



Eclipse 1: New Science Fiction and Fantasy

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An eclipse is a rare and unusual event, when the world is transformed and the sky becomes a dark eldritch thing. It's a time when anything could happen, when any kind of story just might be true. That sense of the strange and wonderful guides *Eclipse: New Science Fiction and Fantasy*, the first volume in an exciting new annual anthology series edited by acclaimed anthologist Jonathan Strahan.

Set to become a major event on the science fiction and fantasy calendar, *Eclipse: New Science Fiction and Fantasy* gathers together new science fiction and fantasy stories by the best writers working today. You can see that in *Eclipse 1*, which features extraordinary tales by Peter S. Beagle, Jack Dann & Paul Brandon, Terry Dowling, Andy Duncan, Jeffrey Ford, Kathleen Ann Goonan, Eileen Gunn, Gwyneth Jones, Ellen Klages, Maureen F. McHugh, Garth Nix, Lucius Shepard, Bruce Sterling and Ysabeau S. Wilce.

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Eclipse 1: New Science Fiction and Fantasy Details

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From Reader Review Eclipse 1: New Science Fiction and Fantasy for online ebook

Paul Perry says

4.5 stars

A generally excellent collection of SF stories from 2007, running the gamut of speculative fiction, but with a distinct slant toward the left-field and downright weird. 'Toother' by Terry Dowling is a weird psychic murder mystery - brilliant, but let down by a rushed denouement, I thought - while Jeffrey Ford's 'The Drowned Life' and Andy Duncan's 'Unique Chicken Goes in Reverse' are pretty much unclassifiable.

'The Transformation of Tag' from Paul Brandon & Jack Dann was funny, and reminiscent of the Alan Moore Futureshock 'The Wages of Sin', while Ellen Klages 'Mrs Zeno's Paradox' was perfect, clever little vignette.

The other stand-outs were 'The Lustration' by Bruce Sterling, which uses a planet-girdling computer of a peculiar sort to discuss what exactly is intelligence, and 'Quartermaster Returns' from Ysabeau S. Wilce, a weirdly brilliant and hilarious fantasy western.

Ian C says

Billed as Sci-fi, it's more fantasy. One of, if not the, worst compilations I've ever read. Were if not for my somewhat obsessive/compulsive nature, I would have tossed this into the fireplace. Even Bruce Sterling's story failed for me. The only standouts are Lucius Shepard's story "Larissa Miusov", and Paul Brandon & Jack Dann's "The Transformation of Targ", the latter being the best story included in this book. Also Ellen Klages' "Mrs. Zeno Paradox", (the shortest tale in this book) was somewhat interesting.

Gareth D. says

First posted on SF Crowsnest April 2009.

In his introduction, editor Jonathan Strahan points out that he was looking for a very broad definition of science fiction and fantasy, and this volume certainly fulfils that brief. The scope is so broad in fact that several of the stories were barely speculative at all. If you're looking for high fantasy and space opera then you'll likely be disappointed. All of the stories are well written, but I obviously have a very different taste to the editor as I didn't find many of them very entertaining or satisfying. There were a few that I did enjoy though.

'Toother' is an intriguing mystery from Terry Dowling, the title referring to the old occupation of collecting teeth from corpses to make dentures. The practice has been revived by a serial killer in this story, a man who seems to have been active for a very long time and has a strange connection to a clairvoyant mental patient.

It reads like a disturbing episode of CSI and offers plenty of tension and bizarreness.

Ysabeau S. Wilce's alternate California is the excellently atmospheric setting for 'Quartermaster Returns'. It starts off like a Western in an especially seedy army outpost, but the presence of an ice sprite soon dispels that preconception. The army camp, the characters and the whole situation is portrayed masterfully and makes for a memorable piece.

Nanotech seeded 'Electric Rains' have caused most of Washington DC's inhabitants to either go insane or be uploaded elsewhere in Kathleen Ann Goonan's poignant story. A little girl is left alone after her adoptive grandmother passes away and she has to defend herself in the almost deserted city where the few people left normal struggle to maintain a veneer of civilisation. It's an uplifting tale, offering a different outcome to the usually grim post-apocalyptic genre.

The shortest story of the book is 'Mrs. Zeno's Paradox' by Ellen Klages, an odd little tale of physics, time travel, and afternoon tea. It's not to be taken seriously, but manages to cram a ridiculous amount into only a couple of pages.

On a much larger scale, 'The Lustration' is Bruce Sterling's far-future story of a world-spanning wooden computer that performs immensely slow operations by shunting spheres along great wooden channels. The society that maintains it is ancient and staid, having developed a complex philosophy that doesn't take well to change. It's a mind-bending concept that forms the heart of an intriguing story.

The final piece is Lucius Shepard's 'Larissa Miusov', the tale of a struggling screenwriter and the eponymous Russian beauty upon whom he becomes fixated. She feeds him strange stories of her youth in Russia, tantalises him with her presence and backs the production of his movie. It's a finely written story that I thoroughly enjoyed and that left me with that magical feeling of inspiration.

Of course, anyone else reading this volume will likely pick a completely different set of stories. For me the book is worth those few alone, so it's no wonder that Eclipse One has been so highly praised. As an example of the immense scope of speculative fiction it is certainly worthy of anyone's bookshelf.

Bill says

I wasn't as impressed as I was supposed to be. I think I read a recommendation for this on someone's blog and figured it was time to be up-to-date in my short story reading. But this can't really be the good stuff, could it? I can't say I read a single story that really knocked my socks off. There was one about a hermaphrodite bigfoot that captured my attention and then lost my respect when the ending imploded. To top it off, I wasn't that impressed with the binding. This one gets two stars for trying, but I'm sure there are better collections out there.

Mind Bird says

Interesting and chewy anthology! I generally like "hard" science fiction, but the fantasy stories here aren't "sword and sorcery" things, they are the kind that are only a step away from SF. All the stories are fresh and

really interesting, and almost all are good. A pleasure to read.

Scott Oesterling says

A book of sci fi short fiction from Night Shade Books. Night shade has great authors and has fantastic fiction free on the website that you can read on your Kindle. However, most of the stories in this anthology did not grab me. I do highly recommend Toother by Terry Dowling and Electric Rain by Katherine Goonan.

Anna Tan says

The 15 short stories in here are a hodge-podge of science fiction and fantasy stories (more biased towards fantasy/paranormal than science fiction), some of which provided a-ha! moments, whilst others left me puzzled.

I'd say there were overall more a-ha! stories than puzzling ones.

The few I really liked were:

- Bad Luck, Trouble, Death, and Vampire Sex (Garth Nix)

Well, what can I say - I initially picked up this book because I saw his name on the cover. Gardner, a bumbling wizard, somehow kills his adopted grandmother, the most powerful witch-queen in the netherworld by sheer accident. Now on the run, Gardner, with the help of Gurl, the gargoyle that used to sit above Granny's office desk, must figure out what's really going on. The story is laugh-out-loud funny. Its series of comedic errors would have made perfect reading for teens, except for its preoccupation with vampire sex. Then again, after twilight, who cares about vampire sex?

- Toother (Terry Dowling)

Someone has been killing women and stealing their teeth and Peter, a psychic, is the only one with leads to this terrible murderer that spans decades. Toother is a little dark, slightly reminiscent of Criminal Minds.

- The Transformation of Targ (Paul Brandon and Jack Dann)

What happens when the Mighty Revenant Overlord Targ, Destroyer of Mordane and Ruler of Hellinor doesn't want to be evil anymore? He goes to consult Hiram Hirsch, Consultant to Evil, that's what. The story is light, entertaining and brilliantly written.

Richard says

This is far from uniformly great - there are better anthologies out there and there are a couple of stories I *really* didn't like. Garth Nix's, for example, seemed to be YA with some added swears (well, he does write plenty of YA fiction, yes?)

And, apart from his collaboration with William Gibson on the Difference Engine, I've just never really been able to get into Bruce Sterling. Must be missing something.

That said, where I enjoyed it, I really did, so, given that there are a reasonable number of stories in it, I am prepared to overall give it the benefit of the doubt.

Besides which, it has a Lucius Shepherd story at the end, and he is always excellent.

Annie says

Overall *Eclipse Once* is pretty good. I did find myself trudging through a few of the stories, but nothing too painful. The best one by far was *The Transformation of Targ* by Paul Brandon and Jack Dann. If you want it quick read this anthology is a good pick.

Leadie says

The opening blurb on this includes 'rare and unusual event.' I have to admit that there were two stories that were strong in this area! One I had a difficult time following but once I got to a certain point it kind of fell together. That said, there are some truly outstanding gems in this collection.

If you need a variety of Science Fiction and Fantasy to get you going it's worth giving a peek at to see if this one is what will grab you. Like I said, some did and some didn't. But I did read all of them. I would have given it a three if the gems didn't put it over the top. Added a couple of must find authors to my list from this one though.

Rob says

Eclipse 1 is a good-not-great anthology of speculative (née "science") fiction and fantasy (rather: "new weird") short stories edited by Jonathan Strahan. My "good-not-great" may be stemming from my disappointment that there was more "new weird"/fantasy than there was science fiction[†:] but there were still quite a few "big wins" in the pile that is this paperback binding.

As for the computed average of my ratings on the individual stories themselves (out to four decimal places), *Eclipse 1* scores: 3.3000

Includes:

- "Unique Chicken Goes In Reverse" by Andy Duncan: ★★★½
→ Cute, weird.
- "Bad Luck, Trouble, Death, and Vampire Sex" by Garth Nix: ★★
- "The Last and Only or, Mr. Moscowitz Becomes French" by Peter S. Beagle: ★★★
- "The Lost Boy: A Reporter At Large" by Maureen F. McHugh: ★★★★★
→ Probably double visceral if you've ever lived in the Baltimore/DC area but outstanding regardless of your geographic history.
- "The Drowned Life" by Jeffrey Ford: ★★

- "Toother" by Terry Dowling: ★★★½
 - ⇒ I couldn't put my finger on why I wasn't bowled over by this one. I wanted to like it a lot more but something about it left me wanting a bit...
- "Up the Fire Road" by Eileen Gunn: ★★½
 - ⇒ *groan*sigh*snort* (reversed)
- "In the Forest of the Queen" by Gwyneth Jones: ★★
- "Quartermaster Returns" by Ysabeau S. Wilce: ★★★★
 - ⇒ A playful tone and artfully written, toys with the right conventions, too.
- "Electric Rains" by Kathleen Ann Goonan: ★★★★½
 - ⇒ As with "The Lost Boy..." (v.s.), this one probably hits harder for folks with a little DC time under their belt but hits all the high notes even without that. [††:]
- "She-Creatures" by Margo Lanagan: ★★
 - ⇒ The prurient overtones didn't exactly make up for the brogue veneer and otherwise bewildering plot.
- "The Transformation of Targ" by Paul Brandon and Jack Dann: ★★★
 - ⇒ Maybe ★★★★ and in my heart of hearts a sympathetic ★★★★★ — this was an extremely *fun* story.
- "Mrs. Zeno's Paradox" by Ellen Klages: ★★★★
 - ⇒ The fact that the story is so short (about 3 pages? 4?) was like its own double-entendre. And any light-hearted story that can work in "ångström" should get bonus points.
- "The Lustration" by Bruce Sterling: ★★★½
 - ⇒ I think it's good? Though maybe a bit too oblique?
- "Larissa Miusov" by Lucius Shepard: ★★★★★
 - ⇒ Far and away the best story in this collection. If your library has this anthology then you owe it to yourself to *at least* read this one.

† = Call it a personal preference.

†† = Also, for the private few reading this that have also read a certain manuscript of mine, I'd like to share that I had a big (and vocal) "WTF?" the night I was reading this in bed. I felt a little dirty and cheated — but how can someone rip you off when they've never heard of you? or read your work? (Besides, it was different enough to not be "the same".)

Lightreads says

A speculative fiction anthology whose theme appears to be 'stories Jonathan Strahan liked.' I don't always like what Jonathan Strahan likes. A few notes, in no particular order:

Bruce Sterling, "The Lustration." Sentient planet computer made entirely of wood! Kind of Ted Chiang lite,

which still leaves it pretty interesting (though with whispers of some weird gender issues).

Jeffrey Ford, "The Drowned Life," and Peter S. Beagle, "The Last and Only or, Mr. Moskowitz Becomes French." You know when a story is good in an objective sense – evocative, creative, all that – but you don't actually *like* it? Yeah.

Ysabeau S. Wilce, "Quartermaster Returns." Huh! Okay, apparently I really need to be reading her novels.

Kathleen Ann Goonan, "Electric Rains." Post-apocalypse Washington D.C. Interesting and rich, but just not quite *there* yet.

Margo Lanagan, "She Creatures." . . . Oookay, whatever.

Garth Nix, "Bad Luck, Trouble, Death, and Vampire Sex." Cute and funny and interesting, but ultimately majority fluff.

Terry Dowling, "Toother." Gah! Creepy in the very good way.

Eileen Gunn, "Up the Fire Road." Speculative fiction goes to the Springer Show. *eyeroll* Really? Must we?

David Layton says

The editor states that his goal for this anthology was to recreate the spirit of the original anthology series of the 1960s and 1970s using contemporary types of stories. The cover calls it "New Science Fiction and Fantasy," and while there is quite a bit of the fantasy, there is precious little of the science fiction. Most of the writers are big names in post 1980s science fiction and fantasy. The stories in this series did not for the most part catch my fancy. Two of them, the first one by Andy Duncan and the last by Lucius Shepard, were neither science fiction nor fantasy, but just plain old ordinary fiction. The few science fiction stories, apart from one, were all near-future, neo-realist pieces that thus also had the feeling of being plain old fiction. Kathleen Ann Goonan's "Electric Rains" was typical in this regard, about a girl in a post-apocalyptic Washington, DC, trying to take her grandmother's dead body to the cemetery without herself getting killed. A good number of the stories are urban fantasies with a slightly satirical edge to them. "Bad Luck, Trouble, Death, and Vampire Sex" by Garth Nix is typical of these amusing pieces, about a man on the run, hopping through dimensions using some off-kilter magic. Peter S. Beagle's "The Last and Only, or Mr. Moskowitz Becomes French" is another amusingly off-kilter piece, this one about a Jewish American who becomes more French than French people, to the dismay of his long-suffering wife. "The Transformation of Targ" by Paul Brandon and Jack Dann to me was the most amusing of these. It tells about an evil War Lord from a hellish dimension who is seeking career advice because, well, he just doesn't feel like being evil any more. The one story of science fiction that really stretches the imagination is Bruce Sterling's "The Lustration," an intriguingly different take on the Gaia hypothesis on a planet where the "humans" are lizard-bird people who have developed a sophisticated computer technology based on the principles of the abacus. The remaining stories are competently written, but to my taste lacked imaginative flair. In sum, the collection has decent reading, but feels too close to home.

Snail in Danger (Sid) Nicolaides says

I picked this up for the Ysabeau S. Wilce story. It turned out to be more of the early adventures of Tiny Doom. It was a good read.

The others ... nothing really jumps out at me. Except for the Garth Nix story, which poked subtle fun at the paranormal romance genre.

Ryun says

“If you look at photos taken of the sun during a lunar eclipse,” editor Jonathan Strahan writes in the introduction to **ECLIPSE ONE: NEW FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION**, “you’ll see a strange, dark eldritch thing.”

Strange, dark and eldritch certainly describe this anthology, which collects 15 original fantasy and science-fiction short stories. All the tales in **ECLIPSE ONE** are creepy at the very least, and the spookiest of them could very well keep you up at night. While the title gives equal billing to two genres, there are only a couple of sci-fi stories here; its stories are far more similar to the works in Ellen Datlow’s great **THE YEAR’S BEST FANTASY AND HORROR** annuals than, say, Strahan’s previous sci-fi collections.

More: <http://www.bookgasm.com/reviews/sci-f...>
