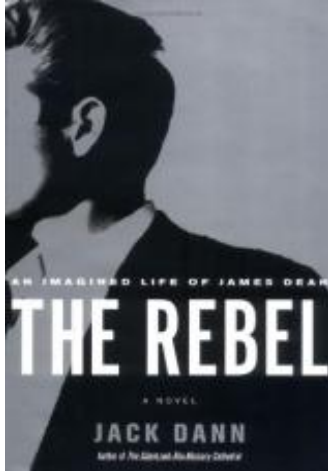


# The Rebel: An Imagined Life of James Dean

by Jack Dann

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## About the Book

A movie star on a meteoric rise, young James Dean was already being hailed as one of America's finest actors when he died in a high-speed car accident in 1955. In one terrible instant a luminous future glowing with extraordinary promise was snuffed out forever.

But what if it wasn't?

With **The Rebel**, acclaimed award-winning author Jack Dann pulls James Dean from the twisted wreckage and offers him a second chance to make an indelible mark on his art, his culture, and his time in an era of profound change and devastating social upheaval.

Surviving the horrific crash that leaves him permanently scarred, both physically and emotionally, the rebellious young star approaches his rebirth with trepidation, charged with an inescapable new responsibility to do "something wonderful and important." Cast back into a world of Hollywood glitz and glamour, a haunted, brooding, and complex artist climbs higher than even his most fervent admirers imagined he could, ascending to a pinnacle of success and power no actor of his or any generation has ever achieved. Yet for Jimmy Dean, the glory road will be winding and broken, littered with the detritus of exploded dreams and destroyed love, as it passes through the holiest cultural sites of postwar twentieth-century America -- the genius-and-drug-pumped world of the Beats, the protected inner sanctum of Graceland, the darkest shadows of Camelot. The lives and futures of Kerouac, Sinatra, Elvis and the Colonel, and the Kennedys will all be touched by him -- yet perhaps none so deeply as the fragile sex goddess who will always be his greatest burden and true soul mate, a dazzling and tragically lost phenomenon named Marilyn -- as he moves relentlessly toward an astonishing destiny that will reconfigure the world.

Ingeniously blending historical fact with brilliant invention, **The Rebel** is a hip, fast, mesmerizing ride through the fifties and sixties -- an unforgettable road trip across a nation torn by bitter racial strife and violently divided by war, with an

American legend at the wheel.

## Discussion Guide

1. There is a continuing public fascination with James Dean as an icon. Does this book extend our understanding of the artist and the man? Can we learn who James Dean might have really been like from novels such as this? Does this book describe an 'authentic' James Dean?
2. Some writers regard Dean as a masochist, and he has been referred to as 'the human ashtray.' Dann does not take this view. Do you think Dean's bisexuality is handled realistically in this novel?
3. Jack Dann has said that **The Rebel** is about the construction of myths, the creation of history, and the nature of memory. Do you agree or disagree, and if so why?
4. There are a number of sex scenes in this novel. Do you feel they are justified?
5. The author has described **The Rebel** as a fictional biography of the pop culture of the 50's and 60's. Does **The Rebel** give the reader a different perspective on the actual past? Were those decades really that different from our own time?
6. What does **The Rebel** tell us about rewriting history and reinventing oneself?
7. Bobby Kennedy marked the following sentence from **Emerson's Essays**: "Always do what you are afraid to do." Do you think James Dean would have marked the same passage? Did James Dean and Bobby Kennedy have a lot in common?
8. James Dean, Elvis Presley, and Marilyn Monroe are described as 'lightbulbs' in **The Rebel**. What does this mean? Is this a real phenomenon?
9. There has been much controversy about whether Marilyn Monroe committed suicide or was murdered. Does **The Rebel** shed light on this issue?
10. The author has said that he 'nudged' history in order to shed a different light on our recent past and to gain a deeper understanding of James Dean's personality and potentiality. Do you feel this was justified?
11. If actors Ronald Reagan and Arnold Schwarzenegger could become the President of the United States and Governor of California, respectively, what does this tell us about the cult of fame and actors as icons?
12. What, if anything, does the election of Schwarzenegger tell us about the future of politics and the influence of fame on the electorate? How does **The Rebel** shed light on this political phenomenon?

## Author Bio

Jack Dann is a multiple award winning author who has written or edited over 60 books, including the groundbreaking novels **Junction**, **Starhiker**, **The Man Who Melted**, **The Memory Cathedral** -- which is an international bestseller, the Civil War novel **The Silent**, and **Bad Medicine**, which has been compared to the works of Jack Kerouac and Hunter S. Thompson and called "the best road novel since the Easy Rider days."

Dann's work has been compared to Jorge Luis Borges, Roald Dahl, Lewis Carroll, Castaneda, J. G. Ballard, Mark Twain, and Philip K. Dick. Philip K. Dick, author of the stories from which the films *Blade Runner* and *Total Recall* were made, wrote that "Junction is where Ursula Le Guin's **Lathe of Heaven** and Tony Boucher's 'The Quest for Saint Aquin' meet...and yet it's an entirely new novel.... I may very well be basing some of my future work on Junction." Best-selling author Marion Zimmer Bradley called **Starhiker** "a superb book... it will not give up all its delights, all its perfections, on one reading."

*Library Journal* has called Dann "...a true poet who can create pictures with a few perfect words." Roger Zelazny thought he was a reality magician and Best Sellers has said that "Jack Dann is a mind-warlock whose magicks will confound, disorient, shock, and delight." The Washington Post Book World compared his novel **The Man Who Melted** with Ingmar Bergman's film *The Seventh Seal*.

His short stories have appeared in *Omni* and *Playboy* and other major magazines and anthologies. He is the editor of the anthology *Wandering Stars*, one of the most acclaimed American anthologies of the 1970's, and several other well-known anthologies such as *More Wandering Stars*. *Wandering Stars* and *More Wandering Stars* have just been reprinted in the U.S. Dann also edits the multi-volume *Magic Tales* series with Gardner Dozois and is a consulting editor TOR Books.

He is a recipient of the Nebula Award, the Australian Aurealis Award (twice), the Ditmar Award (three times), the World Fantasy Award, and the Premios Gilgamés de Narrativa Fantástica award. Dann has also been honoured by the Mark Twain Society (Esteemed Knight).

**High Steel**, a novel co-authored with Jack C. Haldeman II, was published in 1993. Critic John Clute called it "a predator...a cat with blazing eyes gorging on the good meat of genre. It is most highly recommended." A sequel entitled *Ghost Dance* is in progress.

Dann's major historical novel about Leonardo da Vinci -- entitled **The Memory Cathedral** -- was first published in December 1995 to rave reviews. It has been published in 10 languages to date. It won the Australian Aurealis Award in 1997, was #1 on The Age bestseller list, and a story based on the novel was awarded the Nebula Award. **The Memory Cathedral** was also shortlisted for the Audio Book of the Year, which was part of the 1998 Braille & Talking Book Library Awards.

Morgan Llwyn called **The Memory Cathedral** "a book to cherish, a validation of the novelist's art and fully worthy of its extraordinary subject." The *San Francisco Chronicle* called it "a grand accomplishment," *Kirkus Reviews* thought it was "An impressive accomplishment," and *True Reviews* said, "Read this important novel, be challenged by it; you literally haven't seen anything like it."

Dann's next novel **The Silent** was chosen by **Library Journal** as one of their 'Hot Picks.' Library Journal wrote: "This is narrative storytelling at its best -- so highly charged emotionally as to constitute a kind of poetry from hell. Most emphatically recommended." Author Peter Straub said, "This tale of America's greatest trauma is full of mystery, wonder, and the kind of narrative inventiveness that makes other novelists want to hide under the bed." And The Australian called it "an extraordinary achievement."

His contemporary road novel **Bad Medicine** (titled **Counting Coup** in the U.S.) has been called "a vivid and compelling vision-quest through the dark back roads and blue highways of the American soul."

Dann is also the co-editor (with Janeen Webb) of the groundbreaking Australian anthology *Dreaming Down-Under*, which Peter Goldsworthy has called "the biggest, boldest, most controversial collection of original fiction ever published in Australia." It has won Australia's Ditmar Award and is the first Australian book ever to win the prestigious World Fantasy Award.

Dann is also the author of the retrospective short story collection *Jubilee: the Essential Jack Dann*. *The West Australian* said it was "Sometimes frightening, sometimes funny, erudite, inventive, beautifully written and always intriguing. *Jubilee* is a celebration of the talent of a remarkable storyteller."

As part of its *Bibliographies of Modern Authors Series*, The Borgo Press has published an annotated bibliography and guide entitled *The Work of Jack Dann*. An updated second edition is in progress. Dann is also listed in *Contemporary Authors and the Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series*; *The International Authors and Writers Who's Who*; *Personalities of America*; *Men of Achievement*; *Who's Who in Writers, Editors, and Poets, United States and Canada*; *Dictionary of International Biography*; *the Directory of Distinguished Americans*; *Outstanding Writers of the 20th Century*; and *Who's Who in the World*.

Dann commutes between Melbourne and a farm overlooking the sea. He also 'commutes' back and forth to Los Angeles and New York.

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