



Coils

Roger Zelazny, Fred Saberhagen

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The Year is 1995 in high-tech, computer-rich America..

While on vacation with his beautiful girlfriend Cora, Donald BelPatri begins to realize that something is seriously wrong with his memory.

Clickaderick...click

Donald's mind can coil into any computer consciousness, but he cannot remember...Where do his parents live? Who is paying \$8,000 into his account each month? What had he been working on at the Angra Energy Corporation?

The Cora "disappears".

And *coils* uncoils into a gripping psyche-shattering thriller - an adventure that penetrates the darkest conundrums of body, mind and computer consciousness...

Cover Illustration: Peter Elson

Coils Details

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J.j. Metsavana says

Zelazny on minuarust meister zanrite segamises ja ajade kokkupanekus, mis loogika järgi kokku ei tohiks sobida. Siin raamatus paaritab ta küberpungi ning telepaatia ja kuratlikult hästi. Kirjutatud muuseas paar aastat enne Gibsoni Neuromanti ja ennustab muarust viimasest märksa paremini tulevikku ette. Isesõitvat rekkad ja autod näiteks ja ülemailmne elektrooniline pangadus.

Alex Rogalski says

I like this book not because the story is great (it is not) but because of how it incorporates technology as a fantasy element in a way that is historically unusual - it occupies a slice of time when a modem and a cordless phone were state of the art. Zelazny tends to provide you with an expanding insight into the fantasy framework that his characters operate in/with and it's just kinda funny to see this happen with electronics that are now really outdated.

Cynthia says

This isn't Zelazny's best work by a long shot, but I'd have to give it at least 4 stars. It has some of his most incredible writing and a few really memorable scenes, even if the book as a whole is hardly his best. I guess I just have a real soft spot for this one.

Marsha says

Coils posits a man of terrifying power and unshakeable morals—more or less. Donald Belpatri doesn't kill out of sadism or spite yet he shows little remorse when human beings get murdered. He's dead set on getting his kidnapped girlfriend back but you wonder what it is he really feels about her. He's not willing to let her go yet there's no impression given that he actually loves her. He seems closer to the duplicitous and intelligent Ann than to his beautiful Cora.

Yet his feelings are perhaps incidental to the plot. What Messrs. Zelazny and Saberhagen give us is part science fiction, part fast-paced action adventure and the plot certainly delivers. The protagonist is called upon to use every ounce of cunning, intelligence, power and might to outwit his pursuers and what ensues is one high-speed thrill ride after another with a liberal dose of psychic powers thrown into it. The science part of it doesn't detract from or slow down the story in the slightest so the novel holds up well, even after its initial 1980s printing.

blake says

S is for Saberhagen, though I note more recent editions of this book list Zelazny first.

It's not great. It's not bad, either. Competently constructed and written, it suffers a bit for being so much of its time while taking place in an arena that is contemptuously familiar to us all today, the Data-net. I think it takes place in the 1990s, and features an Internet that is powered by phone lines, with roads full of auto-driving cars and skies full of auto-driving vehicles. There's a naive plot about a megalomaniacal power magnate who has cashed in on (sigh) solar energy but who is still somehow afraid of the government—the corruption doesn't go all the way to the top, apparently. (There's also a naive bit of credit card fraud; at least, I don't think it's ever worked the way he describes.)

I don't particularly hold this against it; the hazards of science fiction are what they are. But the characters feel thinly drawn, mostly, after having just finished *Giants in the Earth*, which is more simply written, I would say, but full of well fleshed-out characters.

Zelazny uses a trick here that he used in *Madwand*—this is why I attribute the technique to him and not Saberhagen—where the virtual reality is given a more concrete form, which makes the hero's struggling (in a non-material context) a little more interesting for the reader and easier to grasp, at least theoretically. It worked well enough in the magic book, but not as well here. I felt like the descriptions were not well enough nailed down to provide a really strong, compelling picture.

I didn't like the stinger much, but then I wouldn't, so I didn't hold this against the book either.

It's got a couple of rather good ideas. The notion of a reverse faith-healer, for example. The telepath who brings floral scents with her projections. And a near-fatal accident which seems to be a red herring—but actually isn't. A random encounter with a mysterious rogue which seems to have no bearing on anything whatsoever (but may be a reference to another novel).

My expectations were probably too high. It's not a bad read, though. Fast, easy, enough action to keep things going. I think (besides the characters), I just didn't connect (so to speak) with the conceit used to describe the character's super-powers, so I didn't enjoy it as much as I might.

Reminds me that I should read *Neuromancer*, which this predates by two years, next time I get to "G".

Jamie says

Fun to laugh at.

Alazzar says

I'm never sure what to think about one of Zelazny's collaborations before I dive in. I mean, I've never read one that was *bad* (of course, I've also never read *Flare*), but I tend to think of them as slightly lower quality than his solo works. As such, a used copy of *Coils* sat on my bookshelf for the better part of a year before I finally decided to crack it open. And even then, I wasn't terribly excited about it.

Boy, was I a fool.

Of all the Zelazny collaborations I've read, this is the one that reads most like a book he wrote by himself. I haven't read any of Saberhagen's other work, but he either has a voice very similar to Zelazny's or he was just able to create the illusion that he does with *Coils*.

In previous Zelazny collaborations, it's been very obvious to me when Zelazny stopped writing and the other guy/gal picked up. *Lord Demon* was a tragedy, starting out as a five-star story and then going downhill after about six chapters; *Deus Irae* was pretty good, but every time Zelazny and Dick swapped seats at the typewriter it was about as obvious as a punch to the face. *Coils*, however, was pretty seamless, and I have to give it points for that.

As far as the story goes, Don BelPatri is a pretty standard Zelazny stock protagonist, but I'm okay with that because I *like* the standard Zelazny stock protagonist. He starts out the book suffering from amnesia (sound familiar, anyone?) and goes on a journey to A) find out who he is and B) take the fight to the jerkwads who are hunting him. Things drag a bit in the middle, but aside from that, the book is excellent overall. One chapter in particular was probably worth 5 stars all by itself (spoiler: it's chapter (view spoiler)), and one of the villains is just a fantastic, stand-out character that I'll (hopefully) remember for years to come.

Overall, it's a good book that I'd recommend to anyone looking for a quick sci-fi read.

Charl says

So weird. Two of my favorite authors, put them together, and get a lackluster, barely engaging story, with a literal *deus ex machina* at the end. Very disappointing.

Printable Tire says

This book was horrible. I kept expecting a twist ending but alas, it was a horribly straight-forward scifi/action romp. A waste of both the authors' talents.

I got this from my high school's library for free. Sometimes they would discard books and have them out for free. I think I had it for so long because I thought the cover was cool and the girl looked hot. The cover's about the best thing about this book.

There are really only like three books I regret reading. They are Indiana Jones and the Sky Pirates, the Ravengers, and this book.

Jonathan Palfrey says

Cowritten by Fred Saberhagen, this still feels like a Zelazny book. It's not one of his best, being slightly unconvincing throughout, but I like it well enough to reread it now and then. It features a man who can in effect do telepathy with computers, which is implausible but original, and nicely weird.

Mathew Whitney says

Coils is a novel by Roger Zelazny and Fred Saberhagen, published in the early 1980s and set in the authors' projected idea of the mid-1990s. The book is short and fast-paced with a mystery at its center as the main character tries to remember his past, discover the mysterious powers hidden by his amnesia, and prevent the people who did this to him from harming him or his girlfriend.

Although we've achieved more of the negative than the positive predictions this book holds for a future now 20 years past, nothing is especially far out of reach in terms of technology. The best comparison I can think of would be a combination of a superhero/comic book story with a techno-thriller/spy novel.

Ken says

Quick easy read. Enjoyed the story line

Jim says

Written with Fred Saberhagen, I'm generally not too fond of books where Zelazny writes with another author. This is an exception. They complement each other very well in this short, but very action packed novel.

It's an interesting concept. In the not too distant future, the world is run almost entirely by computers with mega corporations. The hero is caught up in a tense situation, but has a hidden ally & talent that becomes apparent as the novel progresses.

Rhiannon says

I really enjoyed how these authors created a new variety of hacking, as the main character hacks with ESP-like power. Fascinating plot and feels like it was written today almost. Still relevant, especially because the female characters are as bold and interesting as the male characters. I'm probably showing my age as I'm not looking for other sexes, well, there is the Being in cyberspace. Anyway, it's better than Heinlein on that front. It's definitely action packed, which I also liked, and felt it was an easy book to pick up and read for 15 minutes each day.

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