



Saint Leibowitz and the Wild Horse Woman

Walter M. Miller Jr. , Terry Bisson (Editor)

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It has been nearly forty years since Walter M. Miller Jr. shocked and dazzled readers with his provocative bestseller and enduring classic, *A Canticle for Leibowitz* . Now, in one of the most eagerly awaited publishing events of our time, here is Miller's masterpiece, an epic intellectual and emotional tour de force that will stand beside *1984* , *Brave New World* , and *A Canticle for Leibowitz*.

In a world struggling to transcend a terrifying legacy of darkness — a world torn between love and violence, good and evil — one man undertakes an odyssey of adventure and discovery that promises to alter not only his destiny but the destiny of humankind as well...

Millennia have passed since the Flame Deluge, yet society remains fragmented, pockets of civilization besieged by barbarians. The Church is in turmoil, the exiled papacy struggling to survive in its Rocky Mountain refuge. To the south, tyranny is on the march. Imperial Texark troops, bent on conquest, are headed north into the lands of the Nomads, spreading terror in their wake.

Meanwhile, isolated in Leibowitz Abbey, Brother Blacktooth St. George suffers a crisis of faith. Torn between his vows and his Nomad upbringing, between the Holy Virgin and visions of the Wild Horse Woman of his people, he stands at the brink of disgrace and expulsion from his order. But he is offered an escape — of sorts: a new assignment as a translator for Cardinal Brownpony, which will take him to the contentious election of a new pope and then on a pilgrimage to the city of New Rome. Journeying across a continent divided by nature, politics, and war, Blacktooth is drawn into Brownpony's intrigues and conspiracies. He bears witness to rebellion, assassination, and human sacrifice. And he is introduced to the sins that monastery life has long held at bay.

This introduction comes in the form of Ædrea, a beautiful but forbidden "genny" living among the deformed and mutant castouts in Texark's most hostile terrain. As Blacktooth encounters her again and again on his travels — in the flesh, in rumors of miraculous deeds, and in the delirium of fever — he begins to wonder if Ædrea is a she-devil, the Holy Mother, or the Wild Horse Woman herself.

Picaresque and passionate, magnificent, dark, and compellingly real, *Saint Leibowitz and the Wild Horse Woman* is a brutal, brilliant, thrilling tale of mystery, mysticism, and divine madness, a classic that will long endure in every reader's memory.

Saint Leibowitz and the Wild Horse Woman Details

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Terry Bisson (Editor)**

From Reader Review Saint Leibowitz and the Wild Horse Woman for online ebook

loupgarous says

The last novel written by Walter M. Miller before his death in the 1970s (with considerable posthumous rework by science-fiction author Terry Bisson at the Miller family's request), *Saint Leibowitz and the Wild Horse Woman* is a sequel to Miller's classic postapocalyptic novel *A Canticle for Leibowitz*.

This time, the action all happens within the lifespan of Brother Blacktooth "Nimmy" St. George of the Abbey of Saint Leibowitz, a hundred years after the action in the "Fiat Homo" chapter of *A Canticle for Leibowitz*.

The empire of Texarkana, under the virulent Hannegan dynasty, is expanding in all directions and even asserting authority over the Roman Catholic Church by pressing its own Cardinal, the current Hannegan's pederast uncle, as a candidate for Pope at a conclave held in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains after the previous Pope's death.

Nimmy St. George is drafted (because of his origins among the fierce nomadic plains tribes who stand between Texarkana and Hannegan dominion over the West) to be secretary and translator to Cardinal Brownpony, a lay lawyer appointed Cardinal to oversee the Church's secret plans for defending humanity against the Hannegan dynasty, and so travels a roundabout route with Brownpony to the conclave by way of meetings in the plains with mysterious nomads, turncoat Texarkana officers, and little communities of mutants deformed by the radiation left after World War Three nine centuries earlier. And there the action begins.

Saint Leibowitz and the Wild Horse Woman is a rich book, with wry humor and genuine pathos, and endless twists and turns... in many ways, it's different from *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, more of a contemporary novel than that earlier work of Miller's. I can recommend it both for those of us who read and loved and for those for whom this will be their first taste of Walter Miller, Jr. It's an absorbing read.

DROPPING OUT says

This book is nowhere as bad as some have made it out to be, and, indeed, had the original *Canticle for Leibowitz* not been written, this book standing alone might have established Miller's reputation.

Miller's "problem" was that he hit a grand-slam home-run in *Canticle*, and he spent the remainder of what must have been a sad and frustrating life trying to get out from under *Canticle*'s shadow. For a long time the prevailing view was that he had given up writing altogether. But the truth was that he spent decades writing that next book, fighting what must have been crushing depression that led him to commit suicide in 1996.

I read somewhere that manuscript left behind was a good one-third longer than the finished work - and I, for one, would love to know what was cut out. Perhaps one day those texts will become available.

Miller was not a "one-book wonder," however much his reputation rests upon *Canticle*. Before *Canticle*, he had written and had published some forty-one short stories, three of which were edited to create *Canticle*.

I refer you, the reader, to an insightful article by David N. Samuelson, *The Lost Canticles of Walter M. Miller, Jr.*, published in 1976 and available on-line: <http://www.depauw.edu/sfs/backissues/...>

In retrospect, the popularity of *Canticle* in the late 1950s and early 1960s was clearing owing to the pandemic fear of nuclear annihilation. *Saint Leibowitz* and *the Wild Horse Woman* appeared when that fear had largely past, although it clearly still obsessed Miller. Moreover, those issues in Miller's short stories and identified by Samuelson were revisited in much greater detail in *Saint Leibowitz ...Wild Horse Woman*.

Having praised the book and given it five stars, I do admit, I did not find it easy to get into. And I do wish a background summary (written by the editor and printed in italics) and *Dramatis Personae* had been supplied, for I did for a while have difficulty keeping straight who was who.

But on second and closer reading, not only were things clearer, but sharper and in greater focus.

I just wish people would put *Canticle* in the back of their mind when approaching *Saint Leibowitz* and judge it in the wider context of the themes that appeared in his other thirty-eight short stories.

Ethan I. Solomon says

I really enjoyed this book, way more than I thought I would. An interesting take on the post-apocalyptic genre, which often times finds itself shying away from religious storytelling as it can be difficult to justify its existence in science-fiction in general.

I find myself wanting to give this book four stars and yet I am held back by one crucial factor; the ending. In *A Canticle For Leibowitz*, a few ugly points about society and religion are faced and I was left feeling changed, as I believe a good novel can do. This book however, seemed to have no point to it other than being a further examination of a society whose heritage is nuclear war.

Recommended for fans and students of post-apocalypse novels only, though some religious merits are to be found as well.

Doreen says

Oddly enough, I seem to be one of the few people here who enjoyed the sequel much more than its predecessor. I found *A Canticle...* devoid of much of the human suffering that pervades this book, which questions the conflict between faith and tradition, desire and happiness, and what it means to be a good human being. *SLatWHW* tackles some heavy moral issues of how best to synthesize your emotions with your scruples in order to lead a godly life, and admits that self-sacrifice, though good for your soul, sucks hard. I thought this was a good, challenging read that helped me understand better how weak people can be, emotionally, and how heroic it is when we learn to deal with how we feel instead of ignoring our inner selves.

Heather says

It was a bit of a slog. There were too many characters with multiple and similar-sounding names for me to keep them straight. I'm not sure what the point of the book was..? Maybe that no one wins in war?

Sander says

This book was somewhat underwhelming to me. I read it immediately after I finished Canticle (which I love) for the third time and it just does not live up to the standard of the first book.

The focus of the book on politics is an interesting choice. I enjoyed the parts about the conclave. However, the 'human side' of the story was not fleshed out. Many characters felt like cardboard to me.

The book was well structured though. I would recommend it to someone who really enjoyed Canticle but with a caveat. I don't think I will re-read this book.

Myriad says

My reaction in one sentence: What the eff was the point?

There's a problem if I finish reading your book and I have no idea why you wrote it. And I honestly have no idea why Miller wrote this. What did he think he was discussing? Did he think he actually made some kind of point?

I wanted this to be good; it started out with so much potential. Since the main characters are primarily Nomads who have chosen service to the Church, I figured there would be a great exploration of the tension between and conflation of pagan/tribal/animist/polytheist/pseudo-matriarchal worldview and christian/civilized/theist/monotheist/patriarchal worldview. Which could have been awesome, but Miller chose to beat it up, strangle it, draw and quarter it, and then bury it under six feet of overly-complicated arcane Catholic political garbage. By the end of the book, the reader feels rather like *zie* has been subjected to the same series of tortures.

A longer review may be found [here](#)

Bernard says

I struggled with this book, an 'interquel' to Miller's previous novel, *A Canticle for Leibowitz*. The middle third of this mature-themed novel was difficult reading but I am satisfied to have finished it. At first I couldn't figure out what the book was supposed to be about. Then I realized it was really about one man, Brother Blacktooth "Nimmy" St. George, born a nomad but who joined the monks at the St. Leibowitz Abbey in the Southwest desert, but who through all his life struggled to find a balance between his culture and his vows, his duty to man and duty to God, and his human desires. Yes, he is the main character and so the book was obviously about him, but I kept waiting for the book to broaden into a story with broader

implications. It didn't, as the conflicts and grand plans of the supporting characters in the book ultimately fizzled into a literal burnt-out state where almost all was lost, except the revelations in Nimmy's heart and the effects on the reader. In the end I was sad it was over. This book's imagery and philosophical issues now haunt me, as I try to figure out both the meaning of what Miller was trying to convey through the characters and situations in this book, and also how this book helps to expand the universe he laid out in his earlier Leibowitzian novel. It was not an easy read, but I think, a worthwhile read, especially for fans of the post-war survivalism genre and readers looking to challenge their views of the true meaning of faith, the Catholic church, and what it means to be a human in relation to both.

Erik Graff says

I'd read Miller's *A Canticle for Liebowitz* as a kid. Post-holocaust novels were quite popular then when the threat of global thermonuclear war was much discussed. Unlike most other such books, *Canticle* was touching, wryly amusing, even hopeful. Civilization had not quite collapsed and the Church, as in the Dark Ages, maintained fragments of culture and learning.

This book was intended as a sequel, being set many years after its predecessor. Unfortunately, Miller did not live to see it through to completion. That was done by another. For Miller's sake and for the sake of childhood memories, I would like to think that the reason it's so inferior is because of its dual authorship.

Jon says

The sequel to **A Canticle for Liebowitz** was thirty years in the making, but unfortunately, Miller seems to have forgotten how to write a novel in those decades. Many of the moral and ethical arguments that made **Canticle** so brilliant are still present, as is the occasional bit of dry humor, but these are overshadowed by long and drug-out passages, poor plotting, and a conclusion that seems to have been hastily written the night before the book went to press (the "Wild Horse Woman" from the title, for example, virtually never appears in the novel; I'm still confused as to why her name appears so prominently on the book's spine). There is still much to gain from reading **Saint Leibowitz**, and there are passages that will haunt me for years to come (like the torturing of Esitt Loyte). The book's faults, however, made such gains painful and too-long-in-the-coming. My final opinion: **Saint Leibowitz** could have used a couple more runs through the typewriter.

Bryn Hammond says

Hard to rate, even when I discount the last hundred or so pages written by another hand. If I also posit that Walter M. Miller (rest in peace) left an unfinished book behind him, whose first four-five hundred pages still needed his hand – and if I don't blame the book for that – then it's a definite four stars. It was very interesting to follow Miller to this, forty years later, which I did out of curiosity and respect for the writer who gave us *Canticle*. This one seemed to me a case of half-realised potential, with the loss of its author's hand in the end product evident.

To call this a sequel sets up expectations of it being like *Canticle*. But he's lived forty years between. He's changed his views. Often – since I re-read *Canticle* this same month – I thought I saw him putting in the things he now believes he left out of *Canticle*. Revising its ideas. It was, at times, like a commentary on the

early book – from which, I thought, he must have felt quite distanced himself.

Where *Canticle* has been experienced, including by me, as a hymn to the Catholic Church in history, the *Saint and the Horse Woman* (I don't know how to abbreviate that title) is frequently church criticism and satire. Where, in a group read, we spoke of an absence of women, here women and also sexuality are very present. With loose ends: I'll never know what he meant by his running theme of androgyny. A complaint of mine in *Canticle*, that his Plains Indian-inspired culture is out of a cartoon, is well fixed, with half the book's attention on the Plains Nomads' unhappy interactions with a conquering state and church. The other half is church politics. Church politics, Nomad politics: I too feel the book can get bogged down in scenes of politics, to uncertain end. Because we begin with Blacktooth, an ex-Nomad monk, questioning whether he belongs in the old monastery, his visionary search as he blurs Saint Leibowitz and the Wild Horse Woman of his people; I've seen Blacktooth understood to be Miller's spokesperson for his own loss (although it's not a simple loss) of faith. A pity, then, that we lose sight of Blacktooth's inner journey for interminable sections – and that his story is resolved by another hand than Miller's.

There's almost no science fiction left. It was much more like reading a (burlesque) historical fiction on the medieval church, muddled up with the American West. *Canticle's* concerns with science aren't pursued, and the post-nuclear-war setting becomes accidental.

Perry Whitford says

What the hell happened to Walter M Miller?

In the 1950's he was a fairly consistent writer of short-stories who ended the decade producing one of the kite-marks of "literary" post-apocalyptic science fiction, *A Canticle for Leibowitz*.

Then, all of a sudden, he produced precisely nothing until this follow-up novel 40 years later - and this was only published posthumously, after he blew his own brains out with a gun and an editor whittled down a sprawling 600 page manuscript by a third.

I had previously read *Canticle* and it deserves the reputation that led me to hunt it out. It's witty, erudite, unusual and appears to be written by a very smart and funny man with an extensive knowledge of latin. Yet that was it for Miller, and he only left this frustratingly disappointing sequel before committing suicide. That's really sad.

This novel is not exactly a straight sequel either because *Canticle* featured three connected novellas that spanned a millenium, and this is story is set somewhere between the second and third novella from that earlier volume.

That means firstly that all the characters are new (except one, I won't go into that). although figures who featured in the previous novel are referenced. Tt means that you already know how things turned out after this, so it better be a cracking good yarn.

But it was far from cracking. Most of its 400 pages were taken up with complicated exposition detailing the political machinations between the church, the controlling state, and a multitude of independent clans, and it was largely pretty dull.

When Miller focused on the more narrow human travails of his characters, most notably Brother Blacktooth, it was much more interesting, but everyone seemed swamped by the wider issues, and appeared only indistinctly against the sprawling backdrop.

A shame, in every way.

Jason says

Walter M. Miller committed suicide before completing his sequel to his only other novel, A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ. Terry Bisson was hired to edit and finish the book from Miller's outline. That hybrid became SAINT LEIBOWITZ AND THE WILD HORSE WOMAN.

This novel is more of a 'midquel', rather than sequel, because its events take place 80 years after CANTICLE's part two, called "Fiat Lux" (c. 3254 AD, and 600 years before CANTICLE's part three. SAINT LEIBOWITZ reminded me very much of Herbert's DUNE. They are both sprawling novels dealing with the political machinations of both Church and State, and they both center on the manipulations of the mysterious, isolated, less-civilized nomadic peoples whose loyalties will tip the balance of power.

It is finely characterized and the battles and various landscapes are sufficiently detailed to place you within the action and setting without creating a leaden narrative.

I listened to BOOKS ON TAPE's audio version narrated by Jonathan Marosz. He handled the character voices well, but Miller's names for the MANY characters in the novel became confused in my ears-head because of similarity in sound. It would be easier to distinguish on the written page.

Recommended for fans of Miller & CANTICLE.

Mike says

Miller's first (and only other) novel, A Canticle for Liebowitz, is rightly regarded as classic. This posthumously published sequel is, in my opinion, just as good as the first (a minority view, I think). The story takes place around the same time as the second part of Canticle, and is an engrossing story with vivid characters. The symbolism and themes are often similar to Canticle's, with similar pessimism & dark humor, but Miller meanders into eastern mysticism too, and we even see heroism in some characters (tragic more than comic, but still heroic!).

Veronika KaoruSaionji says

Story of two men, simply monk and noble (charismatic) arcibishop, later pope, from future middle-age-like (plus in some aspects renaissance-like and 19. century-like)world about finding way to God, love and hapiness.

I thought for first time about dogmatica and spiritual confussion in middle age. It must be terrible! I feel so sorry for the poor people...

But, all this is so interesting! Very good book.

And there are some gay stories, too :o), some nice, some cruel ones: poor sweet (gay young unhappy monk, later succesful gay priest) Torrildo (I love him and wish him happiness!), other (bad) arcibishop (uncle of ruler of Texark), who likes young boys (as Torrildo - he rape him and want to kill him), the terrible rape of poor first main hero (monk) as boy by soldiers (he fears soldiers his all life because it), terrible rape of

mother of second main hero (arcibishop), which led her in lesbian relationships only (she was probably bisexual, also she can love women, when men hurt her so much) and to hate her child (arcibishop) born from this rape, "manly" behaviour of brave barbarian nomads who will always rape all women (from little girls to old women) and all boys, and so on... Surprisingly a lot of it.
