



Orion Shall Rise

Poul Anderson

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On an Earth that barely survived a nuclear holocaust, visionaries who dream of reaching for the stars attempt to revive the forbidden technology that once destroyed their world

Centuries ago, humankind was nearly destroyed in a nuclear apocalypse. Many generations have passed since that terrible time, and the remnants of civilization have re-formed into separate, vastly different societies. The dominant culture of a widely diminished Earth, the ecologically sensitive Maurai hold fast to their belief that “non-green” science is an unacceptable evil. But the reborn dream of space flight harbored by a forward-thinking few could herald the revival of the nuclear technology that once ravaged the planet and its people—and the powerful Maurai Federation will take every step necessary, no matter how drastic, to prevent doomsday from dawning again.

An enthralling work of speculative fiction, Poul Anderson’s *Orion Shall Rise* is a feat of world-building and a sobering view of tomorrow by one of the twentieth century’s most revered science fiction masters. Anderson’s monumental tale combines science, anthropology, philosophy, and global politics with breathtaking action and adventure, offering an ingeniously unique and provocative vision of humankind’s all-too-possible destiny.

This ebook includes the bonus story “The Sky People.”

Orion Shall Rise Details

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From Reader Review Orion Shall Rise for online ebook

James Rickett says

Enjoyable, with some science that may be interesting in light of current events. The science is largely real; check out Freeman Dyson and the real Project Orion for background.

Michael says

Poul Anderson in several of his novels explores the phenomenon of a future society turning away from high technology, and this is one of the best. The earth has slowly come back from a nuclear war and the dominant Polynesian state closely monitors the rest of the world for signs of a return to the nuclear technology that nearly destroyed humanity centuries earlier. In some ways this makes the Polynesians, here called "Maurai," similar to the American government in its current efforts to limit the nuclear ambitions of Iran and North Korea. There are five or six major characters, each from one of the successor human civilizations and each are interestingly drawn, particularly a France under the rule of an elite caste based in an aerostat, or dirigible, stationed in the stratosphere.

Neil says

It is funny - I have wavered back and forth for quite while on whether or not to read this after I first saw it at my friend's aunt's used book store waaaay back when. I found this copy for a good price (cheap, cheap, cheap!) during a sale at another used bookstore this past year. I finally decided to take a chance and read it (after numerous times of picking it up and putting it back down). Anyway. Enough about me.

I enjoyed this book far more than I thought I would. It does take a bit of time before it starts moving; most of the beginning of the book is setting the stage "for what comes later." Once it gets moving, it focuses on six main characters with a multitudinous cast of supporting characters. The author does a nice job of world-building and does a nice job of creating characters I rooted for and characters I did not care about in the least bit, they were so despicable to me. There was a lot of 'the ends justifies the means' going on throughout the book, as well as a lot of 'blatant hypocrisy' amongst the characters who could not see it because of their own blinders. I did start to second-guess the author on how it was going to end, and I was happy to be proven wrong. The ending was not necessarily 'as satisfying' or 'as neat' as I would normally prefer, but that is okay. it was a very involved story, and it has a lot of backstory history in it to help guide the reader along.

It is funny, but I realized as I read this book that "info-dumps" have occurred with great regularity in most genres over the years; the "info-dump" is not "new" to the 1990s or 2000s. I think the difference is how well the author does in dumping the information onto the unsuspecting reader. In this book, I think the author does a decent job with how he shovels information at the reader. I did not find it overwhelming in the least bit.

One "thing" that I especially enjoyed was when Ronica said to her "crew", "Let's go, boys! . . . On the bounce!" (165). I found myself wondering if it was an homage to Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*, as that was a phrase used quite often throughout the book. It was an interesting turn of the tongue, as it does not really fit

in with the general tone of the book or the moment when she says it. Perhaps she had grown up reading and being educated on "the classics"? hahahah

There is a lot going on in this book. (view spoiler)

There was a lot of intrigue in the book, a lot of double-crosses and betrayals. it seemed many of the men had no issues with cheating on their wives and sleeping around as long as they were away on a "mission of national importance." Yet, they always seemed surprised to learn that their wives were not happy with the lecherous adultery of the husbands. Go figure!

Some other "things" that caught my attention:

On page 359, the comment is made that Jovain suddenly realizes he has not been paying enough attention to the engineers, the technicians, of Skyholm. He further realizes that this lack of attention has been to his detriment. Yuh think?!? It really struck me as funny when I read that. (view spoiler)

pp. 366-367 (view spoiler)

I think the most horrific part of the book for me occurred on page 408. (view spoiler)

The book had an interesting mix of "old religions" and "new religions", some of which intermixed various beliefs in the creating of new religions. It seemed the three "primary" "old religions" which had survived were Hinduism, Christianity, and Judaism. The new religions focused mainly on "preserving and protecting the Earth" and being virulently "anti-technology" (to varying levels).

it was funny - having finished *Confessions of an Economic Hitman* recently, the constant talk about how important energy is to an economy in order to improve the economy and to speed up modernization really reminded me of that book. People are constantly talking about how important the economy is to industry and how equally important energy is to industry (increasing it and improving it). Not everybody in the book held to this view, but it was still amusing to me to read about this mindset in this book.

It was an interesting book; it was a fun book; it was a crazy book. It had some events in it that I did not expect to happen, but which did make sense in retrospect. The author did a good job putting together this dystopian world of the future and then expanding upon it in terms of how things might have changed due to specific events being put into motion. I did enjoy reading it, and I wish I had taken a chance upon reading it sooner. As I said early, it does take some time for it to build up speed (steam?), but when it does, it keeps the reader hopping. I am glad that I took the time to read it.

Jeff Miller says

What a great read showing his master storytelling and ability to combine different cultures from seeming different ages into the same timeline.

My appreciation of him is growing in leaps in bounds.

Now on to the High Crusade.

Ed says

Poul Anderson was an exciting and prolific writer of both science fiction and fantasy. I've never read one of his authored or co-authored books that I did not enjoy. This story was no exception. Sure, it had its dull moments and got a little complicated at times, but the plot was well drawn as were the characters.

The story takes place centuries after a nuclear holocaust wiped out most of earth's population and left much of the land devastated. Three major civilizations have emerged: The Domain which covers most of what is now Northern Europe, the Murai, a queen led nation of South Pacific seafarers and the Northwest Confederation based in the Northwest corner of North America. There are other smaller groups such as the Mong and the Yuan, Asian survivors of the disaster as well as the Espanyans in Southeastern Europe.

The Domain is protected by an immense dirigible called Skyholm which can deliver lasers anywhere in the Domain. The Murai are militarily, the strongest and see themselves as the keepers of the peace. They constantly look for any fissionable material in order to confiscate it. The Northwesterners or Norries as they call themselves are divided into lodges, the strongest of which are the Wolves. The Murai defeated the Norries in the Power War when they tried to build nuclear power plants.

The plot is built around the efforts of the Norries to build a nuclear-powered space ship without anyone discovering what they are doing. The major sub-plot involves the protagonist Iern of the Domain being usurped as leader in a coup just as he is about to be elected by Jovain, a jealous, vindictive rival. Iern escapes to the Northwest and enlists in the space ship effort after falling in love with Ronica Birken a Norrie who helps him escape the clutches of Jovain.

This book won a number of awards including a Hugo and a Nebula. It contains most of the themes that Anderson used in many of his writings: liberty, adventure, individualism, tragic conflicts, human foibles and others. I'm not sure this was Anderson's Magnus Opus, but it's not only long at close to 500 pages but has been reprinted numerous times in the 35 years since its first appearance.

There are times the plot drags but the time is put to good use exploring the characters' motivations and plans. The ending is action-filled and very exciting. The conclusion ties up a number of loose ends and leaves the reader with hope for the human race.

I highly recommend it to not only sci-fi fans but anyone who enjoys an exciting yarn taking place in an imaginative universe with lots of parallels to our own.

Lyn says

Maybe Poul Anderson's greatest attribute is to make the epic personal, to bring within arm's reach the limitless expanses of time and space.

Reminiscent of Anderson's *Vault of the Ages* and *The Winter of the World* the author returns to his Maurai world creation to a far future post-apocalyptic tale, really more about the centuries old rebuilding of civilization, with our self destroyed culture a distant memory.

The idea behind the Maurai is that a nuclear war has decimated most of society, as we know it, with vast stretches of North America and Eastern Europe no longer populated. (Anderson first developed the Maurai in the 1950s when the cold war between the US and the USSR raged frigidly). The Maurai, made up largely of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific islands, was spared much of the destruction and so had a head start on rebuilding a world culture. More interested in green technology and biology, the Maurai are zealous to avoid the nuclear devastation of the old world and to guard against backslides toward technology that is not earth friendly. This concept makes this series of stories especially relevant for today's readers.

Published in 1983, Anderson was able to take the time to more fully develop this story than he had been in his earlier days. Reading this excellent book, I got the idea that the old master was trying to create a masterpiece out of this unique world building experiment.

Orion Shall Rise also includes a floating city / air station called Skyholm, a pre-war aerostat that is developing into a myth by the populace of a future France that has seen generations come and go with the reassuring satellite always hovering overhead.

Tying together themes of social and cultural evolution and Anderson's unique ability to connect probable trends in future societies, *Orion Shall Rise* is one of his best.

On a lighter note:

Back in the olden days of the eighties, the comedy show SCTV (starring John Candy, Eugene Levy, Rick Moranis, Catherine O'Hara and host of other funny people) made a spoof of the television series *Amerika* (1987) called *Kanada*, where the great white north (Kooo-loo-koo-koo-ka-koo!) was invaded by and occupied by the Polynesians. This skit is so obscure that I could not even find it on YouTube. (Can I get a "like" from anyone else who remembers SCTV?) In Anderson's *Orion Shall Rise*, the Maurai invades and occupies the Northwest Union, a loosely organized confederacy made up of the Pacific Northwest and Canada. Were the producers of SCTV inspired by Anderson's work? We may never know, but I could not help laughing to myself as I read.

Mathieu Funk says

Deeply imaginative, beautiful world with an enormous scale. But the writing is flawed, the main character is romantically interested and seduces most of the named female characters, with the exception of his mother.

Maarten says

I was about to lay this book aside at about one quarter in. Some positive reviews here convinced me to carry

on, and in the end I'm glad I did. However, I still think for the first 60-70% is concerned too much with world building and too little with telling a story and developing the characters.

Dalen says

I loved this book. I had to go back and forth between 4 and 5 stars because I didn't love the very end of it, but overall I'd say it's closer to 4.75 than 4 so I put it at 5 stars. The world he created was interesting to me, with seemingly plausible civilization. The characters were enjoyable in their variety, even the "villains" were interesting and human. The concepts explored were also fascinating, the morality of nuclear technology, energy technology, bioethics, conservation, human progress, religion, and others. Even though the dialogue wasn't always realistic in terms of modern conversation, in the context of the novel with bastardized languages it worked. Overall, this may be one of my favorite books that I've read this year. I'd like to thank my brother, Ian, for recommending it.

Allyn Nichols says

DNF : I don't know what it is about this book but i got to 60% and finally gave up There's a lot going on and at the same time there's absolutely nothing going on. I've left it bookmarked and will likely finish it at some point. Until then.....

Paul Darcy says

by Poul Anderson and published in 1983.

I usually like post-apocalyptic novels. But this one by Poul Anderson, I'm not too sure about.

There seems like quite a bit of earth left after the "Big War", whereas I'm pretty sure if several hundred megaton nukes detonated all over our green earth, there would be very little left afterwards. Maybe some cockroaches, ashes, glass bowls and hot rocks.

However, in Poul's 'Orion Shall Rise' we see some pretty well off and advanced civilizations from all over the globe doing pretty well. There is an orbiting platform, fighter planes and aircraft carriers to name a few of the technologies left intact. Um, yeah okay.

Anyhow, overlooking this, we have three or four distinct cultures vying for dominance. One in particular has spent decades on a dream, the dream that Orion shall rise. They have done an incredible job of hiding this project from the other cultures, but in the end the secret is exposed and that's when all hell breaks loose.

I can't tell you what Orion is, or that would spoil the book, but its rising will surely disrupt and completely change the current way of things.

The first two thirds of the book deals with the different cultures and how they operate and differ. I was reminded of "Downbelow Station", and almost bored to tears as much, but not quite. I'm much more into action, adventure and mystery and the first two thirds of this book had very little of it.

So, not wanting to give up on it, Poul's writing is good, I slugged along and was duly rewarded for my perseverance. You see, the last hundred or so pages really heat up and turn into the kind of post-apocalyptic novel I enjoy complete with action, adventure and some mystery.

Overall I would say this is a good book, but not great. The ending pages almost make up for the slow beginning and middle. Almost, but not quite.

For exceptional post-apocalypse novels I would suggest "Liege-Killer", or "The Postman", or Wayland Drew's Earthing Cycle series or Paul O Williams' Pelbar cycle novels.

I'm not saying to give this one a pass, just that there are much better post-apocalypse novels out there.

Orion rose, but is sure took a long time to do so.

Kevin A. says

One of the best post-apocalyptic worldbuilding exercises in all of science fiction, alongside Walter Miller's in A Canticle for Liebowitz. The Maurai hegemony, the Northwest Federation, Skyholm and the Mong are all rich in imaginative detail.

Iuliana Manea says

Probably I will put 5 stars on most books I read, because I find reading very relaxing.

But this book really got me hooked. The idea that our society, as we know it, just ended and we went back to medieval organisation, but still have a space station to protect us is something that I do see happening.

It's a tale about power. The classic story about the struggle between that is good and bad in every society.

There is no civilization and going forward without some bad things happening and we will always look up to the stars for salvation.

Some people just have what they need to save the world and become heroes, as Iern and Ronica and there are always some people like Jovain, that just think they are good human being, but their core is corrupted by their own desire for personal gain and glory. Love is never a good reason for war and treason.

This is a book that most fantasy readers will like, but there are some good aspects for the SF genre readers also.

Milo? Dumbraci says

din p?cate, SF-ul e doar o spoial? vag? de post-apocaliptism, dar ?i aceea slab realizat? ?i prezentat?; restul e un pseudo-Dumas cvasi-medieval cu aristocra?i, lipsit de zvâc ?i pove?ti interesante, împachetat într-o scriitur? cam anchilozat? ?i dialoguri ?epene.

Plictisitor.

Alex Daniciuc says

Nice , easy read
