seized control of the union. Workers refused to go along, paying their dues directly to their elected provincial officials rather than to the national union; but they were beaten when the national BLF imported scabs and employers refused to hire workers without national membership cards.

All too often we are told that working people lack the vision to run society, or are inextricably bound up with narrow self-interests that tie them to the capitalist system. In this important book, the Burgmanns demonstrate that such claims are simply wrong. Ordinary working people are quite capable — indeed, far more capable than the politicians and owners now entrusted with such responsibilities — of envisioning the sort of society in which we would wish to live, and of taking action (even action that in the short term costs them jobs) to advance that vision. But those possibilities are usually latent, as our society is organized in ways that discourage broader visions, divide us from one another, and deny us our potential as human actors. In New South Wales, construction workers demonstrated that these obstacles can be overcome, but unfortunately they fought largely alone and so could not prevail. [JB]

**Kropotkin in Our Time**


Dennis Danvers’ latest science fiction novel is a time-travel story in which Kropotkin, on his deathbed, is offered the chance to be “reborn” in the future – 1995 – by a being from the technologically advanced far future. His rebirth at age thirty-two leaves him with all his memories of his former life intact. He ends up in Richmond, VA, where the heritage of slavery and the Confederacy come close to the surface. The bulk of the book explores the question: can the ideals of Kropotkin survive in the 1990’s American south?

Although this a flawed work (the characters other than Kropotkin never really “come to life” and there are a few cheap plot twists), Danvers is an intelligent writer and the book is compelling enough to hold your interest. Danvers obviously has done research into both Kropotkin and anarchism (he cites http://dwrdmnm.pitzer.edu/anarchist_archives/archivehome.html in his acknowledgments — a great resource), as well as into the history of Richmond, his place of residence. Each chapter begins with quotes from Kropotkin and/or another pertinent historical source. In this way, Danvers successfully presents Kropotkin’s ideas in two ways: he allows Kropotkin to speak for himself, and he faithfully transfers Kropotkin’s ideas into his fictional setting.

The fictional Kropotkin does not attempt to unionize his workplace (a diner where he’s gotten a job as a dishwasher), but he does help organize an effort to re-direct the restaurant’s wasted food to the city’s poor. Along the way, he joins a communal household, attends a problematic performance art presentation focused on US oppression disguised as “fair trade,” and befriends a Civil War-era slave who has also become untried in time. In the best tradition of science fiction, Kropotkin provides insight into our current culture by observing it with eyes from another time period.

In the current political climate, Danvers was brave to have written this book, which brings to life a picture of Kropotkin the man, and shows a generally sympathetic portrayal of anarchism. Although The Watch was written and contracted for publication prior to 9/11, the timing of its arrival is propitious. It certainly doesn’t hurt to have a positive portrayal of an alternative viewpoint made available for mass consumption in a genre of popular fiction at this time.

The major sources of trade reviews have been surprisingly receptive to this book. Publisher’s Weekly gushed: “Reminiscent of classic SF tales of the ‘40s and ‘50s, such as Asimov’s Foundation series, this compelling novel may well become a minor classic in the field,” which is perhaps overstating the case. Kirkus Reviews more realistically opined that “Danvers spins a grand yarn, though his message will stick in not a few reactionary craws.” Recommend The Watch for purchase at your local public or university library, not in the hope that its message will stick in anyone’s craw, but rather that Kropotkin and his ideas may be introduced to people who might not otherwise encounter them.

[Alison M. Lewis]