the odder kind of portal fantasy (I'm thinking of Eddison, though it isn't quite as strange as that, and fortunately lacks the ultraviolet prose).

"Ruminations in an Alien Tongue," Vandana Singh (7/10): a sense of age and decrepitude haunts this story, which moves back and forth in time and builds up a picture of an interesting life.

"Ten Sigmas," Paul Melko (8/10): I enjoyed the first of this author's alternate-worlds novels, and this story was just as good: a person with multiple selves who can communicate across their alternate worlds decides to intervene, at personal cost, to rescue someone.

"Magic for Beginners," Kelly Link (7/10): I've only read one other Kelly Link story that I recall, and that one was less of a story than a series of events, carefully depicted, which eventually just stopped. This is the same, but unlike the other story it's amusing rather than depressing. It has, for me, a tenuous connection to the theme of the book, but the connection is there.

"[a ghost samba]," Ian McDonald (6/10): tries perhaps a bit too hard to be very, very Brazilian. The story itself, under the layers of cultural reference, is simple, and I didn't find it particularly appealing.

"The Cristobal Effect," Simon McCaffery (7/10): a traveler across alternate worlds prevents the death of James Dean, which doesn't work out especially well for anyone.

"Beyond Porch and Portal," E. Catherine Tobler (7/10): springboards off the odd circumstances surrounding the death of Edgar Allan Poe, in a story which has resonance with his but isn't really a Poe kind of story. In mostly a good way.

"Signal to Noise," Alastair Reynolds (8/10): a poignant tale of a man given the chance to spend a last week with an alternate version of his wife, who has just died in an accident.

"Porridge on Islac," Ursula K. Le Guin (7/10): I'd read this before in the author's collected stories. It is, of course (given who wrote it), a strongly human story about lives in unusual circumstances.

"Mrs. Todd's Shortcut," Stephen King (8/10): I'd read this one elsewhere also, but re-read it because I remembered it being enjoyable. It still was. Reminded me of Roger Zelazny's "hellrides".

"The Ontological Factor," David Barr Kirtley (7/10): an unpromising title, but not a bad portal fantasy. Avoids the colonialist issues of the genre by positing that our reality is kind of average in its degree of realness, rather than being superior.

"Dear Annabehls," Mercurio D. Rivera (7/10): an amusing piece in which alternate versions of an advice columnist give advice on coping with a situation where people can move freely between alternate worlds.

"The Goat Variations," Jeff Vandermeer (7/10): the master of weird produces a thought-provoking riff on George W. Bush's seven-minute delay on September 11, 2001, in the elementary school where he was reading the kids a story about a goat.

"The Lonely Songs of Laren Dorr," George R.R. Martin (7/10): Martin's stuff is usually too dark and nihilistic for my taste, but this one is more poignant than depressing. Reminiscent of Fritz Lieber.

"Of Swords and Horses," Carrie Vaughn (7/10): I sometimes like Vaughn's stories more than this. It's from the point of view of the mother of the Chosen One who vanishes into the other world, and, while strong and realistic, it has the drawback of focusing on the person who isn't having the adventures.

"Impossible Dreams," Tim Pratt (8/10): a rather sweet story about a film buff who discovers that alternate movies are not the best thing he can find in a mysterious video shop from an alternate world.

"Like Minds," Robert Reed (6/10): somewhat rambling and ultimately despairing, with moments of cruelty.

"The City of Blind Delight," Catherynne M. Valente (6/10): like her first name, Valente's stuff is consistently overwritten and overornamented for my taste, but sometimes it manages to end up with a decent story half-visible through the fluff. This is not one of those times.

"Flower, Mercy, Needle, Chain," Yoon Ha Lee (7/10): I think I've read this, or another part of the same story, before; it has very much the feel of being part of a longer story, and is a well-thought-out exploration of an unusual variation on the alternate-world idea.

"Angles," Orson Scott Card (7/10): no lack of storyness here, though I was surprised to see such an experienced writer come out with "said Moshe nastily" rather than something stronger that dispensed with the adverb.

"The Magician and the Maid and Other Stories," Christie Yant (7/10): I anticipated the twist quite early, but not a bad story for all that.

"Trips," Robert Silverberg (7/10): an exploration more than a story, with Silverberg's characteristic obsession with sex, but, of course, well told.

Overall, my ratings average out to about 7/10; there were, for me, no truly earthshaking stories, but most of them I liked at least a little, and some quite a lot. And there are certainly plenty of them.

A good and varied exploration of the collection's theme.

Caroline says

- Foreword — Lev Grossman **5** *[...] reality is not where it's at, my friend, so get out by any point of egress you can find and get into somewhere better.*
- Introduction — John Joseph Adams **5** very helpful. It probably would have impacted my enjoyment of the book as a whole having not had the information here in advance
- Moon Six — Stephen Baxter **3** interesting, but dry
- A Brief Guide to Other Histories — Paul McAuley **4** interesting and enjoyable. It was a cool idea that pulled me right in.
- Crystal Halloway and the Forgotten Passage — Seanan McGuire **3** I liked the idea and the message really resonates with me, but something about it irritated me. I don't think I could have read Crystal in a novel-length story. She felt very Mary-sue-ish
- An Empty House With Many Doors — Michael Swanwick **4** short and sweet
- Twenty-Two Centimeters — Gregory Benford **0** I think perhaps they didn't want her commentary on the mission because it sounds like one rushed, long run-on sentence. The descriptions in this story are weird and confusing. *"It's internal rocket engine fired a bright orange plume against the sky's blackness. [...] the living*

cylinder lay there, half in, half out, as if exhausted." Are you describing an animal or a piece of machinery? I honestly couldn't tell if there were actual animals or weird A.I. on the planet. Not helped by the fact that she is directly communicating with it via mores code. Then in her description of the planet she says that she can see dawn coming up as quickly as a "fast moving car." She says that she can literally see pure night and pure day at the same time because the sun is moving so fast. But then also says that it's been 22 hours since dawn. That is not possible. This was all in the first 6 pages - I DNF the last 9. Did it get better? Extremely doubtful.

- Ana's Tag — William Alexander **5** Super enjoyable. Using graffiti tags to move between worlds has to be my favorite method in the whole anthology.
- Nothing Personal — Pat Cadigan **1** The actual story was mildly interesting, but nothing new. It would have been a 3 had the MC not been so unbearable. Honestly, she was a first class asshole. Who was also not very bright. She had an overly difficult time with the basic concept of identity theft, but then accepts and understands parallel dimensions with no questions? Those reactions need to be reversed.
- The Rose Wall — Joyce Carol Oates **3** Too short. It was a cool idea that felt half-finished.
- The Thirteen Texts of Arthyria — John R. Fultz **5** Cool concept with expert world building. I could *easily* have read a full-length version of this story.
- Ruminations in an Alien Tongue — Vandana Singh **5** This was beautifully written and I loved it. She writes in the same tone/style as Le Guin - and just as well. I immediately went looking for novels by Singh after finishing the story.
- Ten Sigmas — Paul Melko **5** Super cool idea. It's a concept that could have been really easy to over-complicated, but Melko's writing was clear, engaging, and enjoyable.
- Magic for Beginners — Kelly Link **5** completely excellent. I need *The Library* to be a real show, right now. I never wanted this story to end - but when it did it was perfectly done. I could gush about this story for a while - and bonus! Link mentioned Diana Wynne Jones in the story ♥
- [A Ghost Samba] — Ian McDonald **4** I really enjoyed this one, but the slew of undefined Brazilian/elitist musician slang kept me from 100% enjoying it. That being said, it was still an excellent story. The core concept was interesting and well executed.
- The Cristobal Effect — Simon McCaffery **2** meh. Too tech heavy with only a smattering of good explanations. Left me, unintentionally, with questions about how exactly it all worked. Also, the way the MC was obsessed with James Dean was just kind of creepy. And also not well explained.
- Beyond Porch and Portal — E. Catherine Tobler **4** I really enjoyed this one. The tone and descriptions pulled me right in and were perfect for a western-style story. It was very easy to imagine this world. The only reason I didn't give it a 5 was because the ending was a tad rushed.
- Signal to Noise — Alastair Reynolds **3** Interesting travel concept and story idea that was brought down by incredibly flat characters. I never felt invested in the MC and therefore had nothing but mild interest in what happened to him. Also I was confused as to why people could travel by nerve link, but not by planes anymore. I hated the alluding to some previous world changing event that was never actually explained. It would have been better to just leave it out altogether.

- Porridge on Islac — Ursula K. Le Guin **4** Written in Le Guin's characteristic easy-to-read style, I really enjoyed. I felt it could have been a touch longer though.
- Mrs. Todd's Shortcut — Stephen King **4** A cool concept that could have benefited from some editing. I felt overwhelmed in descriptions sometimes.
- The Ontological Factor — David Barr Kirtley **3** Fun, but exceedingly average. Nothing to write home about.
- Dear Annabehls — Mercurio D. Rivera **5** This one was surreal and bizarre and I loved it. Definitely a stand out of the collection. I love the idea of using Dear Abby letters to satirize how ridiculous it would be to have multiple versions of ourselves running around.
- The Goat Variations — Jeff VanderMeer **3** interesting concept, but nothing that made it really stand out
- The Lonely Songs of Laren Door — George R. R. Martin **5** beautifully written - very easy to visualize.
- Of Swords and Horses — Carrie Vaughn **4** I was a little concerned because I really disliked the first Vaughn story I read in the *Rogues* anthology, but I ended up quite liking this one. I liked reading the story from the POV of the person who is left behind when our usual MC gets spirited away to a magical world. That is something we so rarely get to see and I think Vaughn did a good job of making you really feel a parent's anguish at it happening
- Impossible Dreams — Tim Pratt **5** I love movies as much as I love books so I get a real kick out of this one
- Like Minds — Robert Reed **4** an interesting concept that was well done, but I wasn't hot on the ending.
- The City of Blind Delight — Catherynne M. Valente **2** I normally a huge Valente fan, but felt totally phoned in. It's like the empty outline of a story. I'm hard-pressed to remember what even happened, despite this being more of the stories I read most recently.
- Flower, Mercy, Needle, Chain — Yoon Ha Lee **4** I loved this one, but it was probably a mistake to put it directly after Valente's. These two write in an extremely similar style, which I assume is why Adams put the two right next to each other. However, this only ended up accentuating how weak Valente's story was. Lee's story pulled you right in and I was sorry to see it end.
- Angles — Orson Scott Card **2** This one started out good with a super interesting premise. Unfortunately it then got bogged down in this never ending "science" lecture, and then wrapped up really fast. If was as if after writing the "science" part Card was like "oh is that the time? Uh, convenient bad guy confession, the end."
- The Magician and the Maid and Other Stories — Christie Yant **3** Interesting idea with a so-so execution. I thought it was good when I finished, but when I actually thought about what happened I realized the story was full of holes
- Trips — Robert Silverberg **3.5** This one was well written with really well done world building. However, the MC felt empty and flat.

Deb Oestreicher says

This was a good anthology of stories about crossing into other universes. Talk about escapism! Like any anthology, some stories are better than others--outstanding stories like Kelly Link's "Magic for Beginners" are balanced by clunkers like Robert Reed's "Like Minds." (Your mileage may vary, of course.) Many stories are more notable for intriguing ideas than great writing, but that's pretty typical in this genre. Recommended if you're seeking some escapist reading.

Gef says

Prior to hearing about this anthology, it never really occurred to me just how much I enjoy stories set in alternate worlds. The Wizard of Oz, Stephen King's The Dark Tower, Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials--heck, even Quantum Leap back when I was a kid. It makes sense considering there is already an otherworldliness to the fantasy and science-fiction genres. So with a premise like that, I had to wonder what kinds of worlds would be presented in this anthology.

Things started off on the Moon of all places with Stephen Baxter's "Moon Six." The whole concept of multiple universes converging on a site on the Moon's surface was really intriguing, particularly through the main character's ordeal of being stranded in a universe that was not his own, but the fragmented manner in which the story was told, jumping back and forth in time, just made it too much of a chore to really enjoy.

A highlight from the anthology came a little later from Seanan McGuire's "Crystal Halloway & the Forgotten Passage." It felt like a coming-of-age tale for a teen girl who still regularly visits the fantasy land she discovered at the back of her closet as a little girl. Just a really good story that plucked every heartstring my inner child has.

Where Seanan's story tackled the story of a girl disappearing into a different world, Carrie Vaughn's "Of Swords and Horses" dealt with the parents that are left behind when the child is gone. This one had a nice is-she-or-isn't-she-gone mystery, as the mother tries to come to terms with her fantasy-obsessed daughter vanishing. Everyone else naturally assumes she was abducted, but the mother is sure there is something more to it. A tragic bit of storytelling that stood out in this anthology.

All in all, the anthology was about half-and-half with me when it comes to the number of stories I enjoyed. I was surprised by how often I skipped over stories that just didn't hook me or interest me at all, and by extremely accomplished authors to boot. It's the roll of the dice when it comes to anthologies, as it's a mixed bag and not everything is going to resonate. There's definitely a wide variety of stories, between fantasy and sci-fi, and between adventure-oriented and character-oriented. For me, however, it didn't wow me as much as I'd hoped, and many of the worlds showcased are worlds I'm not in any hurry to revisit.

Bree says

First and foremost I would like to thank Night Sky Books for letting me read and review this book for them.

Short story collections containing works by multiple authors can be hard to judge fairly on any kind of rigid scale, because it is rare that a reader will find every story equally good or bad. I have given each story its

own 1-5 rating as well. I would recommend this collection to any fantasy or science fiction fans, some of the stories were truly magical. This book is not a light read, and that is certainly not a bad thing...unless you were expecting a light read. Most of these stories are designed to make you think long and hard, and think hard you will.

Moon Six (Stephen Baxter) 1/5 – This story is rife with “space jargon” and I felt like I was reading the same page over and over again. The two distinct threads of the story never converge satisfactorily, and all the different “moon landings” take on a distressingly Sisyphean quality. I felt no interest in the protagonist and I could feel my mind reaching for that final half-blank page that always signifies “THE END.”

A Brief Guide to Other Histories (Paul McAuley) 3/5 – I was really getting into this story when it hit a wall on the 2nd to last page. Sometimes it is better to let things fade out; to let them remain unexplained or unknown rather than to try and stuff everything in a box in a hurry. No one wants to open a messy box full of chaos with a pretty bow on the outside.

Crystal Halloway & the Forgotten Passage (Seanan McGuire) 2/5 – This story is a simple little tale about the lost wonders of childhood and the death of innocence that is inevitable when we “grow up.” It read like a YA book, and a shallow one at that. I found the writing stilted and unfortunately unimaginative. Character development is non-existent, and I was unable to bond with Crystal for even a single sentence.

An Empty House With Many Doors (Michael Swanwick) 5/5 – Short but sweet, a touching account of the pain a widower can’t seem to escape after his wife passes away. Are the things that happen to him real or imagined? Not knowing the answer for sure is what makes this story great.

Twenty-Two Centimeters (Gregory Benford) 2/5 – “It was hard enough to comprehend the mathematical guys when they spoke English.” The irony abounds! I felt that way about the entire story. So many details and so much explaining about the physics of the surroundings, it was impossible to fall into the plot. If you are a die-hard space-lit junkie you might find this story to be incredible, but I found it very hard to get through.

Ana’s Tag (William Alexander) 4/5 – A bit of Narnia but a little more sinister...this story read quickly and easily without being shallow and underdeveloped. Thoroughly entertaining and little bit scary, a girl and her brother happen upon another world and all of the unknown promises and dangers that it holds. It was simple and to the point, but engrossing enough to be a very good short story.

Nothing Personal (Pat Cadigan) 1/5 – The Dread, the Dread, the Dread! The problem with this story is that “the Dread” is so heavily saturated on the pages, yet isn’t nearly as captivating and suspense-inducing as it needs to be. Talking about it more doesn’t make it more interesting. A rather mundane story about a cop, no supernatural elements are even present in over half of the story. Towards the end, the entire supernatural premise gets directly explained to our heroine by another character through dialog. This is not a story for a reader who wants to think about anything on their own.

The Rose Wall (Joyce Carol Oates) 5/5 – A tiny masterpiece of decadent words frames the terror of a lost child. This is quite possibly a perfect short story.

The Thirteen Texts of Arthyria (John R. Fultz) 5/5 – This story follows a man as he traipses from one world into varying versions of another world. The author does a splendid job of weaving in contemporary language with unfamiliar names and places of the fantasy land: Arthyria. The writing-style alone transforms this complex fantasy into an enjoyable and understandable tale of conquest that readers can gobble up

quickly and heartily.

Ruminations in an Alien Tongue (Vandana Singh) 3/5 – This story was very ambitious. Birha awaits her death while thinking back on her work with different universes, people, and places. Both engrossing and far-reaching at times, it was hard for me to decide if I liked it or not. The answer that I came to was...sort of. Sifting through the words the reader can find a lot of semi-hidden treasures about humankind, love, and even death, but how hard do you really want to work to uncover meaning when reading a short story?

Ten Sigmas (Paul Melko) 5/5 – This story gives us a new twist on the Butterfly Theory. Every time the main character makes a choice, he is split into tens and sometimes hundreds of versions of himself. The twist here being that he is aware of all of his other selves, and can access their consciousness and vision in their other worlds. This story hinges on whether or not to do one's civic duty, to help someone in trouble and what happens when "most" of our character decides to help. A great, riveting quick read.

Magic for Beginners (Kelly Link) 5/5 – This story was fun, exciting, off-beat and enigmatic. I absolutely loved it. The story centers around Jeremy Mars, a 15 year old boy, his 4 close friends, and a television show that they are obsessed with about a magical library. The author makes a gift to the reader of quirky details juxtaposed with the "normalcy" of being a teenager that is never really normal at all. This story is a bit longer than the others, almost a novella really, but definitely worth every page. It is fantastic fantasy/whimsy at its very best.

[a ghost samba] (Ian McDonald) 1/5 – This story wasn't difficult to read as much as it was just not any fun to read. The basic premise is in fact this anthology's title – there are "other worlds than these." Take that and mix in a bunch of Brazilian words that you will likely have to look up (if you care enough to, I didn't), and that's really all there is.

The Cristóbal Effect (Simon McCaffery) 2/5 – What if James Dean didn't die in that crash? What if that crash never even happened because someone went to another "when" and prevented it? Would James Dean be a great actor for the ages? If old Hollywood fascinates you, you might really dig this story. Personally I found it kind of boring, but that is more my personal preference than any flaws in the story itself.

Beyond Porch and Portal (E. Catherine Tobler) 5/5 – This story is almost (or entirely) Edgar Allan Poe fanfic. I loved it; the story, the idea...all of it! The author puts complex ideas into simple but pretty words, and speculates that the brilliant authors of our world past may have come upon their ideas by being snatched into another world and putting their experiences in that other world down on paper.

Signal to Noise (Alastair Reynolds) 2/5 – I got this story, but it didn't really get me. A man loses his wife, and swaps places with another "copy" of himself in a "world" identical to his own where his wife still lives. The premise is that he does this for closure before he goes back to his own reality where his wife is still dead, but I am still not sure if he obtains closure, or anything else from this excursion. I felt almost no emotional bond to any of the characters despite the fact that this should have been a heartbreakingly sad tale. Too long and full of empty sentiment, this one missed the mark for me by a whole world.

Porridge on Islac (Ursula K. Le Guin) 4/5 – This story is a short, thinly-veiled commentary on the dangers of genetic engineering. I would love to see this in a longer format to get to know the characters and the history behind the current state of the plane of Islac.

Mrs. Todd's Shortcut (Stephen King) 2/5 – Definitely well-written, as is the norm for our beloved King, but I found this to be a bit boring. We get 2 old guys, sitting on the porch of a store in Castle Rock, talking.

That's it. The subject matter of the characters' story takes a long time to get going (as far as short stories go), and once it does we get just a tiny taste of the supernatural treasures that King serves up so well. It's unfortunate because the "genre" of the supernatural in this story is reminiscent of Lisey's Story, which is one of my most favorite King novels.

The Ontological Factor (David Barr Kirtley) 2/5 – This story didn't really click for me. Steven goes to tend to his late uncle's mansion and finds that there are doors to other worlds within. He meets Asha, who is from another, more "real" world than Steven, and they have to defeat the demon Abraxas, who wants to do something vaguely bad to Earth. The denouement is supposed to be action-packed but I didn't feel it, and the ending is just plain blah.

Dear Annabehls (Mercurio D. Rivera) 1/5 – A kitschy, tongue-in-cheek intergalactic version of Dear Abby, the novelty of this one didn't win it any love from me. Whiny readers write in to Annabehl who turns into The Annabehls as several variations of herself come into the story. The Annabehls respond with the typical plucky go get 'em attitude that is expected from canned advice columnists.

The Goat Variations (Jeff Vandermeer) 5/5 – Mr. Vandermeer is absolutely bulletproof in my opinion, and this short story does nothing to make me reconsider. I had read this one before, but read it again so I could give a fresh review. This story has a lot to say, and says it all with efficiency and enthusiasm. The things it does not say will pop into a reader's head unbidden, because this author is an absolute master at showing, not telling.

The Lonely Songs of Laren Dorr (George R.R. Martin) 4/5 – Anyone who has read anything else by GRRM knows that "succinct" is not a word that would ever be used to describe him. In fact, I think the very thought of forcing one of his ideas into a short story is a big injustice to readers, although this one was not bad. The story is fine, a little abstract yet still easy to comprehend, but you know he could do so much more with this in a 1,000-page behemoth of a hardback. I would classify this story as an average story with an above average ending, the little twist at the end bumped this up a few points in my opinion; it is unfortunate that we don't get to experience any of the masterful character development that is this author's forte'.

Of Swords and Horses (Carrie Vaughn) 4/5 – A teenage girl disappears, seemingly into a paperback novel, leaving her grieving parents behind and searching for answers. I liked this story because it was simple. It doesn't ask a lot of the reader, and it doesn't give up a lot either. There isn't a ton of "light reading" in this anthology, but I would say this close.

Impossible Dreams (Tim Pratt) 5/5 – Part love story, part alternate-universe story; whatever you want to call it, it made me smile. One film buff meets another film buff from an alternate reality, and they both become fascinated not only with the movies of each of their respective worlds, but also with each other.

Like Minds (Robert Reed) 1/5 – So there's this...puddle (?) called The Authority. And you give it...things you write. And then it gives you back...things written (primarily) from other versions of you. And there's a sort of God, and a kid named Josh, who may or may not be the same person. The Authority exists to teach you something about your soul, or the soul of all mankind, or something to that effect. I found this story to be overly ambitious, muddled, self-important, and the ending made me actually physically roll my eyes. Yikes.

The City of Blind Delight (Catherynne M. Valente) 3/5 – A magical/quasi-real takes you to the City of Blind Delight – but is it Utopia, Purgatory, or Hell? You didn't mean to buy a one-way ticket, but would you sell your soul to stay in The City? I found this story to be interesting and not entirely unpleasant. It's a little

vague but I think that is the author's intent, and it seems to work out well for her here.

Flower, Mercy, Needle, Chain (Yoon Ha Lee) 4/5 – Flower, Mercy, Needle, and Chain are guns, each with their own special attribute. The only thing I found disappointing in this story was that as soon as I really go into it, it ended. A book or even a series of books following each of the guns and their wielders would be a fantastic read.

Angles (Orson Scott Card) 3/5 – I wish this story had skipped all the scientist stuff in the middle and just stayed with the one storyline about Hakira trying to get back to Japanese-ruled Japan. I found it interesting (and brave) of the author to use only Jewish and Japanese people as the (captive) makers and refiners of other worlds; clearly based on the stereotype of high intelligence attributed to these two groups of people, which the author does in fact address directly.

The Magician and the Maid and Other Stories (Christie Yant) 4/5 – Aurora is so in love with her husband that she is willing to prostitute herself in order to further his career in magic. Then suddenly, both her and her husband are snatched from their world and tossed into another and then separated. Sometimes the thing you are looking for is in the last place you would expect it to be – right in front of you.

Trips (Robert Silverberg) 3/5 – Chris Cameron wanders from San Francisco to San Francisco, sometimes it's a few decades in the past, sometimes it's post-apocalypse, sometimes it's almost home. The problem is that we don't really know why he is wandering, he speaks extensively of his wife back in "his" San Francisco, and of how happy they are together. He compares himself to Faust, saying he is wandering just because he can, not because he has to, not because he is running away from anything. Unfortunately all of this leads to a sense of aimlessness in the story, with no one to root for and nothing to wonder about.

Alan says

In a parallel universe very close to this one, I didn't even see this book. In a world beyond the veil behind the secret door, libraries are guarded by demons and I was not allowed to see this book. But in *this* universe... Other Worlds Than These is present for my enjoyment, and yours.

Ace editor John Joseph Adams has created what looks at first like nothing more than YATA—Yet Another Theme Anthology. With its awkward mixture of typefaces and muddy images on the cover, it's not a very attractive package. But the contents are, while still a mix, quite a bit more attractive. Adams has assembled an anthology of otherness, an explicit combination of fantasy and science fiction that goes straight to the heart of one of the things that makes sf so appealing to so many of us: the idea that there are elsewhere that, if we're brave or resourceful or knowledgeable enough, we can *get* to. Places that make our humdrum, everyday existences look exactly as shallow and meaningless as they all too often appear to be. Magical worlds, some of them; exotic quantum-mechanical alternities for others.

I'm a sucker for this stuff anyway, and had been since long before I stepped into this timeline from a world without Nissans (long story, not nearly as interesting as the ones collected here)... but Adams has done some truly fascinating curation in this volume, bringing together stories by unknowns and by powerhouses in the field, many of which were—if not new to this volume—new to me, despite that longstanding interest. I recognized many of 'em, sure... stories like Kelly Link's "Magic for Beginners," Paul Melko's "Ten Sigmas" and Pat Cadigan's "Nothing Personal" should not be unfamiliar to anyone with an interest in these realms,

and I recognized Yoon Ha Lee's "Flower, Mercy, Needle, Chain" from at least one other best-of collection. And Robert Silverberg's classic 1974 tale "Trips" ends this volume.

But others were entirely new to me, like Ursula K. LeGuin's loopy and atypical "Porridge on Islac" (the rumination on talking dogs is a hoot), Stephen King's unskippable Mainer yarn "Mrs. Todd's Shortcut," and Ian McDonald's stellar "[a ghost samba]," which reminded me strongly (and favorably) of Lewis Shiner's amazing novel *Glimpses*. Shiner himself isn't represented here, and I didn't like the Vandana Singh story all that much, myself, but I could definitely see how it belonged here.

The unknowns (or lesser-known, at least; unknown to me) were good as well, if not quite as memorable. I think Adams saved the better ones of these for later; David Barr Kirtley's "The Ontological Factor" contains a mathematical conceit as offbeat and entertaining as anything from L. Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt, for example. "Impossible Dreams," by Tim Pratt, was a poignant tale of one lucky film nerd...

In sum, John J. Adams has done a marvelous job here, and if you are, as I am occasionally, convinced that this world isn't the one you were born in... you could do a lot worse than to check this one out while you're waiting to be rescued.

Camila Dodik says

I'm on an SF-anthology reading binge, and I enjoyed the other collection edited by John Joseph Adams that I read, *The Living Dead*. I picked this one up because I was allured by the cover art, the red-black-beige/white design, and the indication that it featured stories by Ursula K. Le Guin. It's a collection of portal fantasies and parallel universe stories, and I enjoyed that the editor's introduction compares these categories and talks about how essentially linked they are. Maybe another thing that drew me to this collection was that while I was certainly familiar with the trope of parallel universes in SF and fantasies about other worlds, I'd never sat down with a whole bunch of them and thought about what they had in common. Reading this anthology does give you ample fodder for doing your own analysis of what kinds of themes crop up and seem endemic to these types of stories, and that's a lot of fun.

As for the stories themselves, I found them to be of high quality, and the collection was consistently enjoyable. There were eleven stories that I thought were exceptional, and the top among those was Joyce Carol Oates' "The Rose Wall," a heartbreakingly fable that is actually not SF at all, but is still very much a story about a portal that leads to a remote, parallel world.

There is of course, diversity among the stories that makes the anthology as a whole engaging, even when they encroach on similar terrain. Reading these stories, you'll spot two stories of girls on the cusp of growing up who must choose between this world and another, more adventure-filled one--but the outcomes are very different and interesting to compare. Still other stories explore the temptation that parallel worlds with different histories pose to music and film fanatics--what if that legend hadn't been cut down in his prime?--and the questionable and high-stakes risks taken to lay hands on such precious media. And there are stories about love and loss.

I recommend this collection. There's a tremendous amount to enjoy, compare, and of course, ponder.

Jenny (Reading Envy) says

Because of the theme of this anthology - parallel universes, alternate worlds - there is a very wide range of subgenres from science fiction and fantasy represented, in the best way. I skimmed the military stuff.

A few highlights for me:

Crystal Halloway and the Forgotten Passage by Seanan McGuire.

This was the first story I'd written by McGuire-not-Grant, and it brought me to TEARS. Feeling foolish, I tweeted this, and she responded in under 2 minutes. I was surprised, but it is touching.

Ana's Tag by William Alexander - kind of a combination of graffiti and faerie, great world.

"Both bones broken, and all the music leaked out from the fractures."

Magic for Beginners — Kelly Link - not a new one to me, but Link is a genius.

[A Ghost Samba] — Ian McDonald - oh, my first short story of his, and it is about the great lost record?! <3

Porridge on Islac — Ursula K. Le Guin - genetically modified beings, only not quite what you think. Creative!

The Goat Variations by Jeff Vandermeer - as always, great writing and a good imagination.

"There have always been times when meeting too many people at once has made him feel as if he's somewhere strange, all the mannerisms and gesticulations and varying tones of voice shimmering into babble. But it's only lately that the features of people's faces have changed into a menagerie if he looks at them too long."

Stephanie says

Average rating of all 30 short stories combined: 3.633, rounded up to 4 for the full collection. Adams chose to arrange the stories into the alternating pattern of portal universe-multiverse-portal universe, etc., which worked well so that while you knew which type of story was coming up next, you also did not get over inundated with too many of one type in a row. The alternation worked well to balance the anthology and keep the reader engaged, in addition to the actual story content.

Some of the stories were, naturally, stronger than others. The weakest ones, in my opinion, were "An Empty House with Many Doors", "Magic for Beginners" and "The Ontological Factor", as they all felt incomplete in their own ways, like they were just *part* of a story, or relied too heavily on genre tropes without adding enough to it to make it something special.

"Somebody described the experience of reading great fiction as being caught up in a vivid continuous dream, and I think movies do that better than any other kind of story. Some people say the best movie isn't as good as the best book, and I say they're not watching the right movies, or else they're not watching them the right way [...]"

— page 287, "Impossible Dreams" by Tim Pratt

My favorite stories would probably have to be: "A Brief Guide to Other Histories" (spoke to my interest in

topics dealing with war and subsequent PTSD, on top of just how attached we should ever become to our “doppelgangers” of another universe), “The Thirteen Texts of Arthyria” (the paced movement from one world to another, how one blended and faded to give way to the next, and all it implied), “Ten Sigmas” (because who has never wondered what it might be like to be connected to all your other possible “selves”?), and “The Lonely Songs of Laren Dorr” (it’s elegance, and how much more is said without actually being said; what is implied is so important, too).

For mini-reviews of each story, please see my status updates – there is one update for each and every story. The only reason this book took me so long to read is that it was not among my “priority” readings at this time – it was my small reward break book, one story at a time usually, and right before bedtime if I wasn’t too tired, at that. Definitely worth the read, as overall it was very enjoyable, and provided me with some very welcome escapes and even some food for thought.

Favorite quotes:

When I’d told him that he wouldn’t get any blame when I wrote up the incident, that I accepted full responsibility because it had happened under my command, he’d given me a haunted look and said, “Doesn’t make it right, Lieutenant. They’re Americans, like us. Americans shouldn’t be killing Americans.”

“I agree. But some of them are trying to kill us, which is why you did the right thing.”

“Maybe it was the right thing to do,” Bobby Sturges said, “but that doesn’t make it right.” Page 34, “A Brief Guide to Other Histories” by Paul McAuley

“Your path is only one of an infinite number of paths. And no one path can claim to be better or more privileged than any other. All are equal.”

“Except we have the Turing gates,” I said.

“Which gives your history the ability to interfere with other Americas. But it doesn’t give your history moral superiority. You brought us freedom. Democracy. Fine. We’re grateful for it, but we’re not beholden. We have the right to make from that freedom what we will, whether you approve of it or not. If we’re forced to become nothing more than a pale imitation of your version of America, what kind of freedom is that?” – page 38, “A Brief Guide to Other Histories” by Paul McAuley

We are what we do, and what’s done to us: if *A Brief Guide to Other Histories* was right about one thing it’s this. And because what happens to us in war is more intense than ordinary life, it marks us more deeply, changes us more profoundly. Every soldier who comes back from war is haunted by the ghosts of the comrades who didn’t make it, the people he killed or saw killed. By the things he did, and the things he should have done. And most of all by the innocent kid he once was, before the contingencies and experiences of war took that innocence away. I have summoned up my ghosts here, and tried to lay them to rest. But it seems to me now that all of us who passed through the mirror into different histories have become like ghosts, lost in the infinite possibilities of our stories, ceaselessly searching for an ideal we can never reach. – page 39-40, “A Brief Guide to Other Histories” by Paul McAuley

Could all language be translated into logically rigorous sentences, relating to one another in a linear configuration, structures, a system? If so, one could easily program a computer loaded with one language to search for another language’s equivalent structures. Or, as many linguists and anthropologists insisted, does a truly unknown language forever resist such transformations? – page 57, “Twenty-Two Centimeters” by Gregory Benford

Most people have no idea how thin that membrane between life and death can be. But then, isn’t it really better that way? Better living through denial. Who’d want to go around in a constant state of dread? – page 88, “Nothing Personal” by Pat Cadigan

(view spoiler)

Thinking the truth is easy. You fit together the puzzle more often than you realize, and in the normal course of days, you dismiss the idea as ludicrous or ugly, or useless, or dull.

Understanding is less easy. You have to learn a series of words and the concepts that come attached to those words, and real understanding brings a kind of appreciation, cold and keen, not too different from the cutting edge of a highly polished razor blade.

But believing the truth...embracing the authentic with all of your self, conscious and otherwise...that is and will always be supremely difficult, if not outright impossible. – page 304, “Like Minds” by Robert Reed

Every day is full of gambles like that: you stake your life whenever you open a door. You never know what's heading your way, not ever, and still you choose to play the game. How can a man be expected to become all he's capable of becoming if he spends his whole life pacing up and down the same courtyard? Go. Make your voyages. – page 346, “Trips” by Robert Silverberg

“I've never seen it that way. I'm running *toward*.”

“Toward what?”

“An infinity of worlds. An endless range of possible experiences.”

[...] “You had all infinity,” she says. “Yet you chose to come to me. Presumably I'm the one point of familiarity for you in this otherwise strange world. Why come here? What's the point of all your wanderings, if you seek the familiar? If all you wanted to do was find your way back to your Elizabeth, why did you leave her in the first place? Are you as happy with her as you claim to be?”

[...] “I believe in searching as a way of life. Not searching *for*, just searching. To stop is to die, Elizabeth.” – page 353, “Trips” by Robert Silverberg

Typo:

Might just be a formatting error, but it reads more or less like this on my phone (page 49, “An Empty House with Many Doors” by Michael Swanwick:

I reach up and take his

!

hand.

For just a instant she knew.... – should be “an instant”-- page 69, “Ana's Tag” by William Alexander

...into the unfenced back yard. – page 91, “Nothing Personal” by Pat Cadigan – Isn’t “backyard” usually one word, no space? Looks like separating it into two words might be a British English thing...? Curious though, as Cadigan is an American author.

“Was this another one of his quantum-theory-explains-everything-inthe-universe theories that no one understood?” – page 167, “[a ghost samba]” by Ian McDonald – should be in-the not inthe.

Most wore cheap, immersion glasses, with their arms covered... -- page 198 – remove the comma after cheap

[...] to protect those who were leaving They gathered at the southern tip ... -- page 328, “Angles” by Orson Scott Card – missing a period before “They”

[...] the Zionists you kidnaped before.” – page 331, “Angles” by Orson Scott Card – “kidnaped” should be “kidnapped” – it’s just an odd variant that I’m not used to seeing.

He voice was calm, slightly ... -- page 339, “The Magician and the Maid and Other Stories” by Christie Yant -- “He” should be “His”

Michael Bartlett says

I really like reading anthologies like this. They are perfect for reading a story or two before bed. I wish I would take the time to write down my impressions after I read them but I usually just fall asleep. Some of these stories definitely touched my dreams.

The following is a synopsis of the stories as I remember them after reading the book. Contains spoilers and definitely does not capture the essence or quality of the writing.

• Moon Six — Stephen Baxter

? I recall liking this, an astronaut gets transported to different realities where the space program has gone through different levels of success, meets other astronauts from other times and knows about the eventual end of the earth.

? A Brief Guide to Other Histories — Paul McAuley

? Ok, a soldier is charged with guarding the gate to alternate dimensions, and deals with the prejudices it causes for the people in those realities, especially while meeting his alternate self.

? Crystal Halloway and the Forgotten Passage — Seanan McGuire

? Liked this, a girl is deciding to stay between two worlds, one where she is a hero and the other she is normal. However, the “truth fairy” final caught up with her and made her forget the other world, just like all the adults before her.

? An Empty House With Many Doors — Michael Swanwick

? Liked it, a man whose wife died and is trying to drink himself to death because he misses her, travels to another universe where she hasn’t died. Contemplates staying but is taken back by people in white jumpsuits (one of whom he tried to save which is the reason he is there). In the end he is better because he knows in infinite realities, there is another world his wife is alive.

? Twenty-Two Centimeters — Gregory Benford

? Ok story, ending didn’t resonate with me. 2 people travel to an alternate world (22 centimeters away) where a homing beacon brought them. The world is frozen, except on the day side. Sea creatures try to communicate with them, using a translator on their ship. Turns out these creatures are not the ones that built

it, they were long ago. And thus foreshadowed what was to come of earth.

? Ana's Tag — William Alexander

? Kinda weird. Brother (Rico) was caught up in a debt with other-world characters to play a song or something. Sister tries to figure out what is going on with him, high school, graffiti.

? Nothing Personal — Pat Cadigan

? Didn't enjoy. A police officer trying to figure out when a sense of dread started. Turns out she has a sensitivity of timelines being crossed or something.

? The Rose Wall — Joyce Carol Oates

? Didn't do much for me. A privileged girl escapes her yard over a rose covered wall and can't get back.

? The Thirteen Texts of Arthyria — John R. Fultz

? Was ok, a man finds a book which leads him to find others and the truth of other kingdoms he had forgotten, eventually saving them.

? Ruminations in an Alien Tongue — Vandana Singh

? Don't recall this. Must not have made an impression.

? Ten Sigmas — Paul Melko

? Interesting. A person who can see all his alternative selves, stops a truck who in some realities kidnaped a girl, in many of those he dies. In only one reality does he succeed, he decides I was still worth it.

? Magic for Beginners — Kelly Link

? Don't recall this. Must not have made an impression.

? Or maybe I skipped it because it was longer than I wanted to read.

? [A Ghost Samba] — Ian McDonald

? Pretty good, A music lover gets to hear the lost unfinished master tapes of a dead musician. And then a friend of his uses a new super computer to fill in the holes from alternate realities. This friend has a theory you can live forever if you have an observer watch you playing Russian roulette, then in some reality you will always survive. At the end he is robbed at gunpoint and the gun goes click, click, click...

? The Cristobal Effect — Simon McCaffery

? Mediocre – A guy stops James Dean from dying, by being a time-traveler to a different reality. Does not turn out how he expected.

? Beyond Porch and Portal — E. Catherine Tobler

? Didn't touch me. A girl's uncle is dying. A mysterious figure keeps appearing and disappearing and telling her to go to her Uncle. Turns out "fairies" have been taking her Uncle, using his dreams and then returning him. She goes to their world and then returns older with the city destroyed.

? Signal to Noise — Alastair Reynolds

? I loved this story. A man whose wife dies has a chance to visit an alternate universe by taking over his "twins" body and be with her "twin" who still lives.. He can't stay forever, the signal degrades. The counterparts know and invite him. She is kind to him, he feels better.

? Porridge on Islac — Ursula K. Le Guin

? Cute story. In a world where you can take airplanes to different "planes" A visitor, finds one where genetic modification got out of control and there are lot of strange creatures. He falls in love with a girl who is partially made of maize.

? Mrs. Todd's Shortcut — Stephen King

? Good writing, enjoyable story. A woman is obsessed with finding the shortest way to wherever she is driving. She disappeared several years ago. Her old handyman tells a story about when he went with her on one, and he believes she was able to drive through un-real places. She looked younger whenever she was driving like that. At the end, she comes back and takes him with her.

? The Ontological Factor — David Barr Kirtley

? Liked this. A man finds doors to alternate worlds. These worlds are numbered 1-10 with the bigger numbers being "realer". So that if you hit someone for a 2 with a weapon from 6 they will disappear. He (a 5) helps a woman (10) fight a bad daemon from stealing the reality from the worlds.

? Dear Annabehls — Mercurio D. Rivera

? Fun. An advice columnist gives advice to people in a world where you can grab people / stuff from parallel universes. The advice gets more bizarre as the damage to the universe becomes apparent.

? The Goat Variations — Jeff VanderMeer

? Ok. A perspective of George Bush on Sept 11, 2001 at the school, when he could see alternate realities thanks to a machine and people that are being kept in a bunker, miles underground.

? The Lonely Songs of Laren Door — George R. R. Martin

? Pretty good. A woman travels between worlds looking for her lost lover who 7 bad beings stole. She is in a world where a man is being held captive alone on a planet the same bad guys. They can only go out during the day, at night the bad people will torcher the. She stays a month, thy fall in love, he sings her songs. At last she leaves.

? Of Swords and Horses — Carrie Vaughn

? Good. A girl grows up learning how to fence and ride horses instead of wanting to be a princess like her mom did. She vanishes and her parents are distraught. But one day her mom sees her again, she has been fighting to keep evil away from their world on a ship that appears in a mist on the lake.

? Impossible Dreams — Tim Pratt

? Loved this. A movie fanatic finds a video store from another reality where movies are slightly different. He can't rent anything because only nickels work and the video formats are different, but he falls for the clerk. The window the store is accessible keeps getting shorter and shorter and he finally tells the girl about here he is from. They live happily ever after.

? Like Minds — Robert Reed

? Good, interesting Not satisfied at ending. – A person can pay to a place where you can ask a “computer / lake?” for three items from different worlds, they mostly ask for things from their other selves like books, movies, etc. Since there are infinite realities whatever you ask it always is able to bring it back. Of course this is addicting and becomes self-destructive. From the perspective of many different selves of the narrator.

? The City of Blind Delight — Catherynne M. Valente

? Weird, ok. A train that goes to every possible city, takes a man to a weird city where streets are made of bread and river of bourbon. A whore with golden insides shows him around, then takes his ticket out so he can never leave.

? Flower, Mercy, Needle, Chain — Yoon Ha Lee

? Really liked. A woman who is in charge of a unique gun which kills the ancestors of its victims is asked by a robot to kill the descendant of the gun's maker (and 3 other unique guns). She evaluates the pros and cons as well as how she got here in life.

? Angles — Orson Scott Card

? Good story. A Japanese descendant wants to travel to a world where Japan was still able to live on their Island, finds someone who did the same for the Jews. The way to do this was discovered by a scientist who investigates poltergeist phenomenon despite warnings from his friends. It ends up being a trap, but the trappers were double crossed.

? The Magician and the Maid and Other Stories — Christie Yant

? OK story, predictable end. A girl is trying to get back to her own world, where her lover lives. Has to deal with a cranky old magician, there are other fairy stories that tie them together.

? Trips — Robert Silverberg

? Decent. A man visits different worlds of San Francisco. Has adventures, meets alternate versions of his wife.

Deborah Gallatin says

Imaginative & Engaging!

If possible, I would've given this book more than 5 stars. Each & every story was well written, filled with creativity, and had not a dull moment anywhere.

Although I loved the entire book, certain stories struck me as A+ standouts. The first was The Goat Variations, written by Jeff Vandermeer. If after reading this story, you find yourself still not a fan of the fantasy genre, go back and re-read it. I can almost assure you, this one will make you a fan.

The second story I mention because I personally believe it is the best of the collection, Impossible Dreams, written by Tim Pratt.

This is another gem hidden away in this collection of tales. Not that they're not all terrific stories, mind you, it's just that this is one of those rare pieces you come across once in awhile that makes you so happy to be an avid reader.
