



Year's Best SF 13

David G. Hartwell (Editor, Contributor), Kathryn Cramer (Editor, Contributor), Johanna Sinisalo (Contributor), Tony Ballantyne (Contributor), John Kessel (Contributor), Gene Wolfe (Contributor), Kage Baker (Contributor), Peter Watts (Contributor), more... Stephen Baxter (Contributor), Gwyneth Jones (Contributor), Marc Laidlaw (Contributor), Nancy Kress (Contributor), Greg Egan (Contributor), Robyn Hitchcock (Contributor), Bernhard Ribbeck (Contributor), Gregory Benford (Contributor), William Shunn (Contributor), Karen Joy Fowler (Contributor), Ken MacLeod (Contributor), Tim Pratt (Contributor), Terry Bisson (Contributor), Ian McDonald (Contributor), Kathleen Ann Goonan (Contributor), John Henry (Contributor), Bruce Sterling (Contributor), James Van Pelt (Contributor) ...less

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The thirteenth annual collection of the previous year's finest short-form sf is at hand. Once again, award-winning editors and anthologists David G. Hartwell and Kathryn Cramer have gathered together a stunning array of science fiction that spans a veritable universe of astonishing visions and bold ideas. Hitherto unexplored galaxies of the mind are courageously traversed by some of the most exciting new talents in the field--while well-established masters rocket to remarkable new heights of artistry and originality. The stars are closer and more breathtaking than ever before--and a miraculous future now rests in your hands--within the pages of Year's Best SF 13.

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Year's Best SF 13 Details

Date : Published May 27th 2008 by Harper Voyager

ISBN : 9780061252099

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Format : Paperback 512 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction, Anthologies

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From Reader Review Year's Best SF 13 for online ebook

Sbulf says

Questa raccolta dei "migliori" racconti del 2007 è l'esempio del fatto che la fantascienza è bella ma gira anche un sacco di spazzatura.

I mie voti racconto per racconto:

Sistema operativo Aristotele 1/5

L'ultimo americano 3/5

Memorare 2/5

Tracciatori e tiratori 3/5

Ripetere il passato 2/5

Niente più storie 2/5

Vennero dal futuro 1/5

La moglie della tomba 1/5

Una serata di onesto pericolo 1/5

Partita finale 3/5

Reclutamento 4/5

Ragioni per non pubblicare 3/5

Impermeabilità oggettiva in un sistema chiuso 1/5(troppo contorto)

Sempre 2/5

Chi ha paura di Wolf 359? 1/5

Artificio e intelligenza 1/5

Pirati della costa somala 3/5

Sanjeev e il robotista 4/5

Terza persona 3/5

Il ponte 5/5

Come sai, Bob 1/5

La lustrazione ?/5 (Io Sterling non lo capisco)

Come inizia la musica 4/5

Steve Stuart says

I thought this collection of stories from 2007 was fairly impressive. I didn't find any new all-time favorites, but most of the stories were enjoyable enough to keep me wanting more, and there were only a few clunkers. The only one that I really didn't care for was "As You Know, Bob", a gimmicky story with no plot that rewrites the same few paragraphs in parodies of multiple different styles, and takes some jabs at magazine editors in the process. Several of the stories were short and gimmicky, in fact. This seems to be a bit of a trend in recent years, especially with the rise of the short-short story: it must be tempting to rely on gimmicks if you can't build characters or plot tension within 1000 words.

One interesting feature of this anthology was the relatively high number of stories translated from other languages: Danish, Finnish, and French. Those stories were also among the strongest in the collection, which makes me think I should be searching out more translated European sci fi (or brush up on my Finnish).

Another notable trend was the relatively high number of stories involving digitized personalities, or characters living in outright simulations. I won't mention which ones, as the simulated nature of the world is sometimes a plot feature, but there were at least half a dozen with fully simulated people or environments.

Many different story types and styles are represented, although (thankfully) there is not a single alternate history tale. As usual, there are a few that rely heavily on supernatural phenomena despite the claim to be "clearly [sci fi] and nothing else", and one ("Always") that is just plain fiction with no science at all. These are all good stories, though, and I won't begrudge their inclusion.

The best thing about the anthology is that it contains a **lot** of stories: nearly two dozen. A scattering of short shorts is responsible in part for the large number of stories, but it's great to have such a large selection to choose from.

Aramis says

Like always some real hits and some misses. The final story was excellent.

Anna says

Like in most of these short story collections, this one had some very good novels and some that weren't that interesting.

The reason I bought this book in the first place was the fact that it has the English translation of Johanna Sinisalo's *Baby Doll*, which was material for my Master's thesis. And there was also a Danish story in this book, translated from Danish. That is worth one extra star for sure. There is never enough non-Anglo writers in these damn collections (and if there are, they usually write in English anyway, like Hannu Rajaniemi).

Some of the stories were not even necessarily science fiction, but they were interesting anyway. A case in point is the *Pirates of the Somali Coast*. I mean, really? Where was the SF element of that story? But I enjoyed it nevertheless. Which cannot be said for stories such as *The Lustration* (which, I am sure, some people just LOVE) or *Memorare*, which wasn't really bad as much as it was just plain boring and oh so very influenced by the idea I have in my head of the 60's pulp SF (which I've never actually read as far as I know, though).

Not one of the best SF collections ever, but it did do its work. And as I said, extra points for including short stories not originally written in English. That is very, very nice after all the other SF short story collections I've read (most of which are even newer than this rather old book).

Joseph says

Another great anthology.

Maryanne says

Year's Best SF13 03232009 edited by David G. Hartweel & Dathryn Cramer

Mark Kuhn says

Some of the short stories were OK, nothing great but most of the stories were not worth the time and a few were PAINFUL to try and read.

Fred says

Why is it that so many books of short stories start out strong and on their way to a five star but then end up stuffing all sorts of lame ass stories at the end of the book? If this book would have been about 75 pages shorter it would have been a four star, and if it had been about 100-120 pages shorter it may have even made five star!

But seriously, there are a few gems in here but if you get bored with it as time goes on don't feel bad putting it down. I'm still hunting for worthy sequels to carry the torch of Dangerous Visions!

Kersplebedeb says

i hope to write a thorough review of this anthology on my Sketchy Thoughts blog at some point, but until i do...

i have read Hartwell and Cramer's annual anthologies for several years now, and while this one had some very good stories in it, it was the least gripping i have read yet. i don't think the problem was simply the stories. Maybe i was in a mood, maybe i rushed through it too fast or i over-anticipated it, but the impression i am left with is that this year's anthology was less balanced than previous years, with many of the stories having similar themes, and most taking place in the imagined later 21st or early 22nd century.

i was left hungry for more far-far future stories, alien encounters, stories that twist my brain like a pretzel... There were some, but they stood out as exceptions to what seemed the near-future rule. And then still, few and far between as they were, they weren't the stories that moved me most.

Further complicating how i feel about SF 13, some of the best stories in this collection were in fact not first published in 2007, but were initially written and published in other languages and were first translated into English last year.

Three best stories:

A Blue and Cloudless Sky - Bernard Ribbeck; My favourite in the collection. Temporal colonization providing room for paradox and prophecy is standard, but in this case it's very well done. The editors' blurb says it was first published in english in 2007, and was translated from Danish - not sure if it was ever published previously or under what title.

How Music Begins - James Van Pelt; A very sad story of alien abduction And teaching. And music. Really good.

End Game - Nancy Kress; i've actually been thinking a lot about what they call "emotional intelligence" since hearing the Quirks and Quarks podcast about IQ and such a while back, and this story is an excellent

exposition of the idea. It's also a great take on what it can mean to obsess on things. And a look at the problem with getting rid of "problematic" thought processes. So i liked it.

Runner ups:

Baby Doll - Johanna Sinisalo; first appeared in 2002 in the Finnish anthology *Intohimosta rikokseen*. A "five minutes from now" story, about the hypersexualization of young girls.

The Lustration - Bruce Sterling; an interesting far-far future tale of a giant wooden computer and the termites who maintain it. So to speak. i like the fact that this author realized posthumans won't call themselves posthuman, they'll just see us as pre-human.

The Bridge - Kathleen Ann Goonan; This story first appeared in 2002 in french, it first appeared in english in 2007. While it's a "gritty detective story", what got me were the background ideas, a city remade by nanotech and microbial computer network which replaced the internet.

Objective Impermeability in a Closed System - William Shunn; A sad story about a sad man who suffers from his personal life colliding with some kind of time bubble.

Although i'm only giving it three stars, in no way do i regret getting this book, and i can't wait to pick up next year's. Perhaps "the genre" had an odd focus in 2007 (i'll compare with Dozois' anthology in a couple of weeks), perhaps the editors were in a mood of their own, i don't know... Hartwell and Cramer still provide me with a nice place to send my brain on vacation. + the nice thing about an anthology is if you don't like one story, there's normally one you will like coming up soon...

SmokingMirror says

I love stories about tombs in space (cf. Tanith Lee's Blakes 7 episode) and I love Gene Wolfe, so I had to get this book simply to read "Memorare," which according to reviews depicts several tombs on various asteroids. While the Wolfe story has the depth most of his works, the preachiness about what is appropriate in male/female roles was hard to take.

Happy day! This anthology also contains the story "The Tomb Wife" by Gwyneth Jones. The introduction states that it is a counterpoint to "Memorare"; in fact it is an antidote to the obtuse sexism displayed in the latter tale, and in much reactionary science fiction. Aggravating though it is that Jones must even address the issue dropped so casually into Wolfe's narrative, her story is full of subtlety and depth, qualities Wolfe is often praised for.

I continue to love Gene Wolfe, with reservations I have had for some time, but now I love Gwyneth Jones too. I can't wait to read her novels.

David Nichols says

Includes four excellent stories: "Baby Doll," by Joanna Sinisalo; "Who's Afraid of Wolf 359?" by Ken Macleod; "Pirates of the Somali Coast," by Terry Bisson; and "Third Person," by Tony Ballantyne.

Kyle says

I bought this because my SF choices have become very predictable. Having been briefly introduced to the discourse of SF by reading a retrospective compilation, I decided to see what the latest was.

I'm currently in the middle of the third story (purported by the authors to be "the best SF story of the year," if so, I'm not hopeful for the year). I found the first story objectionable and obscene, and the second clever but ultimately not that much better. Things had better pick up.

Cheryl says

Just barely two stars because I liked the last story, by James Van Pelt, "How Music Begins." The rest were lame, cliched, gratuitously twisted, and/or dated.

Alytha says

Finished Year's Best SF 13, an anthology of the best sci-fi stories of 2008. 2008 seems to have been a pretty bad year for sci-fi, unfortunately...

Although most stories were decent enough, there were very few outstandingly good ones in this anthology. Some notable examples:

Positively remarkable: (minor spoilers)

Aristotle OS by Tony Ballantyne: Interesting little story about a series of unusual computer operating systems. Our current Windows etc are apparently Platonic operating systems, which mirror the real world inside the computer (think Platonic Cave allegory). Now, the protagonist of the story receives a new OS called Aristotle OS, which assumes that everything you input is real. On the one hand, this works quite nicely, as the system notices when you make logical mistakes in a text, for example, or comments on them. However, some of the assumptions it makes seem to have rather unforeseen consequences on reality....Really interesting premise. I don't think I've ever seen computer OS's and philosophy combined. If working correctly, it could be really useful. I'd get one.

Memorare by Gene Wolfe is about a team of TV producers exploring a series of tombs set into asteroids in the space near the gas giants in our solar system. The memorials contain very different things, from holograms of benevolent old grannies who like to chat and share recipes, to demented cults and booby-trapped vaults. Combined with this is a complicated 4-way relationship. I really liked this one, as it has an interesting plot, and a nicely melancholic style. Also, at almost 100 pages, the longest story in the anthology. Plotters and Shooters, by the sadly deceased Kage Baker, is a hilarious story about the rivalry between two groups of geeks on a space station that protects Mars from stray asteroids. The plotters chart the asteroid belt and monitor any unusual movements, while the shooters destroy any strays. The shooters give themselves stereotypical evil overlord names, dress accordingly, and have bad hygiene, but their attitude makes them the masters of the station, and they make the plotters grovel for them...until a new recruit shows up. Really liked this one. Nice geeks rule :)

No More Stories, by Stephen Baxter. A man comes home to accompany his dying mother during her last

days. They wonder how the world can go on after one dies, as every human thinks that they're the centre of the universe, and can't really believe that they're death will not make a difference in the big picture. And gradually, the world outside seems to change...this story creeps up on you a bit, as for most of it, until the last couple of pages, absolutely nothing supernatural or sci-fictional happens, until you get the whopper at the end. Slightly confusing.

The Tomb Wife by Gwyneth Jones is both good and bad...bad in the sense that it chucks a whole lot of futuristic tech and quantum mechanics at the reader without explaining any of it, so it's all a bit vague. Also, the feminism looks badly shoehorned in. Why would a species that has to biological genders call the one who stays behind and grieves the female? The main idea about how ghosts travel in the space age, is quite interesting though. Interesting premise but could have been much better.

End Game by Nancy Cress is about a chess-player and scientist who has developed a drug which allows you to totally concentrate on a certain field of interest, to the total exclusion of everything else. Unfortunately, it's catching...I guess the world will in general still be fine, as there will be people totally focussing on really useful things, so it might lead to a solution to medical, economical and environmental problems.

A Blue and Cloudless Sky by Bernhard Ribbeck combines time travel and space colonisation. A time traveller comes to a planet colonised by humans, and returns to Earth with a female colonist, who gives the "sages" the coordinates of the planet, in order to allow them to send the colonists there. Unfortunately, the planet is threatened by a destructive space phenomenon, while the time traveller is there, so that the settlers are confronted with the dilemma of either being destroyed, or having never existed, if they can't get the time traveller back to his ship, while wondering why they were sent there in the first place, as the time traveller would have surely told the sages about the danger when he returned...time travel paradoxes tend to give me a bit of a headache, but this story is pretty good, and not too confusing.

In Reasons Not to Publish by Gregory Benford, a man discovers that the Earth is a computer simulation, which leads him to wonder about how other people perceive this, and if he should risk letting the creator/deity know that he knows.

Who's Afraid of Wolf 359 by Ken MacLeod is set in the far future, where the simple life on a planet is sneered upon. A group of deviants create a new planet, and the explorer sent there ends up becoming their leader, and protecting them from the planned destruction by the normals.

Pirates of the Somali Coast by Terry Bisson is definitely the most disturbing story in this book. A teenager is on a cruise near the coast of Africa, when the ship is hijacked by pirates. The story is told in the form of e-mails he sends to his mother and best friend. In general, he finds the pirates pretty cool and eagerly helps them kill the other passengers, which is creepy enough. The worst thing though is that on a certain level he utterly does not understand or assimilate what is going on, as he constantly remarks on what the killed people are going to do "when we get home" or "when you meet her". "shudder"

As You Know, Bob by John Hemry is a much more wholesome story about an author and his agent, who comments on the drafts of the story, making it mutate from soft sci-fi, to incomprehensible tech sci-fi, and finally to fantasy, because that's much easier to understand. Pretty hilarious. Reminds me of an intro to a book I once read, which had a basic plot which was presented in all kinds of genres; western, sci-fi, fantasy, without much difference.

All in all,
6.5/10

Nicholas Whyte says

<http://nhw.livejournal.com/1121128.html>[return][return]As always, a generally good selection, with a lot of the stories revolving around virtual identities and gaming. I had read two of the 25 before, as they were Hugo nominees; of the rest, the ones that will stay with me are the first, "Baby Doll" by Johanna Sinisalo, a terrifying tale of future sexuality; in the middle, "End Game" by Nancy Kress, which retreads some of the

ground from her "Beggars in Spain" but takes it in a new direction; and the final story, James Van Pelt's "How Music Begins", a tale of alien abduction, romance and a high school band. All good stuff; I still have the Dozois collection to look forward to.[return]
