



El sueño de hierro

Norman Spinrad

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NOVELA FINALISTA DEL PREMIO NEBULA

“Dejen que Adolf Hitler les transporte a la Tierra del futuro lejano, donde solamente Federic Jaggar y su poderosa arma, el Cetro de Acero se alzan entre los restos de la autentica humanidad y las hordas de mutantes a los que perseveraos Dominantes controlan por completo. Aficionado de todo el mundo admiten que “EL señor de la esvástica” es la mas vivida y popular de las obras de Adolf Hitler; en 1954recibio el premio Hugo a la mejor novela del genero. Ahora puede obtenerla por fin en esta nueva edición, con un comentario de Homer Whipple, de la Universidad de Nueva Cork. Compruebe personalmente por qué tantos lectores han acudido a las paginas de esta novela, como un rayo de esperanza en tiempos tan sombríos y terribles como los nuestros”.

Así comienza El sueño de Hierro” una de las novelas más famosas y controvertidas de los últimos años, de la mano del norteamericano Norman Spinard. Se desarrolla en un mundo alternativo, dónde Hitler emigra a Estados Unidos en 1919, y éste se convierte en escritor de la novelas de ciencia ficción, alcanzando la cumbre en su obra “El Señor de la Esvástica”. Una novela dura y sin concesiones; una critica contra el nazismo y el racismo, que no se puede leer sin quedar indiferente.

"El Sueño de Hierro" es a la vez muchos libros, evidentes y ocultos: una descripción del nazismo como un festival sadomasoquista de acuerdo con los estereotipos de la ciencia ficción "patológica"; un puzzle literario que se ordena como aviso y advertencia; una historia que ha ocurrido y no ha ocurrido, comentada y parodiada "involuntariamente" por el protagonista principal, que en otro plano coincide con el seudo autor; una crónica de pesadillas ambiguas y recurrentes, que se multiplican reflejadas en espejos paralelos. El vértigo se apodera del lector, hasta que pronto descubre que ha perdido el rumbo y que ha entrado en el corazón mismo del horror contemporáneo.

Norman Spinrad nació en Nueva York y ha escrito entre otros libros: "Bug Jack Barron" (1969), "El sueño de hierro" (1972), "No direction home" (1975). "El sueño de hierro" fue candidato al Nebula y al National Book Award, y en 1974 recibió en Francia el Prix Apollo a la mejor novela de ciencia ficción del año.

El sueño de hierro Details

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From Reader Review El sueño de hierro for online ebook

Edward Erdelac says

This is a spoiler-ific review. So the premise is Hitler has a falling out with the Nazis in their infancy and emigrates to America where he paints pulp fiction covers and becomes a semi-respected writer himself, spawning a Nazi-inspired fashion trend with his penultimate novel, *Lord of The Swastika* (the book within the book *The Iron Dream*, about the last true human state in a post apocalyptic world of mutants and mind controlling Dominators). In the bookend world in which Hitler wrote, Germany and Europe has fallen to Communism and only America and Japan remain (sort of suggesting Hitler was the man who stopped the advance of communism?). As others have stated, it's a send up both of Nazism and male oriented sword and sorcery/fantasy/sci-fi, written as badly as the author thinks that genre tends to be written. It's basically a joke that could have been told in a hundred pages or so. By the time I got to one hundred I was flipping ahead to see how much more of this there actually was. The writing is repetetitive, with lots of 'gleaming steel' and 'tight black leather' and 'feeling the racial will,' etc. I get the joke, but it goes on a little too long till it gets uncomfortable (again, part of the joke - you're supposed to be uncomfortable reading about Feric Jaggar and his Aryan buds stoving in mutant skulls and spraying submachinegun bullets into a mixed race orgy at one point). There are some very cool and memorable moments in here, especially Feric seizing the leadership of the Avengers biker gang. Felt like a Roger Corman movie or something without the beautiful women. One thing I'm kinda suprised no one has mentioned is the fact that Feric, the hero of the story, seems to be a Dominator. The Dominators of Zind are the main bad guys of the novel, being a combination of Russian Communists and Jews. They are able to infiltrate the heroic true human country of Heldon by setting up these 'dominance patterns,' sapping the will of Heldons and controlling them to their own ends. Isn't that exactly what Feric does upon coming to Heldon only on a massive scale? It's said early on that his father was expelled from Heldon (not for genetic impurity but for political reasons, he rather hastily states, it seems) and that Feric was born in a mutant country. He ascends so rapidly to the leadership of Heldon, and there are so many references to his channeling and directing the racial will of the people, that it's pretty clear to me he's intended to be a self-hating Dom. There's a lot of excessive fetishism in here, with the SS eventually propagating their species asexually and literally launching their seed up into space to 'fecundate that stars.' Ultimately it ebbs and flows in terms of enjoyment. I gotta admit I skimmed through a lot of the battles at the end. The subhuman mutants are sufficiently disgusting and the violence is orgiastically described at times. The characters are extremely one dimensional. There's not really much conflict and Feric and his buds for the most part are portrayed as flawless and always in the right, even when they're declaring the need to sterilize the irradiated populace (who for their part squabble good naturedly over who will be the first in line to sacrifice their procreative abilities for the racial glory of Heldon! Sure sounds like a mind controlled populace to me...). The denouement at the close written by an in-universe critic sort of hits you over the head with what should be the obviously ridiculous and fetishistic conventions that you've just slogged through. It feels like the author explaining an overlong and unfunny joke. But I understand this was written after the initial publication to dissuade some of the folks who thought it was for real and a good story to boot. Apparently the book was showing up on the recommended reading lists of various Aryan and neo-Nazi groups and Spinrad felt the need to knock on their skulls a bit. Out of curiosity I googled 'The Iron Dream Norman Spinrad recommendation' and was directed to an Aryan Unity site wherein the critic proceeded to do just that, urging the reader to 'keep an open mind' (!) and ignore the 'usual psychological views' espoused in the end essay and even suggesting at the end that it was a 'rousing adventure' that could make a 'good White Nationalist recruitment novelette,' so I guess it didn't work anyway. Points for getting Michael Moorcock to plug it on the cover as 'Adolf Hitler's classic bestseller of future genetic warfare - exciting and tense!'

Matt says

Don't be fooled!

THE IRON DREAM is not the real deal! Norman Spinrad's novel contains only a cheap copy of Adolph Hitler's masterpiece *LORD OF THE SWASTIKA*. Hitler's work is heavily abridged here and, I must say, rather tamed too. Some of the best bits are missing. The situation in the Classification Camps is hardly elaborated and the pyres of decadent books gets no mention at all. At least the glorious battle against the Zinc filth is left almost intact (Chapter 12). How Feric Jaggar blows over and over again into the slimy smelly bodies of the Zinc warriors with his mighty truncheon? Superb scenes that make every right man's heart beat faster.

Furthermore the entire book-within-book is left out: Feric Jaggar's novel of ideas called *MY STRIFE*. In it the heroic protagonist describes his life prior to becoming world leader, his frustrations, ideals, and dreams for all real humans. That's 700+ pages, folks. Gone—just like that! Without the center piece the rest of *LotS* is bound to be misunderstood and must seem pretty distorted to the young and unsophisticated readers. I heard rumours that some people even consider this book a satire of some kind. How weird is that!?

At the end of the book a somewhat negative “review” by some dubious guy called Homer Whipple is added for no apparent reason. This has to be fake and I suggest you skip it if you decide to read this book. But why would you want to do that? I would rather you read the unabridged version of *LotS*. I added it to the GR database and will read it soon, but the entry got deleted right away by some librarian Nazi. Luckily, I was able to save a screenshot at least:

So, stay away from Spinrad's book. It's disfigured compared to the unblemished and pure *LotS*. Go try to find that. Ask the nationalist party near you; they should be able to point you in the right direction (provided you are found worthy). Good luck, and—ahem—*Hail!*

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Glenn Russell says

Lord of the Swastika - Like a thick layer of stinking hot asphalt poured out on a driveway, a thick layer of racism and jingoism coats every single page of this appalling novel spun from the cramped, warped mind of an upstart writer of science fiction, a scribbler by the name of Adolf Hitler. What the hell was this clown thinking?!! To write such garbage is an act of complete irresponsibility and an insult to the reading public.

We can only raise our eyes to heaven and give thanks Adolf Hitler's vision never became reality.

I trust it is abundantly clear the above paragraph is what an outraged reviewer might have written in the alternative world author Norman Spinrad created in his 1972 novel within a novel. And what a novel! *The Iron Dream* was banned in Germany for eight years, from 1982 to 1990, prompting Spinrad to report how both the political left and right railed against his book – the left claiming it promotes fascism and the right asserting the novel was denigrating to a great man (Adolf Hitler). Now there's an author who can't win!

Turning to Spinrad's *The Iron Dream* itself, on the surface we are given a kitschy bit of pulp, post-apocalypse melodrama entitled *Lord of the Swastika* written as alternative history by one Adolf Hitler, an illustrator and hack science fiction writer who emigrated from Germany to the United States after World War 1.

Lord of the Swastika opens more than a thousand years following global nuclear war, a cataclysm which brought about the end of civilization as we know it. The gene pool of nearly all forms of human life are corrupted by radioactive fallout - humans possessing complete physical and mental health are rare; most of humanity have blue skin, lizard scales or parrot beaks, or, even more insidious, are wizened half-breed mutants or subhuman "Dominators" desiring to hold sway over the earth by their powerful mind-controlling psychic powers.

What this sorry world needs is a charismatic leader who will ruthlessly eliminate all those malignant subhumans and rid the planet forever of their odious, subversive stench. Enter Ferric Jagger. The tall, blonde, robust Jagger takes on the role of Führer and Heldon, the land of genetically pure humans, begins to bear a striking resemblance to Nazi Germany.

Why write such a novel? Norman Spinrad tells us he wanted to demonstrate the close connection ideology of the fascist Nazi variety has with archetypal hero myths and much science fiction and fantasy - created worlds where good guys courageously combat evildoing bad guys, where the shining light of truth and justice eventually overcomes all the loathsome forces of darkness no matter where they are found - Middle Earth, Mars, or the middle of one's very own country.

And to make absolutely, positively sure even the least sophisticated, unlettered clod of a reader understood his intent, Norman informs us: "I appended a phony critical analysis of *Lord of the Swastika*, in which the psychopathology of Hitler's saga was spelled out by a tendentious pedant in words of one syllable."

Unfortunately, even with this laborious literary effort to reach the lowest possible readerly denominator, a number of those muddleheaded clods didn't get it – one reviewer even took the book as an exciting action story and complained how Spinrad spoiled all the fun by adding a whole bunch of crap about Adolf Hitler.

Alas, this has always been the risk for an author of satire - even a number of jaws dropped in stunned disbelief back in the 1700s after reading Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal*. Sad fact: masterfully constructed satire requires a degree of subtle understanding beyond the capacity of many readers. And I can assure you *The Iron Dream* is one such satire masterfully constructed. And much of the pleasure in reading Spinrad's novel is to suspend critical judgement and wholeheartedly support Ferric Jagger in his quest to conquer the world.

The Iron Dream is an intensely aesthetic dream, where every pore of Helder purebred skin tingles with excitement beholding the immense power, speed, dash and style of their new society, a land where every true human vows fanatical allegiance to Ferric Jagger. Here's an example of the glowing rhetoric enlivening nearly every page: "Behind this elite guard were first the ranks of Knight motocyclists, and then the massed

might of thousands of Knights of the Swastika, all heroic figures swaggering grandly in their uniforms of brown leather, most of which were liberally spattered with the blood of the enemy.”

But, but, but . . . similar to other more famous tales of adventure and conquest from *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to *Lord of the Rings* and *Star Wars*, at some point we are obliged to close the book and return to the everyday. How much do we really want our own world to resemble that of a conquering superhero forever in the right, taking aim to blast away the forces of darkness? Is life so simple? In my modest view, *The Iron Dream* is a key novel for our time. Highly recommended.

"The base of the tower was a circular grandstand of steps fifty feet high upon which stood a thousand SS purebreds, the absolute cream of the elite: none under six and a half feet tall, all with flaxen hair and piercing blue eyes, and decked out in spotless tight black leather uniforms, the chrome fittings of which had been polished to the point where the setting sun flashed orange fire off thousands of diamondlike facets. Each of these superhuman specimens held a flaming torch, the crimson brilliance of which matched the hue of their flowing swastika capes." - Norman Spinrad, *The Iron Dream*

Norman Spinrad, Born 1940, American critic, essayist and author of more than two dozen science fiction novels.

Steffi says

Abbruch nach 109 Seiten, Review evtl. später.

David says

I learned that a strong concept doesn't get you anywhere without strong execution. The idea of satirizing the racism/sexism/solipsism of much Sword & Sorcery and "hard" SF by writing a book as if by Adolph Hitler is a good one, but instead of actually critiquing such fiction by demonstrating its links to fascist ideology, Spinrad gets carried away satirizing Nazism itself, an absurdly easy target. For example, rather than introducing a bunch of cardboard characters bearing the barely modified names of Nazi leaders, imagine if Spinrad had featured a Jubal Harshaw-like pontificator, an incomparable Dejah Thoris type, and a Sam Gamgee-style sympathetic sidekick. Instead, he winds up with satire that doesn't hit anyone where they live, which is pointless. Meanwhile, the book itself is poorly written, but not in a way that clearly calls to mind any successful SF or fantasy: if you read every page of this book (I confess to skimming through 2/3 of it) the joke's on you.

Hendrik says

Nachdem ich mich mit eisernem Willen durch dieses Buch gekämpft habe, bleibt mir als Fazit nur zu sagen: Adolf Hitler war ein hundsmiserabler Science-Fiction-Autor. Das Nachwort von Homer Whipple fasst meine Einwände gegen dieses Machwerk prägnant zusammen. Es ist vollkommen entbehrlich, dem noch etwas

hinzufügen zu wollen. (Aber den Leser für dieses magere Fazit durch diesen Schund zu jagen, grenzt an Folter.)

Nicolas says

Il est à noter qu'il s'agit d'une deuxième édition, rajoutant à l'originale (apparemment) une post-face également savoureuse.

Les seigneurs du svastika est donc le roman posthume d'Hitler, honoré d'un prix Hugo. Il nous narre les aventures de Feric Jaggar, défenseur de la pure race humaine, pourfendeur des mutants, et libérateur de la terre.

A un tout premier niveau, on retrouve là le héros de sf classique, un peu analogue, par exemple aux loups des étoiles de Edmond Hamilton (enfin, c'est le seul roman de ce type que j'aie dans ma bibliothèque) ou aux classiques de fantasy, dans lequel le héros passe son temps à découper des gobelins en rondelles (Conan, quoi). Feric est beau, c'est un chef naturel, et il pousse la nation de Heldon vers la pureté.

Mais ce premier niveau est complètement effacé par un deuxième niveau de lecture, beaucoup plus ironique, dû sans doute au nom de l'auteur. En tant que "citoyen du monde", on ne peut s'empêcher, à la lecture des descriptions que Hitler fait de son monde, à l'autre Hitler, à ses SS en uniforme noir de cuir brillant, savamment rehaussé d'argent, à ses svastikas sur fond rouge, ou noir, ou blanc, et à ses meetings politiques monstrueux. A ce titre, Rêve de fer est une métaphore historique brillante (enfin, pour ce que j'en sais) racontant avec talent l'ascension d'un jeune immigré, qui va réussir à entraîner dans une orgie de destruction tout son peuple.

Bien sûr, ce roman a quelques défauts, inhérents à son besoin de trouver une fin de récit digne de ce nom. J'ai d'ailleurs ressenti, dès le milieu de ma lecture, un certain épuisement à force de voir Feric, massue à la main, terrasser des mutants toujours plus innombrables, toujours plus stupides, qui n'ont jamais compris qu'il suffisait de l'assommer sous la masse pour le vaincre. A ce titre, les différentes batailles sont tout bonnement édifiantes. Et le lecteur, quel qu'il soit, ne peut, à mon avis, réprimer un frisson de dégoût devant l'indéniable sang-froid dont font preuve ces étranges SS.

Enfin (si je puis dire) il existe encore un niveau supérieur, principalement explicité grâce à cette postface, dans laquelle Spinrad, alors que tout le roman s'attaque vigoureusement à au nazisme, choisit cette fois de concentrer ses attaques sur la moralité parfois douteuse évoquée dans les oeuvres de SF, ainsi, je pense, que sur la manière dont les critiques de SF ont pu, à un certain moment, tenté d'analyser les oeuvres de ce genre à travers des métaphores plus ou moins réussies (voilà qui ajoutera indéniablement de l'eau au moulin de Yann, mais il n'avait pas besoin de ça).

Tout cela fait au final de Rêve de fer une oeuvre assez étrange, pas loin d'être une critique ouverte du milieu de la sf, le tout habilement déguisé derrière une critique en forme de brûlot de l'idéologie nazie. Je ne le qualifierais pas de roman magnifique, mais c'est uen oeuvre troublante, qui mérite largement d'être lue.

Jean-marcel says

The concept behind this book is great and made me laugh with glee. Adolf Hitler as a hack science fiction writer? Just too good! The front even includes a list of "Other Books by the Author" that stars such alluring titles as "Tomorrow, The World" and "The master Race", and a little biography of Hitler, the SF writer/illustrator.

The story itself purports to be a book called *Lord of the Swastika*, and the narrator is clearly a stand-in for

Hitler himself. In fact, the early parts of the book mirror in some ways Hitler's release from prison and attempts to re-establish himself in 1920s Germany. His ascension to power is a glorious, rocket-propelled explosion of might and...glory!

But wait. The book isn't very good. Did I need to tell you that? Hitler was never renowned for his paintings, and Spinrad seems to have kept this in mind while writing a story from the point of view of "Hitler the Artist". It is an interesting thought experiment but I could barely stay with it all the way through. I recognise what Spinrad was trying to do and on one level I laud him for it, but on the other I think it's a bit nasty. I was born in 1980 but enjoy reading plenty of "Golden Age SF" stuff, and no, I don't generally agree that much of it reads like Nazi/Aryan supremacy fantasies, even if some stories do tend to be a bit one-sided and reprehensible in certain aspects (this book did sort of remind me of something like Francis Moulon's *Armageddon 2419*). It also helps that quite a bit of the Golden Age stuff is simply better written than this. I've read some short stuff by Spinrad and I know he's a pretty capable writer, but for the sake of the metafiction he's chopped his fingers (or maybe a part of his brain) off for this one, and it just isn't very pleasing.

To alleviate the pain you may suffer while reading this book, I suggest the following....*The Iron Dream Drinking Game!*

Take a shot of something strong every time....:

1. the word Swastika is invoked.
2. The protagonist/Hitler goes all starry-eyed and ga-ga describing how beautifully someone's uniform is polished or how colourful/multifarious be their decorations.
3. You see an exclamation mark.
4. The protagonist/Hitler appeals to a sense of justice/past glory.
5. The protagonist/Hitler goes all starry-eyed and ga-ga describing the beautiful lines and contours of a machine.
6. You detect homoerotic undercurrents.

That's all I've got for now, but using these principles alone, you should be on the floor kicking and begging for mercy within a few dozen pages. Wake up and try it again tomorrow! Hours of fun!

Rhys says

What happens when satire is misunderstood?

The point of satire is that it should be accessible on two levels simultaneously. The surface text tells one story, the subtext tells another; or to put it more accurately, the subtext tells the exact opposite story of the surface text. We might even say that the subtext reverses the polarity of the visible story, coinciding with it word for word, image for image, but in the wrong direction. In this case, the wrong way is the right way.

Writers of satire are surely always aware that their satire may be misunderstood, that the surface text might be the only one that is noticed, that they might be held responsible for holding views they despise. The history of Literature is full of examples of a general misunderstanding of rather obvious satire.

If blatant satire can be so easily misunderstood, what about the more subtle kinds of satire? Surely an author is deluding himself or herself as to their own intentions and motivations when subtlety becomes the key rule of a satirical text? These authors must be comfortable deep down with the realisation that their satire will be misunderstood. One almost wants to claim that they hope it will be misunderstood.

But why would any satirist deliberately manage affairs to encourage a misreading of their own works?

It's clear that the psychology of such satirists is more complex than a simple desire to criticise something by mocking it. Some satires are so ambiguous that one is forced to conclude that the author has a foot in both camps, that they are pushing both messages equally, that they stand both for and against the object or force that is the subject of the satire, that in effect they are also satirising themselves and their own satire.

One of the finest satires in modern fiction must surely be *The Iron Dream* by Norman Spinrad. First published in 1972, this novel has drawn praise from Michael Moorcock, Harlan Ellison, James Sallis and many other influential writers and critics. In many ways it is the supreme achievement of the 'New Wave' movement that reinvigorated science fiction in Britain and America in the 1960s and 70s.

The central conceit behind *The Iron Dream* is that the grandiose dreams of most SF writers bear too many disturbing parallels with the grandiose dreams of the Nazis. In other words, the galactic empires, glorification of force and xenophobic elements found in so much science fiction betray a purely Fascistic mentality on behalf of their creators.

In Spinrad's amazing novel, we are presented with an alternate history in which Adolf Hitler left Germany in 1919 and emigrated to New York, where he became a science fiction writer instead of a politician but with his essential psychology unchanged, a fact that made his integration into the world of pulp SF very smooth indeed. In this parallel dimension, Hitler's greatest work is a novel entitled *Lord of the Swastika*, and here at last, in Spinrad's own book, we are presented with the definitive version. But this is no novel within a novel; Hitler's novel and Spinrad's are identical.

The events that propel the main character, Feric Jaggar, to ultimate control over the world, and eventually the universe, parallel the rise of the real Hitler. There are analogues of the SS, the Brownshirts, the Soviets and the Weimar politicians. Instead of democrats, communists and pacifists, the enemies are mutants, mongrels and Universalists. Instead of the clichéd Jew pulling strings in the background, there is the non-human Dominator, a being capable of sapping the will of true men.

Feric Jaggar and his followers wear black leather and are constantly thrusting out their arms in phallic salutes and kissing the tips of shiny truncheons. There are no female characters in *The Iron Dream*. Everything is masculine and direct.

So this book is a straightforward satire against Nazi tendencies in the SF world? No. Spinrad does something more clever and devious here. He makes it impossible not to root for the wrong guys. The reader is coerced into cheering for Jaggar and his purebred warriors; the reader becomes an authentic Nazi for the duration of the novel, thrilling to the cracking of mongrel heads under the truncheons of the Sons of the Swastika, feeling delight and relief at the incineration of foul Doms by cleansing fire, wishing to participate in the utter destruction of the racially contaminated cities where parrotface mutants openly interbreed with harlequins,

lizardmen and blueskins. The reader has no ambiguous feelings at all as Jaggar surges to victory. The reader is one of the bad guys too.

This is a very interesting effect. It is easy to proclaim one's own superiority in terms of holding correct opinions. I am against prejudice of all kinds, totally opposed to racism, homophobia, sexism. And yet under the surface, perhaps not so deep, I am driven by egotism, intolerance and the lust for power. Just as you are. It's called the Human Condition and it's purely a tactical device to pretend that one's stated beliefs are always representative of the way one feels. Morality isn't really about not having evil urges, but about having evil urges and declining to act on them. While reading *The Iron Dream* I felt that Feric Jaggar was in the right. After finishing the book I am free to reject his values, even though I enjoyed them throughout the novel. This novel questioned me, and emotionally I gave all the wrong answers, but that doesn't mean that my reason has to follow suit.

Robert says

The Iron Dream is one of the true classics of science fiction. It is a core work in what I can only describe as a microgenre of sorts that appeared during the late 60's and early 70's -- Science Fiction as seriously black humor and revolutionary social commentary. The principle writers (that I can recall offhand -- I make no claim to this list being exhaustive) were Norman Spinrad and Harlan Ellison (*I Have No Mouth But I Must Scream*, *Dangerous Visions*), but a number of other authors such as Larry Niven (especially his books on organlegging) or Fritz Leiber (e.g. *A Spectre is Haunting Texas*) contributed books or short stories that are arguably in the microgenre. *Dangerous Visions* (and *Dangerous Visions II*) collect a number of the short stories with the peculiar combination of sardonic darkness and flower power that arose out of the first generation of Vietnam war cynics who really took a hard look at our civilization.

The Iron Dream stands alone at the top -- *over* the top. It is a deeply, deeply disturbing science fiction novel that was supposedly "written" by Adolph Hitler. It is a post-holocaust story -- the big nuclear war of Damnation Alley or A Boy and His Dog has happened, and civilization has been reduced to a small group of white people who are undergoing a crisis as they are attacked by mutant hordes. A strong leader Feric Jaggar emerges and, surrounded by his jackbooted thugs, smashes his way to power in time to mobilize an army to save this tiny remnant of white civilization. Overcoming infiltration by mutant Semites and people of color with mind control powers, he creates an army that manages to utterly destroy the mutants at the cost of making the world too radioactive for stable sexual reproduction to work ever again.

Not to worry! Jaggar triumphs over even this, and guarantees that blond haired, blue eyed white people will maintain eternal mastery over not only this world but the stars themselves!

I think that many of the reviews of this story so far miss its fundamental point. It is intended to be pure "fun" for the sort of demented soul that can read it for the satire it is and not be offended by its "elevation" of a distortion of the real historical story of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust to an insane wish-fulfillment fantasy of an Adolph Hitler who became a hack SF writer in an alternate reality. The book pokes fun at so many things -- pulp SF in general, post-holocaust pulp like *Battlefield Earth* (which is almost the *same story* except that L. Ron Hubbard takes himself *seriously* and the bad guys are space aliens and hence "safe" instead of mutant semisemitic hordes), Nazi Germany, racism, White America (which was alive and well and fighting "gooks" when this was written).

Its real point was to make you think (while entertaining you enormously). The reader comes away from the story both enlightened and annoyed. Spinrad makes you *cheer* for Jaggar in the narrow context of his fantasy even as you are *repelled* by the fact that you are cheering for a thinly veiled distortion for one of our most horrifying pieces of actual history. Thus he holds a dark mirror up to our souls, showing how there is a narrow line separating our legitimate wish not to be enslaved by mutant hordes in fantasy and the all-too common white-person fantasy in the real world that Jewish people, Black people, Oriental people, all are secretly mutant hordes that wish to enslave them so that the only defense is to enslave them first.

Spinrad (I will admit) is one of my all-time favorite SF authors. Some of his books are mediocre, or so strange a vision that it is difficult to hold onto the thread of plot through the distractions of drugs and galactic cultures he invents, the uber-hippy mentality of his future universes. Some of them are just plain awesome and make you think even as they skewer society on many levels. The Iron Dream is one of them.

(Bug Jack Barron is another, and I'll write a review of it one day as well...:-)

rgb

Derek says

Rating this book in terms of "one to five stars" is a complicated proposition. Are you rating the entire package or the book-within-a-book, *Lord Of The Swastika*, by Adolf Hitler?

On its own, *Lord Of The Swastika* is fairly wretched stuff: formulaic, over-enthusiastic pulp tripe.

But packaged as a product of an alternate history, it becomes powerful. It's the study of an embittered politician and possibly a latent homosexual, and a statement about mythic heroes as they apply to history. With the shadow of the Holocaust and World War Two looming behind it, this pulp tripe becomes unsettling.

In the alternate history, *Lord Of The Swastika* is light entertainment and has a strong and enthusiastic fan base. If we take a similarly-enjoyed fictional work from our work and perform the reverse of Spinrad's transformation, what kind of disturbing world would be produced?

Manny says

You know those great ideas you have late at night when you're chatting with your friends after a few glasses of wine? Well, if I had been involved in writing this book, here's how I think it might have got started:

[Table is covered with the remains of what looks like a large and pleasant meal. Animated conversation.]

- ... So don't you just hate those fascist science fiction writers who sell right-wing ideologies to suggestible teens? You know, Robert Heinlein and people like that?

- I think Heinlein is more of a libertarian...

- No, no, he's a fascist. Farnham's Freehold. A *bridge-playing* fascist, they are absolutely the worst kind.

- OK, good point. Anything left in that bottle? Thanks. May all their slams go one off!
- Two off, doubled!
- Cheers!
- Someone should take a stand. Hey, I have an idea. Suppose we were to write a parallel world novel, where Adolf Hitler never founds the Nazi party, but instead emigrates to the US and becomes a science fiction writer.
- I think I see where this is going...
- You do indeed. So, he writes this novel called, I don't know, *Lords of the Swastika*, and it's a huge success, and the fans just love it. And everyone ignores the fact that the evil mind-controlling villains look just like Jews, because well it's *fun* and how can you take that stuff seriously. And at the conventions everyone dresses up in Nazi uniforms like they do in *Swastika* and goosesteps around giving Nazi salutes.
- So you're proposing we write this novel for him?
- Absolutely. We write the novel, and there is a foreword and an afterword by some academic we make up, who explains the history and why every SF fan loves Adolf so much. It'll be cool!

Now if it had been me, we could easily have had the above conversation, but I'm afraid the book would never have been written. Spinrad, I am pleased to say, actually did it. The joke wears a little thin after a while, but it is still pretty funny. If you are nursing guilt feelings for having enjoyed dreadful Fascist SF in a Kiss-of-the-Spiderwomanish way when you were too young to know better, you will almost certainly like this. Spinrad has got your number alright.

Terence says

An alternate history where Hitler immigrated to America and became a pulp fiction writer.

nettebuecherkiste says

Abgebrochen auf Seite 126

Printable Tire says

Update: I actually did end up finding a copy in a used bookstore for \$1.49 or something and it had the cover I wanted and everything and it was awesome.

I'm freaking dying for a copy of this stupid book. I've wanted it for like a year now. All the copies on amazon are way too much money. I actually asked Spinrad about it, but he didn't know where I could get a cheap

one. The hunt continues.

"Let Adolph Hitler transport you to a far-future Earth, where only FERIC JAGGER and his mighty weapon, the Steel Commander, stand between the remnants of true humanity and the annihilation at the hands of the totally evil Dominators and the mindless mutant hordes they completely control. LORD OF THE SWASTIKA is recognized as the most vivid and popular of Hitler's science-fiction novels by fans the world over, who honored it with a Hugo as Best Science-Fiction Novel of 1954. Long out of print, it is now once more available in this new edition, with an Afterward by Homer Whipple of New York University. See for yourself why so many people have turned to this science-fantasy novel as a beacon of hope in these grim and terrifying times."

Finally I have gotten my hands on this book- through a friend using inter-library loan, my copy comes from the library of Texas A&M University. I hope borrowing a book like this doesn't put him on some sort of government list.

Alas, reading the pulp novel at the center of this literary work is a fairly redundant undertaking- it is literally a Nazi wet dream, a predictable celebration of violence and fascism. Lord of the Swastika's titular hero, Feric Jagger, is the ultimate anti-hero, or, as the faux- Homer Whipple says in the faux-afterward, "essentially a monster: a narcissistic psychopath with paranoid obsessions. His total self-assurance and certainty is based on a total lack of introspective and self-knowledge." He is a one-dimensional character, as are all the inhabitants of this pulpy universe- the collective human genotype brooks no sympathy toward their enemies, but neither does the reader feel any compelling desire to understand characters that are ultimately a high-meta joke.

The plot, as it were, is completely linear and follows Feric Jagger's and his Swastika comrades Battleship Potemkin/Horatio Alger-esque Rise (and no-Fall) to glory, to a predestined, inevitable conclusion, lacking any dramatic weight or suspense whatsoever. It is a story played out with a loaded deck, written by someone not playing with a full one. It can be very difficult to read, both for being so repetitive and for being so sickeningly precise and detailed in its violent fetishism. About halfway in there becomes little time for rest for either character or reader as Jagger launches campaign after tireless campaign against hordes of horrible mutant enemies, to the point that the prose reads disturbingly like the minutes of World of Warcraft or any other strategy role playing game. I must confess that I was disappointed the plot is entirely a political/military endeavor in a post-apocalyptic world- perhaps I would have warmed up to imaginary Hitler's prose if the setting was in a more science fiction or fantastical world to my liking.

Jagger is obviously a stand-in of how imaginary Hitler sees himself (Jagger is vegetarian, etc.), the rest all wish fulfillment with some historical figures thrown in (the core members of Jagger's party are obvious stand-ins for the core members of the Nazi party). It is interesting to note imaginary Hitler's obsession with motorcycles and the truncheon; where a sword would seem more violent and cliché, perhaps truncheons (and especially Jagger's Great Truncheon of Held) hold a special meaning of a purely ruthless device of brutality, and as the faux-scholar points out, the truncheon as imagery has clear phallic undertones.

It is also interesting to note that although the Zind/Dominators are on one hand clearly a one-dimensional foe of ultimate evil, they are nonetheless, despite perhaps imaginary Hitler's best intentions, presented as a somewhat paranoiac and elusive enemy, so much so that even at the end of this messy, fatalist, vicious book I wasn't at all convinced they were capable of all they were held culpable for.

Imaginary Hitler's use of compassionate concentration camps is sickening, as is this imaginary world's commitment to orderliness, loyalty, destiny, and resolve, and how imaginary Hitler supposes we will respect Jagger for shunning nuclear weapons. The preposterous ending (in which Jagger's escalating violent destiny has nearly eclipsed even his own usefulness) would be chilling if it weren't so preposterous.

Also of note is the lack of women in the novel, which the faux-scholar makes note of.

Which brings up a point- namely, what is the point of this book-within-a-book, *Lord of the Swastika*? It is hard to read, purposefully written poorly (no slight accomplishment- it must have been agonizing for Spinrad to keep this narrative going on for as long as it does), and in the end only offers us a psychological study of a fake Adolph Hitler. The faux-afterward gives us a frightening portrait of an alternative history in which the Nazis never rose to power and the Soviets have conquered nearly the entire world, as well as the fake-scholar's insights into the phallic imagery of the novel. It is very good fake-scholarship, and even though it seems the tone changes halfway through, it does give the preceding bad novel its comeuppance.

In the end, this whole endeavor can be seen in two ways: an unsuspecting attack on the gullible science fiction fanbase, who worship Joseph Campbell Heroes with Charmed Objects of Power that battle Ultimate Evil (i.e. Star Wars), and read the wish fulfillment prose of L. Ron Hubbard and actually create a religion out of action-nonsense; or a cautionary tale to and from an alternate history, where the world apparently face an Ultimate Evil (the Soviets there, the Terrorists here), and, having no dastardly historical figure like our man Hitler to offer the negative side of iron resolution, truly question of themselves whether or not utter and extreme devotion to brutality in the form of a Supreme Leader is needed to "win the fight."

Fortunately, our alternate-history scholar Whipple, who is incapable of even imagining such a figure rising to power, let alone the horrors inflicted on the Jews and the world in our own historical time, comes to a sensible conclusion:

"In a sense, such a human being would be all surface and no interior. He would be able to manipulate the surface of social reality by projecting his own pathologies upon it, but he would never be able to share in the inner communion of interpersonal relationships. Such a creature could give a nation the iron leadership and sense of certainty to face a mortal crisis, but at what cost? Led by the likes of Feric Jagger, we might gain the world at the cost of our souls."

Their history is fortunate to have a monster like Feric Jagger only exist within the "confines of the pages of a science fantasy, the fever dream of a neurotic science fiction writer named Adolf Hitler." One can only hope that our very real and historical Hitler might teach us some damned lesson about the vulnerability of the human soul, which can be warped as easily, to quoth an expression fond of imaginary Hitler, as "so much fillintheblank."

As an aside, I was shaken by how the straw man approach to writing inherent in *Lord of the Swastika* reads so much like other science fiction I have read, especially the lesbian propaganda *Daughters of a Coral Dawn: A Novel*. And I also enjoyed Theodore Sturgeon's introduction, which listed five or so more books I must read, as well as illuminating to me the fact that *Catch 22* was written in the style of a Bach Fugue.
