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Coeditors:
Barbara Lucas
Shelley Rodrigo
Blanchard

Nonfiction Reviews:
Neil Barron

Fiction Reviews:
Shelley Rodrigo
Blanchard

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Barbara Lucas, Coeditor
1352 Fox Run Drive, Suite 206
Willoughby, OH 44094
<sfra_review@yahoo.com>

Shelley Rodrigo Blanchard,
Coeditor & Fiction Reviews Editor
6842 S. 40th Place
Phoenix, AZ 85040
<shelley.rb@asu.edu>

Neil Barron,
Nonfiction Reviews Editor
1149 Lime Place
Vista, CA 92083-7428
<rneilbarron@hotmail.com>

Visit Us At:
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RECENT AND FORTHCOMING BOOKS

* Denotes a book to be reviewed. Write to rneilbarron@hotmail.com if you judge yourself qualified to review. Publication dates are tentative, and delays are common.

Ackerman, Forrest J.

Ackermanuscripts: Non-Fiction Fangoria. Sense of Wonder Press, February 2001.

Alschuler, William A. *The Science of UFO's*. St Martin's 2001. An astronomer, authors of *The Physics of Star Trek*, examines the possible scientific principles at work if, in fact, extraterrestrials have visited Earth. He remains skeptical, although doesn't rule out extraterrestrials a priori.

Anthony, Piers. *How Precious Was That While*. Tor, July 2001. Memoir continuing his *Bio of an Ogre* (1988), which ended at age fifty.

* Ashley, Mike. *Algernon Blackwood: An Extraordinary Life*. January 2002.

Barker, Martin. et. al. *The Crash Controversy: Censorship Campaigns and Film Reception*. Wallflower Press (UK)/Columbia University Press (US distributor), October 2001.

* Beetz, Kirk H. *Exploring C.S. Lewis's The Chronicles of Narnia*. Beacham, March 2001.

Bloom, Harold, ed. *Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale*. Chelsea House, 2001.

* Broeker, Randy. *Fantasy of the 20th Century: An Illustrated History*. Collectors Press, October 2001.

Brom, Gerald. *The Offerings: The Art of Brom*. Paper Tiger (UK), October 2001.

Brooker, Will. *Batman Unmasked: Analyzing a Cultural Icon*. Continuum, June 2001.

* Burger, Patrick R. *The Political Unconscious of the Fantasy*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Michael Levy

SFRA 2001
Schenectady, NY
May 24-27, 2001

Despite my usual battles with the airlines, I had a great time in Schenectady this year. Jan finder, Barb Chepaitis, Joe Berlant, and their associates at LASTSFA threw a very good conference with a wide range of papers. Our guests of honor, C.J. Cherryh, David Weber, Jane Yolen, and Vincent Di Fate were accessible and more than willing to share their time with conference goers. Weber, in particular, seemed to be constantly surrounded by interested folks. All four guests gave individual presentations on their work, and the three authors did an enjoyable panel on how they became writers and where they got their ideas (other than Schenectady). Jane Yolen's presentation on her two young adult Holocaust novels, *The Devil's Arithmetic* and *Briar Rose*, was a particular highlight for me personally, although C. J. Cherryh's description of the writer's life and its startling similarities to that of a person suffering from psychosis was also rather intriguing. Joan Slonczewski, who has become a fixture at SFRA in recent years, did an excellent science presentation entitled "Carbon Nanotubes: Building for the Space Age." I spent a fair amount of time dealing with SFRA business, but managed to hear a number of worthwhile papers, including Carol Stevens on the picturebooks of David Weisner, David Ketterer on Margaret Atwood's *The Blind Assassin*, Alan Elms on Cordwainer Smith's psychotherapy, Matt Wolf-Meyer on apocalypse fiction, and Yeonman Kim on William Gibson's *Idoru*. Other long-term SFRA members who presented at the conference included Joe Sanders, Betty Hull, Elizabeth Davidson, Ted Krulik, and Barbara Bengels. Among a large number of newer SFRA members and graduate students presenting, I heard particularly good things about papers by Javier Martinez, Alison Crane, Shelley Rodrigo-Blanchard, and Eric Drown. Our unusually large number of overseas presenters included Larissa Mihaylova, Elisabeth Kraus, Martin Griffiths, and Wu Yan. My apologies to the many other participants who I don't have room to name.

The banquet and awards presentation was well attended. The Graduate Student Paper Award went to Sonya Fritzsche for her essay on East German science fiction; the Clareson Award for service to the field of SF scholarship went to Mack Hassler, one of our former presidents and the long time editor of *Extrapolation*; the Pioneer Award for the best critical essay of 2000 went to De Witt Douglas Kilgore for his piece in *SF Studies* on Vonda McIntyre; and the Pilgrim Award for life achievement in the field went to Dave Samuelson, who several times insisted that he didn't deserve it, but then gave a brilliant paper which demonstrated exactly why he did. The introductory and acceptance speeches for each of the awards will appear in this or future issues of the *Review*, depending on when their final drafts reach us.

The SFRA Board also discussed several important transitions at the conference. *Extrapolation*, as you probably already know, will be leaving Kent State next year. Although several possible new homes for the journal are being considered, no final decision has been reached as I write this message. Neil Barron, our long-time Non-Fiction Review Editor, has decided to resign his post and we are currently looking for a replacement. Speaking of transitions, we're also planning the "transition" across the Atlantic Ocean for our first overseas conference at New Lanark in Scotland, UK, from June 28-30 2002. There should be information on this upcoming event elsewhere in the *Review*, or check our website at www.sfra.org. Farah Mendlesohn, our New Lanark conference coordinator, has put together an exciting lineup of award-winning writers, including Pat Cadigan, Paul McAuley, and Ken MacLeod, and the venue, the home of Robert Owen's great Utopian

experiment, is one of the most beautiful places I've ever been in my life. I hope to see you there.

SFRA BUSINESS

SFRA EXECUTIVE BOARD: MINUTES

Submitted by Wendy Bousfield

The SFRA Executive Board met over dinner Friday night (5/25/01), during the 2001 conference in Schenectady. Present were Michael Levy (President), Alan Elms (Immediate Past President), Wendy Bousfield (Secretary and Recorder), David Mead (Treasurer), and Shelley Rodrigo Blanchard (coeditor, *SFRA Review*). Among the issues discussed were (1) spending an unusually large treasure balance, (2) planning for future SFRA conferences, (3) SFRA's publication program, and (4) vacancies on SFRA committees.

David Mead reported that, as of May 2001, SFRA had substantial balances in both checking and savings accounts. Since maintaining a large balance could result in tax problems, SFRA is faced with the happy task of spending more money. The following were suggested: (1) hire a consultant to design a new accounting system; (2) replace the Executive Board's January conference call with a face to face meeting; (3) spend more money on the annual conference; and (4) reduce SFRA dues from \$80 to \$75.

For SFRA 2004 and future conferences, Board members suggested combining SFRA with another conference or convention. We also discussed having the conference at the same place each year, preferably an airport hub.

Shelley Rodrigo Blanchard raised several issues connected with the *SFRA Review*. Since Neil Barron has resigned as non-fiction book review editor, we agreed to post a job description on the SFRA listserv and website. Shelley brought a sample of the *Review* that had been photocopied rather than printed. The xeroxed *Review* looked very similar to the printed version, having the additional advantage of being less expensive and more convenient for the editors. The Board gave Shelley the go ahead to make the change. Shelley outlined the timetable for future issues of the *Review*, which will shortly be back on schedule.

SFRA hopes to have a greater involvement with the journal, *Extrapolation*, which will no longer be published by Kent State University Press and must find a new venue. We discussed making the new editor a non-voting member of the SFRA Board and making the President of SFRA a member of the *Extrapolation* board.

Finally, we mentioned SFRA members who might be willing to serve on the Pioneer, Graduate, and Clareson Award committees. We decided to call for volunteers at the Business Meeting (5/27/01).

The Board meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Wendy Bousfield, Recorder
6/21/01

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Subgenre of Romance Fiction. Edwin Mellen Press, 2001.

Carretero, Gonzales, Margarita & Encarnacion Hidalgo Tenorio, eds. *Behind the Veil of Familiarity: C.S. Lewis (1898-1998)*. Peter Lang, 2001.

* Chance, Jane. *Tolkien's Art: A Mythology in England*. Revised edition. University Press of Kentucky, November 2001.

* Chance, Jane. *The Lord of the Rings: The Mythology of Power*. Second edition. University Press of Kentucky, October 2001.

Collings, Michael. *Story Teller: The Official Orson Scott Card Bibliography*. Overlook Connection Press, April 2001.

Collings, Michael. *Hauntings: The Official Peter Straub Bibliography*. Overlook Connection Press, August 2000.

Daffron, Benjamin Eric. *Romantic Doubles: Sex and Sympathy in British Gothic Literature, 1790-1830*. Ams Press, May 2001.

Dark Dreamers. Commentary by Stanley Wiater, photos by Beth Gwin (of *Locus*), introduction by Clive Barker. Cemetery Dance, April 2001. About 100 writers (plus a few filmmakers, editors, artists) have black and white photos, brief commentary by the subjects or Wiater, each with a recommended reading list.

* Del George, Dana. *The Supernatural in Short Fiction of the Americas: The Other World in the New World*. Greenwood, August 2001.

Doctorow, Cory & Karl Schroeder. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Publishing Science Fiction*. Alpha Books/Macmillan, February 2001.

Ellison, Harlan. *The Essential Ellison: A 50-Year Retrospective*. Morpheus, May 2001. Adds fifteen years and two hundred pages to his 35-year retro-

spective; 1200 pages, eighty-four stories and essays at a surprisingly reasonable \$39.50 (hc)/\$24.95 (trade paper).

Fenner, Cathy & Arnie, eds. *Spectrum 8: The Best in Contemporary Fantastic Art*. Underwood Books. October 2001.

* Fredrik, Candice & Sam McBride. *Women among the Inklings: Gender, C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien and Charles Williams*. Greenwood, August 2001.

Gale, Robert L. *An Ambrose Bierce Companion*. Greenwood Press, February 2001.

Gambino, Fred. *Ground Zero*. Paper Tiger (UK), May 2001.

Gerrold, David. *Worlds of Wonder: How to Write Science Fiction and Fantasy*. *Writer's Digest*, February 2001.

* Glassy, Mark C. *The Biology of Science Fiction Cinema*. McFarland, March 2001.

Greg and Tim Hildebrandt: *The Tolkien Years*. Watson-Guptill, July 2001.

Hammond, J.R. *A Preface to H.G. Wells*. London: Longman, 2001.

Hardy, David. *Hardyware: The Art of David Hardy*. Paper Tiger (UK), August 2001.

Haugen, Hayley Mitchell, ed. *Readings on the Short Stories of Edgar Allen Poe*. Greenhaven Press, September 2001.

* Haut, Mavis. *The Hidden Library of Tanith Lee: Themes and Subtexts from Dionysis to The Immortal Gene*. McFarland, October 2001.

* Hendershot, Cynthia. *I Was a Cold War Monster: Horror Films, Eroticism, , and the Cold War*. Bowling Green University Popular Press, June 2001.

Howarth, Tony. *The Haunted World of Tony Bava*. FAB Books (UK), 2001.

* Hunt, Peter & Millicent Lenz. *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction*. Continuum, August 2001.

SFRA AWARDS 2001

Schenectady, NY

Pilgrim Award: Dave Samuelson

Committee: Neil Barron (chair), Adam Frisch, Elizabeth Davidson (presenter)

Clareson Award: Donald Hassler

Committee: Carol Stevens (chair) (presenter), Edra Bogle, Carolyn Wendell

Pioneer Award: De Witt Douglas Kilgore

Committee: Shelley Rodrigo Blanchard (chair) (presenter), Philip Snyder, Susan Stratton

Graduate Student Paper Award: Sonja Fritzsche

Committee: Susan Stratton (chair), Liz Cummins, Shelley Rodrigo Blanchard (presenter)

Pilgrim Award Presentation Speech*Elizabeth Davidson for the Pilgrim Award Committee*

When this year's Pilgrim was told of his selection, he was somewhat incredulous, claiming that he'd never had a book of science fiction history or criticism published. He'd argued some years earlier, when he was chairman of the Pilgrim committee, that such a book was a minimum requirement for any Pilgrim. This year's committee, consisting of Neil Barron, Adam Frisch, and me, judged his total contributions to the study and understanding of SF to be extensive, varied, and more substantial than those of some earlier Pilgrims.

Our Pilgrim was born in Manhattan in 1939. His parents were Salvation Army officers, and his peripatetic lifestyle took him to about sixteen towns in the northeast before he entered college. He read *Astounding* in the mid-1950's and a few of the juveniles of that period, such as books by Heinlein and Norton, but had relatively little contact with fandom. He wrote a 200-page undergraduate thesis in 1962, a critical survey of writings about SF in books and magazines, excluding fan publications, examining the "two cultures" debate of that period.

His doctoral dissertation was accepted in 1969, probably before three-fourths of today's SFRA membership entered college. It provided a detailed analysis of six modern SF novels representing different theoretical aspects of SF. Very unusually for those days, and for PhD theses generally, it was issued as a 400+ page book in 1974. His doctoral committee had little familiarity with SF but were very receptive to his ideas. He thinks his was the first doctoral thesis on modern SF and the first to use the techniques of so-called New Criticism.

By 1966, he accepted a position at the university where he has taught for the past thirty-five years. His courses have included, SF, fantasy, and utopian studies, his methods and the texts varying widely over the years. Most were undergraduate lecture-discussion classes, but he has taught seminars, arranged for a guest speakers class at a nearby university, and taught extension classes. For his initial ten years, he taught a folklore/mythology course in the Comparative Literature department. His more traditional undergraduate and graduate courses often used SF texts.

Throughout the years, he has been an active published scholar. In 1979, sixteen of his essays appeared in the Salem Press set, *Survey of Science Fiction Literature*. Seven essays appeared in the companion fantasy set published in 1983. A dozen author profiles appeared in 1981's *Twentieth Century Science Fiction Writers*. 1984 saw another book, a very comprehensive bibliography of one of SF's major figures. His published books, essays, and reviews number more than 160, in both scholarly and popular venues. He serves as an editorial con-

sultant for *Science Fiction Studies*, in whose pages he has had a number of articles. An MLA interview with him was broadcast on public radio in 1998, and he recruited and edited papers presented at two MLA seminars in New York.

Last winter he said he's "making little progress on three books, on hard sf, Delany, and the world history of sf (i.e., how scholars from different nations/languages construct its history). Maybe in retirement I can finally do something about them...Plans for books of Pohl, Miller, and the myth of utopia all died a-borning, as did a novel." Like Tennyson's Ulysses, a character I have long admired, this Pilgrim prefers to "shine in use" and faces the enviable dilemma that his talents are so valued in both his university teaching and leadership and in his science fiction scholarship. He commutes to his university from a community called Coto de Caza, loosely translated as "hunting estate," possibly the only such estate believed to harbor illegal replicants posing as "independent scholars."

Peter Nicholls' entry on our Pilgrim in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* said he "is among the more intelligent and better informed academic critics of sf," which is true but badly understates his significant and long-standing contributions to the study and teaching of science fiction and literature generally.

The committee is especially pleased to present a long-overdue Pilgrim to David Samuelson.

[Originally written by Neil Barron to be delivered by Elizabeth Davidson at the 2001 SFRA Conference in Schenectady, NY.]

PILGRIM AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

A LITERATURE OF POTENTIAL

David N. Samuelson

Introduction

News of my selection for the Pilgrim Award came as a shock. I can't say I never expected it, but when I served on that committee, I argued for a substantial book as evidence of respectability. I am not sure that a dissertation and a bibliography suffice, whatever their merits, which were not rewarded in the marketplace. Other Pilgrims have also fallen short of that standard, of course, and I recognize the alternative criterion of longevity, most often used for those whose best years are behind them. In any event, I thank this year's committee and SFRA for finding me deserving of this honor, and I hope, beyond longevity, that I have earned some respect for what I see as "common sense," and my expectation that SF and SF criticism live up to their potential (even if I have not always lived up to mine).

In pursuing "common sense," I do not mean that I shy away from literary theory. Common sense tells us that the world is flat, and that science fiction is only about ray guns and rocket ships. On the other hand, neither do I pledge allegiance to any theory. The real reason for theory's appeal to academics today recalls Thomas Kuhn's periods of "revolutionary science." With the legs knocked out from under once-reigning theories—historical, formalist, Marxist, psychoanalytical—scholars are scrambling to find a new ruling paradigm, though I don't think they will or can find one, now that the genie is out of the bottle. Our theories of the word and the world are inherently faulty; both kinds empower us with an endless proliferation of partial and sometimes contradictory truths (rather like SF itself).

I use a modicum of theory, scientific as well as literary, usually with a minimum of jargon, in the classroom and in print, and I tend to cling to the "theory" that there's a real world out there, which we try fallibly to represent with our language, both inside and outside literature (and I do count SF as literature). I try also to focus on what looks like real behavior by real writers and readers. I guess this makes me an "Anglo-American empiricist," as Darko Suvin once said, with what I recall as a mixture of scorn for my naiveté and admiration for what I did in spite of it. After all, Darko and Dale Mullen chose a chapter from my dissertation to lead the first issue of *Science-Fiction Studies*. In college around 1960, I was trained as a formalist, with both its strengths and weak-

Jacobs, Diane. *Her own Woman: The Life of Mary Wollstonecraft*. Simon & Schuster, May 2001.

Jewell, Keala Jane, ed. *Monsters in the Italian Literary Imagination*. Wayne State University Press, 2001.

* Joshi, S.T. *The Modern Weird Tale: A Critique of Horror Fiction*. McFarland, 2001.

* Joshi, S.T. *A Dreamer and a Visionary: H.P. Lovecraft in His Time*. Liverpool University Press, April 2001.

* King, Geoff & Tanya Krzywinska. *Science Fiction Cinema: From Outerspace to Cyberspace*. Wallflower Press (UK)/Columbia University Press (US distributor), September 2001.

King, Stephen. *Danse Macabre*. London: Warner, 2001. Reprint of 1981 edition.

* Kitchin, Rob & James Kneal, eds. *Lost in Space: Geographies of Science Fiction*. Continuum, December 2001.

* Kraus, Elisabeth & Caroline Auer, eds. *Simulacrum America: The USA and the Popular Media*. Camden House, 2000.

* Lazaro, Alberto, ed. *The Road from George Orwell: His Achievement and Legacy*. Peter Lang, 2001

Lewis, Anthony R. *Concordance to Cordwainer Smith*. 3rd Ed. NESFA Press, September 2000.

* Mann, George. *The Mammoth Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*. Carroll & Graf, July 2001.

* McAllister, Matthew P., ed. *Comics and Ideology*. Peter Lang, 2001.

McKillop, A.B. *The Spinster and the Prophet: A Tale of H.G. Wells and the History of the World*. London: Aurum, 2001.

* Meyers, Helene. *Femicidal Fears: Narratives of the Female Gothic Experience*. SUNY Press, November 2001.

Miller, Ron. *The History of Science Fiction*. Franklin Watts, September 2001. (For younger readers)

- * Minden, Michael & Holger Bachmann, eds. *Fritz Lang's Metropolis: Cinematic Visions of Technology and Fear*. Camden House, October 2001.
- * Nel, Philip. *J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter Novels*. Continuum, September 2001.
- * Ordway, Frederick I. III. *Visions of Spaceflight: Selections from the Ordway Collection*. Four Walls Eight Windows, August 2001.
- * Price, E. Hoffman. *Book of the Dead: Friends of Yesteryear: Fictioneers and Others*. Arkham, April 2002.
- * Rigby, Jonathan. *English Gothic: A Century of Horror Cinema*. Reynolds & Hearn, distri. By Trafalgar Square, February 2001.
- Royo, Luis. *Evolution*. Many 2001.
- * Sardar, Ziauddin & Sean Cubitt, eds. *Aliens R Us: The Other in Science Fiction Cinema*. Pluto Press (UK), January 2002.
- * Saricks, Joyce G. *A Reader's Advisory Guide to Genre Fiction*. American Library Association, June 2001.
- Shepherd, E.H. *Drawn from Memory: The Autobiography of E.H. Shepherd*. Methuen, 2001. EHS memorably illustrated *The Wind in the Willows* and *Winnie the Pooh*.
- Simpson, M.J. *The Unofficial Guide to the Hitch-Hiker's Guide*. Pocket Essentials (UK), April 2001.
- * Slusser, George, Patrick Parrinder & Danielle Chatelain, eds. *H.G. Wells Perennial Time Machine: Selected Essays from the Centenary Conference "The Time Machine: Past, Present, and Future," Imperial College, London, July 26-19, 1995*. University of Georgia Press, August 2001.
- Smith, Andrew & Jeff Wallace, eds. *Gothic Modernisms*. Palgrave, 2001.
- * Sonser, Anna. *A Passion for Consumption: The Gothic Novel in*

nesses, but I have been learning (and teaching) theory ever since. Its potential is great, like the potential of SF, but neither is limitless, and neither may ever reach that potential.

The "theory" I wish to pursue tonight specifically concerns that potential, which some may find old-fashioned in a Postmodern age when tentative belief in anything can raise knowing smiles from sophisticated readers and thinkers. James Blish once credited the success of Arthur C. Clarke to treating hoary SF clichés with a straight face. What success I have had may depend on treating straightforwardly the idea that science fiction is a literature of potential, less for the validity of its forecasts than for their embodying a challenge set forth almost two centuries ago by a 19-year old girl in Switzerland. A horror story of obsession with something like science, and an oblique reminder of the risks of parenthood, *Frankenstein* is subtitled "the Modern Prometheus." Prometheus means "forethinker" and SF, even more so than science, arouses interest both in what can be done and what can be done about it, i.e., about potential in an era of change overpowering stability.

Potential is necessarily unrealized, and mostly incapable of realization. That is both its joy and its frustration. Potential is what a rock has in a high place, a child before development, a conception before its execution, a blank page or a monitor screen before words materialize on it. If the rock falls, its energy is expended, but in only one way; it always goes downhill and its effects are often destructive. Potential is limited for the animate as well as the inanimate, though we constantly surprise ourselves when we misjudge it. But ants can not be six feet tall, and at 5'10," I was never a likely star basketball player. I once daydreamed of playing pro baseball and actually did play intercollegiate tennis, but my athletic potential was always limited.

When I was a young boy, however, family members said I could be anything I wanted. Anything? The prophecy seems worthy of the Delphic Oracle. Whatever I became would be some version of "anything." It was often said then that "anyone" could become President of the U.S., a cliché considerably devalued each time we see it embodied. Probably they meant someone who talked a lot, and had ideas (often half-baked) about nearly everything. A lawyer? A preacher? A musician? A writer? A teacher? Those were alternative futures proposed in my youth, all of which I flirted with at one time or other. So I suppose the prophecy came true. I wanted to write almost as soon as I could read, and I wanted to be a college teacher as soon as I met some.

Like most kids, I fantasized a lot, and for a sickly child in the Northeast that was aided by a lot of reading (I must have been 14 or older when we got TV). I resisted "good" literature in favor of books mass-produced for children: the Bobbsey Twins, Jerry Todd, the Hardy Boys and—of course—Tom Swift. I missed a lot of school, even spent two years with a home tutor, so I cannot blame the educational system for stunting my potential. SF infected me at the usual age, about 13; I went from school library books to a subscription to *Astounding* by 1954. Obviously, the reason was not literary quality, which was just starting to matter in magazine SF and which I was too young to recognize, much less respect. I wanted the armchair adventure, the big canvas, the apparent valuation of science and technology, and the imagining of future potentials. In the mid-Fifties, amid Cold War warnings of imminent nuclear annihilation, many people doubted the human race had a future, as we may still now, for longer-term reasons. I feared annihilation more than death, actually, and the thought of death at 19 made me less fearful than angry, because it would prevent me from seeing the future. SF offered a palliative, even when its futures were horrific, like *1984*, which terrified me when I read it before I was fifteen.

As a bright kid, I was urged toward engineering, especially after Sputnik generated the National Defense Education Act; a runner-up for the first National Merit Scholarship, I eventually won NDEA and Fulbright fellowships. I even went to MIT in 1956, but poor grades truncated my four-year scholarship to one.

After a year in business and a flirtation with the social sciences, I eventually lit

on English, then Comparative Literature, writing two lengthy studies of science fiction that took my instructors by surprise. Meanwhile, I had learned to look for signs of literary respectability and for more powerful reading experiences; addiction to the drug of SF required stronger “hits” for the desired effect. I was hired by a large commuter institution, California State University, Long Beach, to work in several areas, including technical writing; which I did not teach for ten years, but I have directed our respected certificate program since 1988. I was indulged again in my eccentricities, including flings with fantasy, utopia, mythology, and Future Studies, since I was someone with potential. Educators deal a lot with potential; though they often reward students who follow in their footsteps; I was lucky enough to have some who let me venture where few had gone before.

I share this biographical background not merely to be self-indulgent, though the years may tell on me as much as I tell on them, but because it suggests what I believe is the impetus behind most SF readers’ addiction and the near impossibility of its ever being satisfied or cured. What drew me to SF primarily was its flirtation with possibilities for the future, which I assumed would depend on science and technology. Most young boys get older, of course, whether or not they grow up. My first publication referred to Clarke’s *Childhood’s End* as a ‘median stage of adolescence,’ a judgment I have never disowned—for that book or for most of science fiction. I mean it not as a condemnation, its usual weight in literary criticism, but as a recognition that perpetual adolescence may be a “normal” state in a society continually remaking itself. While a fixation on consumer goods and recycling what we call “information” herds us towards perpetual childhood, SF and its less disreputable cousins like technological forecasting help us cock at least one eye on the future, or rather on potentials for the future in what we are doing today.

Forecasting is only one expectation readers have of science fiction, but at least an appearance of forecasting is central to the enterprise. The potential of the genre—if it is a genre—has also been touted (and derided) for its science lessons and metaphysical speculation, for both social warnings and models of experimentation, as well as for storytelling, fabulation, and a sense of wonder; rarely, for verisimilitude, character, and style. Some of these expectations are mutually contradictory, and few are realized in any work with a legitimate claim to be called science fiction. The only potential of SF realized on a large scale is commercial success, unthinkable in my youth and due less to forecasting than to replays of mythology. I shall consider that aspect last, after reviewing SF’s potential as science and as literature.

Potential as Science

The science in SF is not invariably wrong, but SF almost always goes beyond known science, and what science knows is hardly permanent. Science mainly serves four functions in SF:

- it provides jumping-off points to alternative futures, a redundant expression;
- it provides backing for technological fantasy, verbal equivalents of engineering and architectural models;
- it acts as a brake on flights of fancy, citing facts and theory from the real world;
- and it provides a handy reference point, like local color in realism.

I know that not all writing labeled SF is even ostensibly set in the future, and that any future setting is limited by contemporary expectations, including what Clarke calls “failure of nerve” and “failure of imagination.” Those caveats, however, do not prevent readers from taking seriously, at least for the duration of the reading experience, many visions of the future expressed in SF. I believe they are what originally draws in readers—more young than old, more male than female, even today—and keeps them reading when most of what SF offers is available more reliably elsewhere.

America. Bowling Green State University Popular Press, April 2001.

Spignesi, Stephen J. *The Essential Stephen King*. Career Press, June 2001.

Stone, Elaine Murray. *C.S. Lewis: Creator of Narnia*. Paulist Press, March 2001.

*Stuprich, Michael, ed. *Horror*. Greenvale Press, September 2001.

*Telotte, J.P. *Science Fiction Film*. Cambridge University Press, July 2001.

*Thomsom, Douglass H., Jack G. Voller & Frederick S. Frank, eds. *Gothic Writers: A Critical and Bibliographical Guide*. Greenwood Press, November 2001.

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It is no accident that most SF pretends to be about the future, that much of it takes place off Earth, and that its most distinctive characters tend to be aliens. Robots and androids (even cyborgs, *pave* Donna Haraway) are less useful for this purpose, since even within the world of the fiction we usually know them as products of human design. Outside the fiction, we know that about everything else in SF as well. Tomorrow, space, and aliens represent the unknowable, but for these unknowns we have theoretical models; in other words, they offer potential at least for setting and action. Ventures of the human imagination into these unknowns we call variously predictions, forecasts, or projections. They may resemble nightmares, daydreams, even wet dreams. They may draw support from theories in any of the sciences (physical, biological, social, behavioral, linguistic). They can also be metaphysical, metaphorical, obsessive, and/or paranoid. Most are some combination of the above. As literature (definitely not science), they can also represent the potential in science of the past, and even in SF of the past, becoming in effect parallel worlds.

With no brake on fancy, mythology is always available; indeed, mythology is hard to shake in any literary endeavor. Without invoking science, writers can also limit fantasies with allegory or inversion, metaphorically related to what readers pretty much take for granted in the world they consider real. The brakes on fancy peculiar to SF, however, have some scientific foundation; they at least invoke, if not embody, what scientific theory considers possible. As I have argued elsewhere, they typically employ extrapolation, speculation, and transformation to bridge the gap between the present and a hypothetical future.

That braking function is most obviously at work when it comes to the physical sciences. Writers may ignore or finesse such limitations, but the potential of their visions is inevitably vitiated for anyone familiar with the science involved. Faster-than-light travel and planets congenial to human life are major exceptions here, which technically turn every space opera into fantasy. H.G. Wells's late-in-life dictum of one "impossibility" per story is commonly stretched, and a whole series of conventions brought in (sometimes merely by implication) to excuse the impossible, in verbal as well as visual science fiction. Authors also create, borrow, or rely on reader familiarity with, "theoretical" rationales that are essentially literary, not scientific, but they usually accept some limitations of nature and rules established by contemporary hard science.

Regarding the social and behavioral sciences, authors' imaginations are differently constricted. Some social forecasting is susceptible to theoretical interrogation, but most is simply disproven with time, often well before the period of the fictional setting, as plausible timelines for that forecast are closed off. Fashions obviously date, but so does theory. Olaf Stapledon's communist future in *Last and First Men* and Walter Miller's technological renaissance in *A Canticle of Leibowitz* became fantasy shortly after publication and long before their fictional settings arrived. Standards of judgment for behavior of characters may also borrow from the sciences, but more often the operative criteria are literary conventions concerning how people behave, or more precisely how writers have described the ways people behave. Critical interest in science fiction typically flourishes in this area, where Darko Suvin's *novum* need have no potential other than literary (parenthetically, I still find my own formulation of a single "science fiction" more precise, albeit more cumbersome).

Rather than predictions or even forecasts, SF writers may be more accurately credited with "projections," a term with a useful double meaning. On the scientific side, a projection should be impersonal, based on assumed conditions, and limited by distance and cross-impacts. Useful for planning contingencies, such extrapolations are seldom relied on as predictions of what will be. Few SF stories are based simply on extrapolation, but it is one major way in which SF can and does resist or at least counterbalance mythologization. On the literary side, a projection is explicitly personal, imputing to others what one wants or fears to see, in an often unconscious anticipation inherently related to desire. However scientific an SF writer or reader may wish to be, subjective factors usually outweigh attempts at neutrality.

Many scientists in fact disclaim prediction in their enterprise, anxious about the human propensity to make too much of prediction. Experiments usually have hypothetical outcomes, however, and an "if . . . then" structure. Though failed experiments provide information, successful ones satisfy better their makers' anticipations, even outside a controlled setting. Nobody was happier than the astrophysical community at the 1988 Supernova seen in the Southern Hemisphere. Unable to test theories in the lab, they wait for a star to blow up, and this one bore out most of their "predictions." Call them forecasts, hypotheses, or projections, results are eagerly awaited, and they are also fundamental to the potential reality of SF. Not always central to a story, and essentially non-literary, they provide its underpinning, but their outcome is awaited with a different attitude. For a story to work as SF over a considerable period of time, the validity of the forecast should never be known.

In his book, *The Fantastic*, Tzvetan Todorov places the "fantastic" in literature on a knife edge between the "uncanny" and the "marvelous." The uncanny he locates in the mind of a character, sometimes the narrator. Essentially an aberration or hallucination, it may (following Freud) stem from a traumatic suppressed memory. The marvelous Todorov locates in the storehouse of human imagination, what Tolkien calls the "pot of story." Like the writer, the reader recognizes the impossibility, but goes along for the ride. About the pure quill of the "fantastic," however, Todorov says we can not make up our mind. At least for the moment, it challenges our sense of what is real, asserting a place for the "impossibility"

in the real world. Todorov's triage does not encompass all "unreal estates" in literature, nor do I think his "fantastic" represents a real psychological quandary, but his structural model parallels the one I apply to SF. For me, what distinguishes SF from both realism and fantasy is the possible, balanced on a knife-edge between the already established and the already disproven. Because of its dependence on potential, very little SF remains on that edge very long; most of it dates quickly, depending for its continued attraction on more literary elements.

Potential for Art

Forecasting has minimal importance for the reception of literature, which depends more on resonances with the past. Potential realized is a curiosity, potential disproven a fantasy, virtually indistinguishable from potential forever unproven. Literary acceptance, conditioned by decades of academic instruction, depends on consistency not with science or scientific plausibility, but with certain traditional values. It is not just a question of talent: it hardly matters how well you write, if what you write about is not taken seriously, and the potential is SF is not meant to be taken seriously—in literary terms. Living up to your potential in literature tends to mean living up to traditional expectations, sometimes but not always refurbished to fit present conditions.

The most powerful of those is a belief in human nature as substantive and unchanging, a belief continually belied by the historical record and the vast variety of people alive today. Many proposals for social and psychological change are answered by "You can't change human nature," which really means whatever we are used to. Repeating that mantra may give it subjective weight, but objectively we can get used to a lot. As living beings, we need air, food, some protection from weather, elimination of wastes, sexual release, and perpetuation of the species. Except for the last, we can do most of these on our own in a pinch. Like other apes, we also need interaction with others, which typically includes grooming, and protection from enemies both inside and outside the troop. Although nature can and does offer mental stimulation (especially with survival at stake), interaction with others accelerates the pace and shoves nature into the background, leaving the rest of "human nature" to acculturation, i.e., it is virtually up for grabs.

Acculturating values rooted in genetics and history include hierarchical and oppositional relations, favoring proximity over distance. Race, gender, and ethnicity make a difference if your identity is communal and provincial, no matter how large the province. Various mixtures of war and peace, competition and cooperation, community and individualism, neither side completely dominating, flow from these premises. The nature of these elements is hotly contested, possibly none more than the recollection of historical events, but true to its form, SF introduces variables which challenge those basic assumptions. If, as Jim Gunn has argued, the hero of science fiction is the human race, that position diminishes local issues, including the genetic and social. Even without aliens, SF can question gender inequality and its limitation to two sexes (with all of their permutations). Living and machine intelligences, not human in origin, complicate social relations still more. So do interstellar distances and the time to traverse them, as well as planetary (and non-planetary) circumstances that affect human relationships and communication. These SF variations are by definition not yet witnessed and therefore not serious in a literary context.

Characterization in SF is typically limited in other ways, as well. No readers and writers have any personal experience with the future, and few can claim experiences in space or with aliens. We can only guess how human beings (in whatever form) would act or react in situations we have never met and usually draw them from present-day life or even more commonly from previous literature. SF novels tend to be short, but even a long series of novels requires a lot of material detail largely unrelated to character, to let readers help invent a made-up world. Only a handful of writers come close to doing justice to imagining how differently people in such changed circumstances might behave. The more alien their behavior, to suit those circumstances, the more they will alienate all but the most dedicated SF addicts.

Literature expresses and reinforces social and psychological values, but literary values, strictly speaking, center on the word. Even more than expression, reception depends on access to words, and to concepts for which they are held to stand. Lewis Carroll's Humpty Dumpty said "a word means what I want it to mean, no more, no less," but in practice words mean what we have learned them to mean, in daily use, in prior reading, in dictionaries. There is now a Klingon dictionary, and many guidebooks to SF define terms new readers might not recognize, but SF is rife with scientific words and neologisms, most of which date and become even less accessible. Many explain themselves in context, but the experience is offputting to casual visitors, and George Lucas did not endear himself to SF lexicographers by applying the term "droid" (short for android) to entities in *Star Wars* that are clearly robots. Of course, Karel Capek started the confusion in his play *R.U.R.* by using the term "robot" for protoplasmic beings.

As words go, so do concepts, and SF does not stop with new and recent ideas borrowed from the sciences. Samuel R. Delany shows how even a relatively familiar term like "Velcro" can evoke "futuristic" static in his book-length analysis of a Tom Disch short story. Elsewhere, he calls attention to other relatively inaccessible terms as well as to how SF can literalize dead metaphors in what we call "ordinary" language. Gary Westfahl is one of a few others who have also analyzed the effects of neologisms in SF. Since literature typically outlasts science, SF preserves outmoded scientific ideas as well as SF ideas never given scientific credence, from the solar system model of the atom to William Gibson's cyberspace, as well as countless turns on the generation or regeneration of life indebted to Mary Shelley.

Once the limited shelf life for many terms is gone, they become clichéd markers of what ordinary readers see as science fiction's irrelevance or peculiarity. Murray Leinster forecast networked personal computers with personalities in the 1920's in "A Logic Named Joe," but had the misfortune of naming them "logics." Similarly, although "Terrans" is a perfectly logical term in an extraterrestrial context, it sounds arch at best to ears not attuned to it. In other words, their lack of popular resonance becomes more evidence of SF's unreality and non-seriousness. Since literature traffics in resonance, this contributes to the inference that SF writers have, perhaps must have, a tin ear for style. Many do, since so much SF is cranked out commercially to fill pages and fulfill contracts, and other failures of craft abound, from the sentence level up, but literary craft is not enough. Even a skilled SF writer, whose style is otherwise impeccable, whose characters are recognizably human, and whose fiction deals sensibly with major issues, is measured in part by verbal access as well as social or political acceptability.

Fantasy literature does not suffer from all of the same deficiencies. Although much of it is also turned out like yard goods, and most is not to be taken seriously, fantasy is universal where SF is provisional. In fact, most human expression is fantasy in that it does not center on the here-and-now. Within the domain of imaginative literature, even "realistic" fiction is tinged with fantasy, as Kathryn Hume points out in *Fantasy and Mimesis*. But fantasy fiction defines itself by descriptions of a fictional world widely held to be disproved in the world outside the fiction, i.e., things that are empirically, historically, socially, or psychologically impossible. Although Western society has officially held prose fantasy in disrepute for centuries, even driving it underground for a few decades, it never goes away, because human desire always exceeds the known possible. Yoked more directly to myth and fairy tale as well as to religious and occult beliefs, fantasy elements lack SF's shelf-life problem. Never true, they are slower to go out of fashion. SF is also unreal for most readers and critics, but its emphasis on what is not yet lacks fantasy's familiarity. What newfound respect SF has received in recent years comes indirectly from the rise of literary and social theory and directly from its own unanticipated commercial success.

Linguistic-based theory highlights conventionality in all linguistic expression, and corrodes any verbal assertions about reality. That opens the door to Magic Realism and other Postmodern or Postcolonial writings in which nominally realistic elements coexist with fantasies challenging Western paradigms. Cultural criticism and other neo-Marxist approaches give SF grudging respect for questioning the status quo and providing alternate models for human behavior and social organization, though few examples of SF show much sympathy for Marxist models.

Some Postmodern analysts like Brian McHale also see in the SF enterprise a perennial need to imagine the whole world of the story, bypassing or finessing the reader's suspicions about actuality. Larry McCaffrey even goes so far as to call it the paradigmatic form of the Postmodern. That literary modernism with its intense interest in psychological interiors largely bypassed SF may have been a blessing in disguise. While it may prove temporarily advantageous for SF critics to form an alliance with its latest phase, a dead end of recycled forms and retrograde visions offers little on the face of it to a medium distinguished by forecasting alternatives. In the present glut of fiction (not to mention drama and poetry) at war with the conventionally real world, however, SF is just one claimant for attention from the critical fraternity, obsessed (quite legitimately) with the past.

Potential as Commerce

How important is "literary" acceptance? Can it buy happiness? Does it overshadow experimental verification? On the bottom line, does it affect sales? Probably not much.

Most of what the world knows as science fiction isn't. It isn't good science, it isn't good literature, it isn't even good science fiction, and the aims of these three ideals are almost mutually exclusive. Science looks forward, literature looks backward, SF looks sideways; and this principle distinguishing it from other forms of fantasy is not easily swallowed, accepted, remembered, or even recognized. All art is fantasy, because it is simulation. Fantasy literature simulates something impossible but desirable; even horror and terror represent sado-masochistic desire, or at least the audience's pleasure in escaping them. SF explores potential buttressed by theory most of which will never work out. The odds are against any SF coming true or being remembered, and what succeeds in one of those two arenas usually fails in the other.

This claim may seem perverse, since SF seems to be enjoying unprecedented commercial success. That may be a warning sign, however, since what is widely accepted is by definition no longer cutting edge; making the cover of *Rolling Stone* was the death-knell of cyberpunk as a movement, however many of its elements have now been assimilated into SF. Its continued popularity with the general public and some avant-garde elements in the arts indicates what little it has to do with the future. Indeed, even Gibson's trilogy showed a progressive emphasis on myth and the supernatural at the expense of a dialogue with the possible; Gibson's name is better known than his fiction, while "cyberspace" seems to have invaded nearly everybody's vocabulary. Stephen King, who often claims to write SF, is a publishing phenomenon rivaled only by J. K. Rowling. Tom Clancy's technofantasy, just a step ahead of the headlines, is in their league, if not their ballpark, and Michael Crichton made most of his best-selling reputation writing books and movies with SF premises. Even the millions of copies their books sell, however, pale in comparison to the dissemination of SF on screen, and other electronic variations are only in their infancy.

Most of the biggest money-earners in movie history have more than a few SF trappings, and a major proportion of primetime TV, though it usually avoids the term science fiction, titillates audiences with memes from the pot of story long associated with SF, such as space travel, time travel, mind travel, intelligent aliens, and genetically manipulated life forms. Would that a fraction of viewers who believe the truth is out there thought about it more rationally than is encouraged by the *X-Files*, which for non-addicts is no more believable than *Samantha, the Teenage Witch*. As with popular fiction, the present boom is more for fantasy than for SF, as can be seen with even a cursory look at shows like *Quantum Leap*, *The Invisible Man*, and *Seven Days* (not to mention *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer*, *Xena, the Warrior Princess*; and the already defunct *Lois and Clark*). It would be churlish to blame that on the absence of SF writers. Being labeled an SF writer is not a plus for sales in many markets; neither is asking the audience to think beyond traditional mythical frameworks. Harnessing SF ideas to traditional vehicles is also nothing new. SF writers have always done that, since very few stories or even types of stories can be strictly associated with SF. The puzzle story is shared with detective fiction, space travel echoes sea voyages, and alien visits resemble those by supernatural beings.

Even as the world of entertainment is inundated by SF memes, the curiosity about potential that generated them is barely on the public's radar screen. Limits in films and TV are set not by science, but by literary or mythical imagination. Even the interminable *Star Trek* series, whose radio with pictures at least makes verbal passes invoking science, gets an emotional charge out of time travel stories and adventures on the holodeck, while routinely ignoring barriers of physics, biology, and linguistics. Gary Westfahl's observation that space travel in visual SF since *2001: A Space Odyssey* routinely omits spacesuits is emblematic of how screen SF privileges desire over the limits of reality. I have nothing against well-done fantasies and I have the greatest respect for myths, but neither is SF and their increased popularity does not bode well for SF as an index, let alone as an engine, of change. Recycled mythology in the guise of SF may be the real culprit in Frederic Jameson's warning that Postmodern culture can no longer imagine a future not predigested.

Fantasy lasts; SF ages quickly. Fantasy says "make a wish." SF says to reflect on a multitude of possibilities, most of which will not come to pass, and to consider their plausible causes and consequences. Despite the proliferation of science classes in school, and university GE requirements, a passive populace prefers fantasy, not only to SF, but also to life. Indeed, poststructural and postmodern literary theory suggests that we have only a choice of fantasies. I am not delivering a eulogy, however, just trying to live with some uncomfortable facts. From oral tale to computer game, stories may live forever, but written literature is a minority taste, one that is shrinking in its percentage of the populace, but has never captured the masses much more than it does now. I am not ready to accept Delany's science fictional forecast in *Nona* that his writer surrogate, Katin, must reinvent the novel in the 23rd century for a tale nobody wants to hear, but within the province of prose fiction itself, SF is still a distinctly minority taste. If it can only grow and expand by abandoning its most distinguishing feature, it is incumbent on us not just to be "fans" but, as scholars and critics, to accept our minority status and try to keep alive some sense of the potential of potential.

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SFRA AWARDS

PIONEER AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

De Witt Douglas Kilgore

Thank you. This is my first national scholarly award. And I doubt very seriously that there will be any that I will cherish more for what it represents. I greatly appreciate the honor that the SFRA has done my work in making it.

The Pioneer Award is for me a tremendous bit of positive feedback, the sign of a constructive engagement that is all too often hard to come by. [Since Mike Levy notified me of the award while I was teaching my intro to science fiction course this past semester it also had a very gratifying effect on my students and certain of my colleagues.]

This also is my first SFRA. I’ve been favorably impressed by the quality of this gathering both on the personal and intellectual level. The opportunity for casual and productive exchange between writers, artists, critics, historians, and editors (not to leave out scientists) speaks to a vitality of interest, which I hope will remain a hallmark of the association.

I would also like to publicly thank Veronica Hollinger, my editor at *Science-Fiction Studies*, and a past winner of the Pioneer Award. Without her patience and encouragement the essay would be much the poorer.

I must also thank Ranu Samantrai, my partner, without whom I would not be here.

Again, my sincere thanks to the Members of the SFRA.

INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW WITH KEN MACLEOD

Andrew J. Wilson

Ken MacLeod is a writer who thinks that Utopia would be a nice place to live, but he wouldn’t want to write about it. “There is a conflict running through all my books between free-market libertarianism and some kind of socialism,” he says. “It’s played out in different ways, but never actually resolved because I haven’t resolved it myself. I think the tension makes for interesting fiction.”

MacLeod doesn’t talk like a revolutionary. His gentle accent still betrays his childhood on the island of Lewis, one of the Outer Hebrides, even though he moved to the town of Greenock in Clydeside, Scotland’s former centre of shipbuilding, when he was 10 years old. “Greenock was quite a change. I had never seen anybody who was poor before—I had never seen anybody who had suffered any malnutrition, at least not visibly. At that time in the mid-sixties, old men and women in Greenock had bow legs from rickets. There were frightful smogs in the winter.”

Nevertheless, he feels that the experience was positive. “It was quite a stimulating move. I remember how bright and modern and industrial things like the motorway between Greenock and Glasgow were. The electrification of the railway lines also happened at that time—the trains looked great, almost Utopian, gliding along the Clyde Valley.”

When he left school, MacLeod chose to study Zoology at Glasgow University, but he was still equivocal about his future direction when he graduated. “I wasn’t entirely sure what to do next. Under something of a delusion that I could be a scientist, I went to Brunel University and attempted a Ph.D. in Biomechanics—years later, I eventually got an M.Phil. out of it.”

After abandoning his doctorate, he went into computer programming, eventually returning to Scotland to work at Edinburgh University and settling in South Queensferry, a town situated between the great road and rail bridges that span the River Forth. With the encouragement of his life-long friend Iain Banks, who credits MacLeod with coming up with the V-shaped structure of his own novel *Use of Weapons*, he wrote the first of the books which he had been planning for years.

MacLeod’s first quartet of books form a science-fiction series that mines the past to look forward into the future. “I wrote the first two novels by taking things from my experience, and exaggerating and intensifying them to get these high-impact, data-dense visions of future societies.”

In *The Star Fraction*, a Balkanized United Kingdom is liberated from an oppressive US/UN hegemony by a democratic revolution that reaches a global scale. *The Stone Canal* examines a libertarian capitalist society in the space colony of New Mars. His third novel, *The Cassini Division*, introduces an egoist-communist culture that comes into conflict with the inhabitants of New Mars and post-human artificial intelligences.

A running theme throughout the books is the friction between humanity and the computer-generated entities that may have a radically different agenda from their creators. The AI’s may not destroy humanity, but the alternatives may be almost as bad. As Marvin Minsky once suggested, “Perhaps they’ll keep us on as pets.”

“The happy ending of *The Cassini Division* could also be seen as a kind of trap for humanity in that it gets endlessly reproduced on endless worlds without actually getting much further because this AI suppresses any rival ones that turn up.”

In the final novel of the sequence, *The Sky Road*, two stories intertwine. The narrative present is set at an undefined future date in a re-industrialized Highlands, as an ecologically sound society attempts the first space launch in generations. “The idea of people in Scotland bashing together an enormous spaceship out of boiler plate was too attractive an image to pass up.”

Simultaneously, MacLeod examines the events that shaped this version of the future in flashback chapters. Clovis colha Gree, the narrator of the Scottish sections of the novel, is a student preparing a thesis on Myra Godwin-Davidova, the Deliverer and perceived founder of his culture. Myra is also the heroine of the retrospective sections, but she can also be seen as villain, not least by herself. “The question that gets posed is: How far would you go stop the emergence of a world where humanity is living, one way or another, inside a machine?”

For all its technological reference points, *The Sky Road* is a pastoral novel. The terrible and tragic times of the past, which are brought so vividly to life in Myra’s story, have laid the ground for a gentler, more liberated world which again has its origins in MacLeod’s personal experiences: “Actually, the highlanders who I knew, particularly one summer when I was working on a road-mending crew, were remarkable men. They were very like the Utopian citizen that Karl Marx once mentioned, who will hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon and criticize after dinner. That was precisely what they did as well as holding down a regular job.”

Although MacLeod is careful to avoid black-and-white oversimplification, his character David Reid represents the closest thing to a villain in the sequence. “It’s notorious that people who go from the Highlands to the city very often lose the inhibitions of their upbringing. Reid is doubly lost in that he has given up not only his Calvinist background but also his Communism, so he is a completely calculating amoral character.” It is hard not to conclude that Reid may represent MacLeod’s dark side, the man who went down the path he chose not to take.

The quartet of novels form an ongoing debate about political and social evolution. The free-market libertarianism of New Mars in *The Stone Canal* provides an alternative to the Communist ideology of *The Star Fraction*, but is challenged in turn by the egoist-communist society that has evolved on Earth over the centuries during which the societies have been separated. *The Sky Road* carries this dialectic even further by describing an alternate history that diverges from the one portrayed in the first three books.

“You get stability when forces are in equilibrium,” MacLeod points out, underlining his belief that societies must engage in a continual process of debate and reappraisal. “The equilibrium in *The Sky Road* is disrupted partly by the internal forces in that their scientific curiosity has driven them to building a spaceship which will inevitably lead to competition from other countries and continents, and a new round—or another cycle, at least—of potential conflicts. Again, it’s left open how these will develop: whether they will evolve in a civilized fashion, as it were, or whether they’ll go back into a nineteenth or twentieth century world of upheaval.”

MacLeod became involved in left-wing politics as a doctoral student in London, and his interest and participation in political debate informs all his work. His childhood experiences in 1960's Greenock had planted the seed of his political concerns. "At that time, there was a very impressive labour movement on the Clyde which was obviously always there in the background. My parents, although I thought of them as dreadful reactionaries later—which of course they were anything but, they had risked their lives in the war against fascism and they staunchly supported the welfare state—actually had their own politics which, in a very moderate way, were still rooted in the Highland land wars. Some of that percolated through."

Nevertheless, his own political awakening was essentially grounded in his eclectic reading. "The things that got me interested in politics at an individual level were much more intellectual—a lot of the stuff that came through from America at that time like the Black Civil Rights and Power movements. There was a whole little clique of us in Greenock High School who used to read everything from Malcolm X to Timothy Leary, and it was working my way along the library shelves from that kind of echo of late-sixties New Left type stuff that I encountered socialist ideas. At the time that it happened with me—round about 1970 to 1972—the working class movement in Britain was moving into a fairly militant phase and there were big events going in the world which, I think, affected us all. When we were school students, we discussed things like the Polish workers' strikes in Gdansk in 1970 and the UCS work-in. It was only when I went to London that I got actively involved. The *Critique* seminars, which are mentioned in *The Stone Canal*, were actually real—although not the actual one described, and of course, the characters are fictitious. In terms of size, the International Marxist Group was the next group down after the Socialist Workers Party and Militant. They did a lot of work in areas like the issue of Ireland, anti-racism and the women's movement. The most famous person associated with the IMG was Tariq Ali, who left in the late seventies, and the next most famous was Robin Blackburn, historian and intellectual."

He is well aware that three decades are a geological age in politics. "It's easy now, looking back, to denigrate what people did then, but I don't think that's at all fair. No matter how unrealistic the ideas of many people involved with these things were, much of what we did had to be done by somebody and we were the only people who were actually doing it."

There were personal gains for MacLeod as well as collective ones. "Before I got involved in politics, I was quite shy and self-conscious. Any fear I had of talking to strangers or addressing crowds got well and truly knocked on the head in the course of those few years. You learn a lot of useful skills, which is part of the reason why—in Britain in particular—a lot of people who are now in fairly influential positions are ex-Trots. A surprising number of journalists and newspaper editors had their apprenticeships in these kind of groups."

MacLeod became disillusioned with Trotskyism and joined the Communist party as it began to tear itself apart. "I have to point out that I was entirely happy with the overthrow of the Eastern European regimes. I was on the side of the demonstrators in Tiananmen Square, and I was on the side of Romania and the people who brought down the Berlin Wall. I also felt that a kind of traditional socialism was ending and that a lot was going to be lost in the process. It was because of that that I started writing ... that and finally being brow-beaten by Iain Banks into actually writing one of these damn books I kept talking about. What gave *The Star Fraction* its political subtext and a lot of its energy was my reaction to the end of Eastern Europe, the end of the Soviet Union and the Gulf War. In terms of my fiction, I was looking at what had gone wrong with the movement."

It could be argued that was not carried to its logical conclusion by the British Left: a thesis had been proposed and then countered with its antithesis, but no synthesis was ever achieved. "I don't want to give the impression that either I or very many other people were blinkered adherents to a kind of simple-minded Clause-4-with-knobs-on socialist ideology until 1989 when it all blew up," MacLeod responds. "There has been no real public acknowledgement of the fact that there was always a self-critical side to the Left. In 1977, I was involved with smuggling illegal literature into Czechoslovakia, and that was part of a long and large organized piece of activity that was organized by the Left, by people who extended from Trotskyists to the Communist Party and people on the left of the Labour Party, and as it later turned out, the CIA... There was a lot of solidarity with Solidarity in Poland and there was a lot of critical work done in the eighties on ideas like whether a completely centrally planned economy was viable, ideas about market socialism and workers' control of democracy. I suppose the shattering thing about 1989 was not that the Stalinist regimes had fallen—good riddance to them, many of us had long hoped for that—but it was that the critical Left, however it identified itself, was completely marginalized by these events and didn't make any impact at all on them. I think it is understandable that populations who had been subjected to what they were told was Socialism for generations and didn't like it just threw the whole thing out, bag and baggage, and that the Left in the West was thoroughly discredited by its association with these regimes. Even the most anti-Stalinist leftists in the West got some sort of borrowed credibility from the fact that this so-called Socialist superpower had nuclear weapons, and therefore, these ideas had to be taken seriously. As soon as the Soviet threat evaporated, the Left was reduced to lots of people in the streets selling newspapers! Today, ten years later, we can see the beginnings of a newer Left in the West and in the former Soviet bloc, one which the earlier anti-Stalinist socialists are very much part of, so all the work of the seventies and eighties wasn't wasted effort."

MacLeod is a writer who does not want to live in a literary ghetto. “At its best, SF does measure up to the mainstream in literary terms. I think SF has different priorities, and therefore, it can’t necessarily focus on characterization to the degree that conventional fiction can. The priorities of SF are what is outside human society. Mainstream fiction is very largely about what goes on between people, which can be anything from love to war, but SF deals with the confrontation between human beings and the non-human universe, which science and industry increasingly bring violently to our attention.

“From the point of view of human society, even things like our own genetic code are part of the non-human universe; it’s part of nature, something which we confront from the outside, no matter how intimately it affects us as human beings. It is that turning outwards which is the validity of SF. It’s what distinguishes it really from, say, utopias and satires. You can have utopias and satires within SF, but a novel which is primarily about a utopia or a dystopia is perhaps not, strictly speaking, SF itself. On one level, we would all like to claim *Brave New World* or *Nineteen Eighty-Four* for SF simply because they’re accepted as part of the literary mainstream, but it’s an interesting thought that maybe the mainstream was right clutching them to its bosom, and rejecting the bug-eyed monsters and death rays and spaceships which SF is so inextricably associated with.”

MacLeod’s definition of the science fiction and mainstream divide highlights one of the ways he generates the tension in his own books: “My books are definitely SF in that the one common thread that they have is about the confrontation between human beings and post-human artificial intelligence, but a lot of the business going on in them is about politics and personal affairs.”

He has also written a young adult SF novel called *Cydonia* for a series about virtual reality called *The Web*. “The only restrictions were that we didn’t use swear words... You can write quite straightforwardly for younger readers. The main difference was that the world I was writing in wasn’t one that I had made up and that there was a story arc between the books. I very much did my own take.”

In his latest novel, *Cosmonaut Keep*, Matt Cairns, a software project manager in near-future Edinburgh, becomes involved in an international conspiracy when Russian cosmonauts announce the first contact with alien life. Gregor Cairns, his descendant, lives a very different life many years later and thousands of light-years away on the planet Mingulay. MacLeod winds their two separate but connected stories together in the first part of his new SF sequence, *Engines of Light*.

MacLeod is clear about what he is setting out to achieve. “I’m trying to write a colourful space opera with lots of adventure and romance and a certain amount of scientific speculation. It’s a way of returning, hopefully with interest, some of the ideas and images that fascinated me with SF in the first place—one of the first real SF novels I read was *Rocket to Limbo* by Alan E. Nourse, and it had this wonderful scene of farmers and fishermen walking on to starships. All that Golden-Age glow of lots of human-settled planets with different societies and levels of technology, linked by interstellar trade—I wanted to do something like that, but to bring something fresh to it, ideas from recent science, and history and a couple of ideas just completely out of left field, like the lightspeed ships. The other area that I’ve drawn on is also one that intrigued me in my teens—the whole UFO mythos, which I don’t take seriously for a moment but which is a source of really resonant images, and which sets a kind of challenge, which is how much of it could be science-fictionally if not scientifically rationalized.”

The near-future strand of *Cosmonaut Keep* touches on the political concerns of MacLeod’s first four novels, but handles the material with a lighter touch. The Mingulay episodes, which show the consequences of the earlier events, introduce a variety of exotic aliens such as humanoid saurians and immense starship-piloting squid. MacLeod has dipped into the science fiction toy box, and pulled out the flying saucers and dinosaurs. The result is a playful novel packed with incident and flamboyant detail.

Engines of Light promises to be very different from his first quartet of novels. “It starts off with a different and much more hopeful near future, in that Russia and the world don’t simply go down the tubes. And the second volume, *Dark Light*, which I’ve recently finished, and the projected third volume are set completely away from Earth, on planets which have their own conflicts and histories which aren’t rooted in our present. It deals with different questions, and while it has its dark moments and heartbreaks, it has a more open and space-operatic feel.”

MacLeod has a full workload at present. “Immediately after finishing *Dark Light* I plunged into a 20,000 word novella which I’d rashly promised to Peter Crowther, and I’ve just sent it to him. *The Human Front* is an alternate-history story based on a completely different pseudo-explanation of where the flying saucers are coming from. It goes one better than *Engines of Light* in that it doesn’t just rationalize the Greys, it rationalizes the tall fair-haired aliens who used to turn up in the 1950’s claiming to be from Venus. It escalates into a full-scale, broad-spectrum skiffy rationale for the whole ridiculous phenomenon. That’s my story and I’m sticking to it.

“And I’m not expecting a very long break before beginning the third book of *Engines of Light*.”

[Ed - Portions of this interview appeared in a different form in *The Scotsman* newspaper. Ken MacLeod will be one of the guests at SFRA 2002 in New Lanark, Scotland from June 28 – 30, 2002.]

NONFICTION REVIEW

***BETWEEN LITERATURE AND SCIENCE: POE, LEM, AND
EXPLORATION IN AESTHETICS, COGNITIVE SCIENCE, AND
LITERARY KNOWLEDGE***

Michael P. Baumer

Swirski, Peter. *Between Literature and Science: Poe, Lem, and Exploration in Aesthetics, Cognitive Science, and Literary Knowledge*. McGill-Queens University Press, 3430 McTavish Street, Montreal PQ H3A 1X9 Canada, October 2000. xviii + 183 p. C\$60 (US\$39). 0-7735-2043-0, 0-7735-2073-3, trade paper, April 2001, US \$19.95. Credit card orders to customer.service@ccmailgw.genpub.com.

Swirski (English, University of Alberta) proposes to bridge the proverbial gap between the cultures of literature and science by showing that Poe and Lem did scientific thinking or had what he calls “cognitive ambitions” within works of literature. In this way he tries to show the inadequacy of each of the two cultures insofar as it neglects the other: the literary culture ignores the “cognitive” or scientific and philosophical content of works of literature in its theory and practice of criticism; the scientific culture neglects the imaginative realm in favor of dry formalism as the only arena of cognition. The body of the book allots three chapters each to Poe and Lem, in whose works themes occur that are used as points of departure for addressing issues in aesthetics and philosophy that relate loosely to the theme of the two cultures.

Several topics in literary criticism are raised by “The Purloined Letter,” among them the concept of fiction both as a game played between author and reader and as an illocutionary act (which possess the property of “reflexive intention”), and the problem of “truth in fiction.” Poe’s “Eureka” leads to a general discussion of the nature of science and whether there is an irreducible difference in nature between the physical sciences and the humanities (with the social sciences somewhere in between); he denies such a difference. “Eureka” is subjected to an exhaustive critique in which he seems to conclude that it is bad science but admirable philosophy. (This seemingly implies a gulf between science and at least a philosophy of the humanities after all.)

He turns to a common theme of several of Lem’s novels, notably *The Invisible* and *Solaris*, the encounter of scientifically sophisticated man with the incomprehensible and unconquerable in his exploration of the stars. Here, in my judgment, he makes too much of an alleged refutation by Lem in these works of what he calls “positivism” and “reductionism.”

He also investigates the recurrent idea that computers can do human tasks, particular, can write works of fiction, as argued in *A History of Bitic Literature* (included in *Imaginary Magnitude*, 1973, trans. 1985). Swirski cautions against over-optimism regarding machine intelligence. His conclusion reiterates his advocacy of an interdisciplinary approach to the study of literature, by which he apparently means the adoption of methodological canons that have proved reliable in the sciences. Curiously, he gives as an example the reconstruction of part of *The Canterbury Tales* by scientific means, whereas all the other discussion focuses on the scientific content of stories.

I found the book interesting and engaging, introducing me to “Eureka” and *A History of Bitic Literature*, and introducing me, a professional philosopher, to some current controversies in literary theory. But I also think the book has notable flaws. Most obvious is the miscellaneous nature of the book as a whole; it appears to be simply a compilation of articles, an impression that is conclusively verified as soon as one consults the extensive bibliography (twenty-eight pages), including several entries by Swirski. More seriously, Swirski’s investigation of the nature of physical science in “Eureka” and the nature of mind in “bitic literature” require far more careful discussion than he gives them. In doing so, he unwittingly illustrates the intractability of the very real problem of the alienation of academic fields from one another that he is trying to ameliorate.

[Swirski investigated Lem in more detail in his 1997 work, *A Stanislaw Lem Reader* (Northwestern) and wrote the fourteen-page essay on Lem for the second edition of *Science Fiction Writers* (1999), edited by Richard Bleiler. – Ed.]

NONFICTION REVIEW

THE BIOLOGY OF SCIENCE FICTION CINEMA

John A. Waas

Glassy, Mark C. *The Biology of Science Fiction Cinema*. McFarland & Co., Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640, April 2001. viii + 296 p. \$39.95. 0-7864-0998-3. Orders to 800-253-2187.

Glassy is a biochemist, a molecular biologist with many years experience in cancer research, who teaches at UC San Diego. His scientific background is glaringly apparent from even a brief perusal of the text. As a scientist and data analyst myself, I find his approach refreshingly different from the usual emphasis on the cinematic and philosophical aspects of SF films. But most readers should be cautioned that this reads like a science text.

Each section of the book addresses a different area of life science, plus several catchall groups such as Shrinkology (size reduction, as in *The Incredible Shrinking Man*) and CULFology (creating unusual life forms, as in *The Killer Shrews*). Sections include cell and molecular biology; pharmacology; surgery; microbiology; biochemistry; and, given the large number of giant insect films, entomology. Each section includes reviews of two to thirteen films, with a very brief plot synopsis, selective credits, and summary of basic biological principles. More space is devoted to what is scientifically right or wrong, what science is necessary to actually achieve the results in the film, and “could it actually happen?”

A seventeen-page overview of scientific principles in various biological fields is designed for the non-scientist and to make more sense of the detailed discussions of each film. Glassy shows how much films have followed scientific developments: in the 30’s, the plots tended to emphasize glandular/hormonal effects; in the 50’s, it was atomic energy; in the 60’s and 70’s, virology, immunology, and biochemistry were prominent; and in the last two decades, gene splicing and cloning. He notes that scientific rigor was usually subordinated to dramatic or cinematic needs.

Glassy’s account beautifully complements the typical survey of SF films, which tends to slight the science (or pseudoscience) for the cinematic or sociological features or the films’ historical position. One inexplicable omission among the seventy-nine films is 1970’s *The Andromeda Strain*, whose screenplay closely follows the novel by Michael Crichton, who is a doctor.

This oddity should wow them in the biological sciences departments but may well bomb in the humanities areas. It’s highly recommended to those who would like to think about “what ifs” and “could this really happen?”

NONFICTION REVIEW

WOLF MAN’S MAKER: MEMOIR OF A HOLLYWOOD WRITER

Walter Albert

Siodmak, Curt. *Wolf Man’s Maker: Memoir of a Hollywood Writer*. Revised edition. Scarecrow Press, 4720 Boston Way, Lanham, MD 20706, February 2001. xxii + 457 p. + 32 p. of unpaginated photos. \$45. 0-8108-3812. Orders 800-462-6420.

The original edition of this autobiography, *Even a Man Who Is Pure in Heart*, was published by Three Rivers Press in 1997 in an edition of 400 copies that were distributed to the author’s family and friends. Siodmak then accepted “an offer from Scarecrow Press to make [the book] accessible others who might see some value in it.” He does not mention what revision he might have made; judging from the number of misprints and incorrectly dated photographs, I suspect the original manuscript was reprinted by Scarecrow with minor, if any, editorial supervision.

In the wake of the Nazi’s rise to power, Siodmak fled first to England, where he wrote the story for *Transatlantic Tunnel*, which details the drama of tunneling under the Atlantic to connect Great Britain with the US, and then migrated to Hollywood, where he worked only a few years before he jumpstarted his career with the screenplay for *The Wolf Man* (Universal, 1941). Although his previous work in Germany and England had established his talent for SF stories, he was to be known in Hollywood largely for his work on the 40’s horror cycle at Universal. He wrote screenplays for, among other films, *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man*, *Son of Dracula* (directed by his brother, Robert), *I Walked With a Zombie*, and *The Beast With Five Fingers*. His novel *Donovan’s Brain* was filmed three times, with the first two versions (*The Lady and the Monster*, 1944, and *Donovan’s Brain*, 1953) both registering as effective B-film adaptations of the book.

Siodmak’s film career slowed in the 1950’s in quantity as well as quality, and he ended his Hollywood career as both a writer and director for two unmemorable films. He returned to an inhospitable Germany, then again to Hollywood where, after making the decision to “leave forever the giant toy train called ‘motion pictures,’” he continued to write, but not for the camera, and appears to have lead an active, satisfying life until his death in 2000.

This is a frustrating book for anyone expecting a chronological, carefully dated account of Siodmak's life and career. He considered the years 1929 to 1933 to be his most productive years when he wrote fourteen novels and half a dozen screenplays, but there's relatively little detail on this period. His view of Hollywood is harsh, but he recognized the intelligence and talent of a producer like Val Lewton and peppers his meandering text with anecdotes about some of the film world's legendary figures. He acknowledges the talent of his brother, director Robert Siodmak, who had a major career, and chronicles their complicated relationship.

"Making motion pictures is like an amusing cruise, where one makes friends for life whom one never meets again," he writes. Reading *Wolf Man's Maker* is also like taking a cruise, where ports of call are not always announced and arrival and departure dates are subject to the captain's fancy. But Siodmak is a writer of great imagination, if not a great biographer of the mundane facts of his own life, and every page is alive with the imprint of his probing, restless mind, an exhausting but still a rewarding and sometimes illuminating experience.

NONFICTION REVIEW

ENGLISH GOTHIC: A CENTURY OF HORROR CINEMA

Walter Albert

Rigby, Jonathan. *English Gothic: A Century of Horror Cinema*. Reynolds & Hearn, 61 Priory Road, Kew Gardens, Richmond Surrey TW9 3DH England, 2000. 256 p. £17.95. 1-903111-01-3. Distributed by Trafalgar Square, Box 257, North Pomfret, VT 05053, February 2001. \$29.95. Orders to 800-423-4525.

Rigby efficiently dispatches the first fifty years of British horror films, from 1897 through undistinguished Hammer films of the early 1950's, in thirty pages. International figures like James Whale, Boris Karloff, Alfred Hitchcock, and James Mason surface briefly, while Rigby pays tribute to the popular anthology horror film *Dead of Night* and Cavalcaanti's *The Queen of Spades*, a less well-known but superbly baroque phantasmagoria that does not deserve the oblivion to which it has been relegated. Connoisseurs of indigenous British efforts will appreciate Rigby's discussion of the talented melodrama performer Todd Slaughter, whose films may not be examples of the best of anything but kept alive the traditions of British theater in productions that were usually showcases for Slaughter's often over-the-top but entertaining acting. (A production still on page twenty-one is mute testimony to his peculiar talents.)

All of this, however, is only a prelude to Rigby's real interest, the emergence of Hammer Films as a major company in the mid-1950's. Since the publication of David Pirie's excellent *A Heritage of Horror: The English Gothic Cinema 1946-1972* (1972), a very active cottage industry of books, magazines, and conventions has memorialized the Hammer legacy. Rigby has certainly taken full account of Hammer's predominate role in the "first wave" of horror productions, but he also provides coverage of the several competing companies that attempted to challenge the Hammer juggernaut, with Amicus/American International the most important.

Rigby has written his text as a narrative sequence, and the five hundred films he claims to cover are chronicled in mind-numbing detail. One feature that helps to bring some relief to the besieged reader is the highlighting of one hundred films whose credits are given in boxes inset in the text. Unfortunately, the skimpy index does not identify these films. What Rigby has actually attempted to write is an encyclopedia of the British horror cinema, especially in the years 1954-1975, and it's unfortunate the book wasn't structured to acknowledge this fact.

In spite of the difficulty of accessing the films Rigby considers to be major, the comprehensiveness of the coverage makes the book self-recommending. In addition, Rigby writes with such obvious affection for the genre that even reluctant viewers will be swept along by his enthusiasm. I was almost convinced that the Hammer *Frankenstein* films were masterpieces, when my memory of seeing them in the theater was that they were significantly less engrossing than the *Dracula* series starring Christopher Lee. I shall never forget the impact of *Dracula* (a.k.a. *Horror of Dracula*), a film that I have never failed to enjoy on repeated viewings and that, despite the virtues of other films in the Hammer canon, still strikes me as a landmark in horror film and a worthy successor to the great achievement of Hollywood's Universal Studios' horror cycle of the 1930's.

Pirie's *A Heritage of Horror Cinema* remains, after thirty years, the best monograph on British horror cinema, but Rigby's more inclusive coverage and the advantage of some historical distance makes this an essential purchase for all library collections of film history.

NONFICTION REVIEW

A GUIDE TO APOCALYPTIC CINEMA

Joseph Milicia

Mitchell, Charles P. *A Guide to Apocalyptic Cinema*. Greenwood Press, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881, March 2001. xv + 310 p. \$79.50. 0-313-31527-2. Orders to 800-225-5800.

Everyone who loves to debate what (sub)genre a particular movie belongs in should get some pleasure browsing through this alphabetically arranged list of fifty major films, each with one to five stars denoting quality, detailed credits, a lengthy plot synopsis, a one to three page critique, and a set of “representative quotes.” Appendices list fifty other films with brief credits and plot synopses, plus a list of post-apocalyptic films.

No rationale is given for the fifty plus fifty selection. He includes films that include any threat to the planet and/or humankind, whether accomplished or not, so that his major list includes expected titles like *On the Beach* but also titles that surely few others would include in his category, like the James Bond *Moonraker* or *Star Trek—The Motion Picture*. Most types of apocalyptic threats, other than “religious” or “supernatural,” are subcategories of SF, including “celestial collision” and “solar or orbital disruption,” along with nuclear war, plagues natural and human-designed, alien invasions, etc. He includes some “big” recent films (*Armageddon*) and classics (*Dr. Strangelove*) in his main list, but relegates to the short list such films as *12 Monkeys*, *Independence Day*, and *The Birds* on the reasonable grounds of making room for more obscure films (how ‘bout an unauthorized 1970 Turkish *Star Trek* movie?) and film trivia.

Mitchell does a decent job commenting on the virtues and absurdities of his chosen films—from a totally non-theoretical position, one hardly need add. For a more sustained and insightful critical survey of apocalyptic films, consider Kim Newman’s *Apocalypse Movies* (reviewed by Andrew Gordon in *SFRAR* 244). His non-academic, somewhat breezy style offers some detailed evaluations but typically leaps about with comparisons among dozens of mainly post-World War II films, while constantly stressing the cultural subtexts of nuclear threat and the Cold War. Mitchell’s account is a better reference volume (the index is twenty-six pages), though typically overpriced, while Newman is more thought provoking. For yet more sustained analysis of particular films, one might seek out the anthology *Crisis Cinema: The Apocalyptic Idea in Postmodern Narrative Film* (Maisonneuve, 1993) for essays on *Blade Runner*, *Mad Max*, and even *Taxi Driver*.

NONFICTION REVIEW

STAR TREK: THE HUMAN FRONTIER

Bruce Beatie

Barrett, Michèle and Duncan Barrett. *Star Trek: The Human Frontier*. Routledge, 29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001-2299, March 2001. xviii + 244 p. \$85. 0-415-92981-4; \$19.95, trade paper, 0-415-92982-2. Orders to 800-797-3803.

Considering that this book purports to be the product of a “renowned sociologist” (claims the publisher), radical feminist, and Marxist, and her nineteen-year-old son, I approached this book without high expectations. But I am delighted to report that it is certainly the most interesting, and probably the best, study of the actual *Star Trek* programs and films that I have seen. It is scholarly and informative, and also very well written, quite accessible to the general reader.

First, and most important, the book totally ignores the “*Star Trek* phenomenon,” in part perhaps as a result of the Barretts being British; to judge from most available scholarship, the “phenomenon” seems largely restricted to the US. The book concentrates solely on the created world of *Star Trek*: the original series, *The Next Generation*, *Deep Space Nine*, *Voyager*, and the six theatrical films, with an occasional look at a few of the many spin-off novels. And the Barretts know the canon thoroughly; the argument includes constant and detailed references to specific episodes and scenes.

In Part I, “The Starry Sea,” they demonstrate convincingly that, in spite of Roddenberry’s comment that the series was intended as “wagon train to the stars,” the whole canon has deep roots in the nautical and exploratory fiction of the nineteenth and twentieth century: Melville, Conrad, and Forester’s Hornblower novels—not only in the surface details, but in this tradition’s attitudes toward an alien realm and the notion of “British maritime supremacy, in all its aspects of colonialism, commerce, and naval victory.” The authors are well aware of the polemical studies that admonish *Star Trek* for its purported racist and capitalist ethic, but their view is much more balanced. They make a good case for *The Next Generation* as the best fulfillment of Roddenberry’s rationalist/modernist/western ideals.

An obsession with human identity is the focus of Part II, “Humanity on Trial,” which comprises about a third of the book and which demonstrates how the developing canon’s focus on human identity turns increasingly toward “identity as human,” with characters such as Data and the Doctor, Dax, Odo, and Seven of Nine as crucial figures. Their analysis

concludes: “Although Star Trek in general is about human nature, human morality, and the nature of the human in contrast to other entities..., there are significant differences between the various series. We argue that the modern paradigm—so well mapped out in the tropes of exploration used by maritime fiction...—is giving way to a characteristically *post-modern* style of representation” (their emphasis).

That argument is the concern of Part III, “The Post-Modern Tack,” which demonstrates that *Voyager*, and especially *Deep Space Nine*, while retaining the value system of the earlier series, increasingly and interestingly raise questions about those values (the authors have given me for the first time a real sense of what “post-modern” can mean). The brief conclusion reprises their introduction: “If, in the projected twenty-fourth century, humans are not limited to Earth itself, they at least remain fixed in the larger ‘home’ of our own *Star Trek* portion of the galaxy. In this, although planet Earth is not displaced and decentred, the project of *humanity* is still very much center stage” (their emphasis).

The brief bibliography includes remarkably few studies specifically of *Star Trek*, an excellent general index, and an index of episodes referred to that is extremely useful.

NONFICTION REVIEW

Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America

Matthew Wolf-Meyer

Wright, Bradford W. *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2715 North Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21218-4363, April 2001. xix + 336 p. 0-8018-67514-X.

The history of comic books has thus far been written tangentially in other studies of comics and slanted toward the individual theses of the given author’s work. Only by splicing histories from a variety of sources could the history of comics be achieved, thus causing an impediment to understanding the history of the medium for new scholars approaching the field. *Comic Book Nation* should provide such scholars with an appropriate historical understanding of a complex medium in an indispensable single-volume study.

Readers familiar with the history of comic books may find it somewhat repetitive of material in other recent studies. Ron Goulart’s *Great History of Comic Books* (1986) was marred with inaccuracies; Richard Reynolds’s *Superheroes: A Modern Mythology* (1992), while theoretically vital to the study of the field, largely eschewed historical analysis. William Savage’s *Comic Books and America: 1945-1954* (1990), which Wright acknowledges his debt to, focused too narrowly on an anomalous era of comic book publishing, much as Amy Nyberg’s *Seal of Approval* (1998), which focused on the era of comic book censorship in the 1950’s. Wright approaches the whole of comic book history, and while he suffers from lack of analytical depth, he provides future scholars with an indispensable point of analytical departure.

Wright makes broad historical claims, and while he properly cites the comics that he thoroughly summarizes, he rarely cites historical texts that inform his critique of history. Claims such as, “Yet even DC’s sales dropped significantly after the [CMAA] code (which censored comics), largely due to competition from television,” are common and play with the reader’s understanding of history. Historians might find Wright’s history more a study of individual comics than the cultural forces that shaped them, and find themselves aggravated at his constant summaries of American history. It’s impossible to attribute the declining popularity of comics to a single factor, like television. While Wright explains that comics competed for recreational time also shared with film, music, and other reading, he doesn’t mention the changes in DC’s editorial policy that made them much more light-hearted than their wartime predecessors.

His discussion of SF comics is rather cursory and limited. He mentions EC’s SF comics and their progressive attitudes toward race relations in the early 1950’s. DC’s post-code SF comics are discussed, but other than noting their optimistic view of the future, he omits analysis. The difference between Stan Lee’s pessimistic outlook in Marvel SF comics of the 50’s and the editorially prescribed optimism of DC is noted, but little is made of the cultural value of SF comics in the atomic age.

Wright closes his study with a brief note on his sources, which reads more like a list of personal favorites than a proper bibliography. A bibliography of published scholarly articles would have been more useful for further study. Scholars interested in studying comics will greatly benefit from reading *Comic Book Culture*, but rather than the equivalent of Aldiss’ *Trillion Year Spree*, readers will only find a valuable starting point, not an authoritative reference tool.

NONFICTION REVIEW

THE CLASSIC ERA OF AMERICAN PULP MAGAZINES

Neil Barron

Haining, Peter. *The Classic Era of American Pulp Magazines*. Chicago Review Press, 814 Franklin Street, Chicago, IL 60610, April 2001. 224 p. \$39.95. 1-55652389-0. UK edition by Prion Books, Nov. 2000, £16.99.

Pulp magazines, so named because of their use of cheap wood pulp paper, began with *Argosy* in 1896. Haining, born in 1940, lived in the last third of what he calls the classic era of the pulps, about 1920 – 1950, seeing his first examples on a table in a British Woolworth's in the early 1950's. Most of the many color illustrations in this informal, uncritical history come from his large collection. Of the hundreds of titles published in this period, Haining lists about two hundred in the three-page personal name and magazine title index. Most titles have at least one cover reproduction, and some, like *Amazing*, *Black Mask*, *Famous Fantastic Mysteries*, *Planet*, *Startling*, *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, and *Weird Tales*, have several. The book was printed in Singapore on paper with a matte finish, not coated stock, which slightly dulls the garish colors.

Each of the eight chapters is devoted to a specific sub-genre, although there's a lot of overlap, e.g., "hot" and "spicy" are very similar as are the detective and "shudder" pulps. Other categories include fantasy, SF, and British pulps; no westerns, air stories, few general adventure, and none of the early pulps, such as *All-Story*. Haining says the pulps "were all about three things: action, adventure, and sex—not necessarily together or in that order"—in a phrase "cheap thrills." The audience was mostly American men and boys hoping to be "red-blooded," "two-fisted" "he-men" (thus the long-running ads for Charles Atlas, who appealed to 97-pound weaklings the world over). It's no accident that the pulps flourished in the grim years of a decade-long depression.

Of the three elements that Haining claims were most prominent in pulps, he stresses sex, evident in his choice of illustrations and his own often fevered, cliché-ridden prose, sometimes printed in large type sidebars. As social mores became more permissive, the sex pulps died and were revived in an upscale slick format as *Playboy* and *Penthouse*, magazines often read with one hand. The emphasis on the salacious is evident in the chapter on fantasy pulps, in which the work of Chicago housewife Margaret Brundage and the bubbly creations of Virgil Finlay were prominent in *Weird Tales* and *FFM*. Earle Bergey is equally prominent in the chapter on SF (Haining prefers "sci-fi") pulps. An appendix provides one-paragraph sketches of fifty-eight writers, some well known to general readers (Hammett, Heinlein), others beloved of hardcover pulp fans. Only one (Dorothy Quigg, 1900-1962) is a woman.

Haining has edited dozens of anthologies, predominantly emphasizing supernatural and horror fiction, and has written a lot of related non-fiction, including a 1976 illustrated history of the horror pulps. This casually written survey is colorful but adds little. For the same price, I'd recommend another picture book, printed on coated stock and with much greater variety, *Pulp Culture: The Art of the Fiction Magazines* (Collectors Press, 1998) by Frank M. Robinson and Lawrence Davidson. Robert Lesser's *Pulp Art* (Gramercy Books, 1997) reproduces the work from the original paintings/drawings and has a number of contributions by knowledgeable collectors. In spite of its title, *Danger Is My Business* (Chronicle Books, 1993), by Lee Server, is just what its subtitle says, *An Illustrated History of the Fabulous Pulp Magazines: 1896-1953*, whose intelligent text is not overwhelmed by the illustrations.

NONFICTION REVIEW

THE ALTERNATE HISTORY: REFIGURING HISTORICAL TIME

Steven H. Silver

Hellekson, Karen. *The Alternate History: Refiguring Historical Time*. Kent State University Press, Box 5190, Kent, OH 44242-0001, February 2001. vii + 130 p. \$14, trade paper, 0-87338-683-3.

Most of Hellekson's study is an in-depth examination of several quintessential alternate history texts, each illustrating a different one of her subcategories. She applied the historiographical theories of Hayden White, Paul Ricour, and others in her analysis of the works, practically treating the fictional works as historical writings. This historiographical reading of these texts is the strongest aspect of her work, demonstrating the theories used by historians in their work with allohistorical content, thereby removing any emotional tie to the material discussed.

The major stories selected range from H. Beam Piper's Paratime/Lord Calvin series (begun with "Police Operation" in 1948) to Sterling and Gibson's *The Difference Engine* (1991), with several other studies mentioned. While most works discussed are novels, the Piper series and Poul Anderson's *Time Patrol* are made up of shorter pieces, which allow her to examine how the authors changed their opinions about historical interpretation over time.

Hellekson uses Ward Moore's *Bring the Jubilee* (1955) to examine theories of time running from a starting point to an ending point or time running in cycles. The novel lends itself to this because, at the beginning, Hodge Backmaker's world seems set in stone. Only after Hodge travels backward in time does the question of causality become an issue. She discusses several similar works but never fully discusses this topic in light of the topics she presents in the other essays. Each major text is treated almost, but not quite, in a vacuum, not compared to the other texts.

The Alternate History does a marvelous job in applying literary standards to the works she discusses, as well as explaining historiographical theories. She doesn't explain why she feels it is necessary or useful to categorize the subtypes of alternate history, nor why she judges some "better" than others. While her short study reveals some of the reasons for alternate history's popularity, it comes across as something, on the whole, inconsequential.

NONFICTION REVIEW

SPEAKING SCIENCE FICTION: DIALOGUES AND INTERPRETATIONS

Janice M. Bogstad

Sawyer, Andy and David Seed, eds. *Speaking Science Fiction: Dialogues and Interpretations*. Liverpool University Press, 4 Cambridge Street, Liverpool L69 7ZU, December 2000. 248 p. £32.99. 0-85323-834-0; £14.99, trade paper, 0-85323-844-8. Distributed in North America by ISBS, \$49.99 and \$22.99, orders to 800-944-6190.

These fifteen essays and three introductions derived from a 1996 conference that celebrated the relocation of the large SF Foundation collection to the University of Liverpool. Sawyer administers the collection, and Seed is a professor of American literature and edits the LUP series, *Science Fiction Texts and Studies*. British essayists were joined by American, Australian, Canadian, Czech, and Portuguese.

The essays range from ten to twenty-one pages. Many are informal, personal, discursive, or conversational in tone yet very informative as overviews, often as self-revelations about working methods of authors. They explore, in overlapping discussion, issues such as cyberspace, gender, language, and media. Each has citations and a bibliography, and the volume has a good index and bibliography. Sawyer's introduction expresses one of the goals: "A conference such as 'Speaking Science Fiction' reflects the various strands and strains at work in the field: the fact that there are different, even ideologically opposed approaches to the field and that this source of creative tension is one of the field's strengths." David Seed uses Brooke-Rose's concept of the SF megastory (in her *A Rhetoric of the Unreal*, 1981) to challenge external perceptions of SF as a genre or mode and places the other critics in the ongoing debate to define SF.

Farah Mendlesohn's "Corporatism and the Corporate Ethos in Robert Heinlein's 'The Roads Must Roll'" takes a literary-historical approach. Bromwen Calvert and Sue Walsh argue that cyberpunk and feminist SF are mutually exclusive categories, citing theoreticians of "cyberfutures" such as Sandy Stone and Donna Haraway, whose work I've often found effective in the classroom. Forms other than literary SF are also well represented, including *Star Trek* as television and film, other SF cinema, and, in passing, comics.

The writers of fiction used this forum to reveal how they came to write their kinds of fiction. The most lyrical and problematic (Is it fiction? Psychoanalysis? Criticism?) is the Czech writer Josef Nesvadba's "Speaking Science Fiction—Out of Anxiety?," which tells the story of a "madman" who is a lot saner than the rest of us. Gwyneth Jones speaks to the core of aliens and gender theory as she simultaneously and generously gives us many secrets of the Aleutian culture of her novels. Canadian Candace Jane Dorsey, well known for her "(Learning About) Machine Sex," expounds on the gender transformation of western culture.

This is a valuable tool in our ongoing debates about the nature and place of SF, whose contents I've only touched on, and to which I will return.

NONFICTION REVIEW

SF: How BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION CHANGED THE WORLD

Bob Blackwood

O'Brien, Daniel. *SF: How British Science Fiction Changed the World*. Reynolds & Hearn, 61 Priory Road, Kew Gardens, Richmond Surrey TW9 3DH England, 2000. 160 p. £12.95, trade paper. Distributed by Trafalgar Square, North Pomfret, VT 05053. \$22.95. Orders to 800-423-4525.

This study is derived from the British Channel Four series of the same name and is a concise history of British SF, mostly in films and on television and radio, with lesser discussion of print and comics. Kim Newman's fifteen-page prologue, "In Search of Scientific Romance," contrasts British and American SF and delineates what makes British SF

unique: usually a view questioning all the results of scientific advancement. It charts literary (e.g., *New Worlds* writers) and media events in detail, starting with More's *Utopia*. Wells, Huxley, Stapledon, Orwell, Burgess, and Ballard are judged major literary artists. Newman praises *2001: A Space Odyssey* as the most important SF film yet released and discusses as well how British series such as *Doctor Who*, *The Avengers*, and *Judge Dredd* have been compromised by American attempts at franchising.

O'Brien opens his fourth chapter with *The Tempest* and how its plot elements were used in MGM's 1956 film, *Forbidden Planet*, and draws parallels with *Brave New World* and the 1982 musical *Return to the Forbidden Planet*. Unlike Newman, his emphasis is far more on film and television. With *Frankenstein* as a model, he discusses the themes of forbidden knowledge, unnatural birth, man's usurpation of God, and the failure of science to assume responsibility for its actions, arguing that that last theme recurs in British SF until today.

Side excursions into the monster personas in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *The Invisible Man* are interesting and appropriate. The film versions of Well's novels, especially *The War of the Worlds*, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, and *The Time Machine* are methodically examined. Kubrick's *2001* receives praise, but his *Clockwork Orange* is found wanting. James Bond films are lightly discussed. Much space is devoted to Nigel Kneale's *Quatermass* television and versions. The long-running *Doctor Who* series receives the most attention, with sidetrips to *The Avengers*, *The Prisoner*, and other television shows.

The book concludes with a science time chart and a British SF time chart (prose, film, television). About one hundred well-chosen black-and-white film/television stills supplement the text, which is in very small print. A recommended addition to an academic library with strength in film studies, which should own John Brosnan's *The Primal Screen* (1991) to provide a broader perspective.

NONFICTION REVIEW

THE PRENTICE HALL ANTHOLOGY OF SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY

Bruce Beattie & Peter Sands

Roberts, Garyn G. *The Prentice Hall Anthology of Science Fiction and Fantasy*. Prentice Hall/Pearson Education, One Lake Street, Upper Saddle River, NJ 07458, January 2001. xviii + 1166 p. \$35.25, trade paper. 0-13-121280-6. Desk copies from Thomas De Marco, 201-236-7531, or on school letterhead from address shown.

The publisher claims that "this one-volume anthology and study of the last two hundred years of Science Fiction and Fantasy... is designed to heighten student interest in the subject matter... leading students to meaningful intellectual, social, and historic investigations." Roberts provides a two-and-a-half page introduction and a total of four pages of introductions to the three main sections, approximately half-page headnotes to each story, and reprints Moskowitz's 1957 essay, "How Science Fiction Got Its Name." These forty-four pages, whatever their quality, hardly constitute a "study."

The usefulness of a teaching anthology lies in its coverage and selection. The 1093 pages of fiction range from Shelley's 1833 story, "The Mortal Immortals: A Tale," and Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), both tagged "archetypal," to a 1998 story by Jack Williamson, probably chosen less on its own merits than as a thank you for his complimentary forward. Within those 166 (not two hundred) years, the chronological distribution is as follows (number of stories/pages): 1833 – 1900 (14/121); 1901 – 1939 (16/291); 1940 – 1959 (28/343); 1960 – 1979 (17/158); 1980 – 1998 (12/179). The complete text of the 1912 chestnut *A Princess of Mars*, is included. It seems to be appropriate that the two decades of "classic" SF are represented by the most stories (about a third), though others might wish for a greater emphasis on more recent fiction, especially considering the publisher's claim that the "book taps into the contemporary student experience and places that experience in the context of a larger world culture."

Almost all stories appeared first in magazines, dominated by *Astounding/Analog*, followed by *F&SF* and thirty-five other periodicals (*Asimov's* is slighted). One story Blaylock's "Thirteen Phantasms" (1996) comes from the defunct online version of *Omnibus*. Each of the quite unequal thematic sections is chronological. The two "archetypal" stories are followed by the dark fantasy, opening with Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" (1835), and including stories by Dickens, Stevenson, and Bierce; a chapter from *Dracula*; and three tales that for me count as classic horror: "The Monkey's Paw" (1902), "The Lottery" (1948), and Damon Knight's "To Serve Man" (1950). High fantasy is devoted to "Ancestors and Disciples of Robert E. Howard and J.R.R. Tolkien." It includes a chapter from *The Hobbit* and stories from Merritt, Leiber, Dunsany, and Zenna Henderson.

The SF section is, by far, the largest, but its introduction says that it does not pretend to comprehensive coverage. As one who started reading SF in the 1940's, I was delighted to find Asimov's "Robbie," van Vogt's "The Weapon Shops," Judith Merrill's "That Only a Mother," and Clarke's "The Sentinel." Moore's "Shambleau" (*Weird Tales*, 1933) is more properly in dark fantasy than SF. It's good to have the original 1977 version of Card's "Ender's Game."

The publisher's obligatory politically correct blurb claims that the book includes "appropriate representation of international/ethnic and gender authors." Yet only authors writing in English are included (other than a very short story by Verne). A few British authors are included, but most fiction is by American authors. Women contributed twenty-one stories, 216 pages (20%), including several whose names were new to me. I am puzzled that the most recent female author is Butler with her 1984 "Bloodchild." My impression is that the number and quality of women authors has significantly increased since 1980, including Joan Slonczewski, Mary Doria Russell, and Maureen McHugh.

The final section will be extremely useful to teachers and students. These lists include F/SF film and television (the book's table of contents includes icons marking stories that have been filmed or televised), F/SF radio series, F/SF comic strips/books, twenty-one Internet sites, F/SF themes, motifs, and settings (a very limited list, each with a single example of a mass media version). Half of this 23-page section is devoted to a list of recommended anthologies and non-fiction but give only authors/editors and titles, without publication data. The anthology includes four color plates of magazine covers plus several other illustrations. The 6x9" pages are fairly thin.

Roberts wants to please readers by selecting stories that illuminate fantasy and SF and give pleasure. In that regard, this is a pretty successful anthology. He reprints terrific gems, such as O'Brien's "The Diamond Lens" and Bierce's "The Damned Thing," two personal favorites. Following the two "archetypal" stories (see above for more notes on contents) are eighteen stories (174 pages) of dark fantasy, and fourteen (130 pages) of high fantasy. The SF section has a short historical introduction to the fifty-three stories (781 pages).

Teaching anthologies should provide both well-wrought introductory material but also pointers to sources and other means by which interested readers can learn more. Roberts is clearly a big fan of SF, suggesting its sacred character or seriousness by consistently capitalizing Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror. Unfortunately, fannishness dominates Robert's view of SF, despite his academic credentials (Northwestern Michigan Community College). Frequently, this gives an unfortunate tone that does a disservice to his ethos. He singles out Bleiler, Derleth, and Moskowitz as SF's best scholars but fails to explain why he prefers their work to the scholarship of, say, Clareson, Gunn, or Suvin.

"Any story worth anything as an intellectual construct, as a credible and representative piece of cultural anthropology, as an enthralling narrative work, is or once it was popular—of the people. There is no other way." This market measure of artistic worth, leaving aside the question of whether stories are or ought to be "cultural anthropology," simply ignores art that makes us uncomfortable or art that fails to attract a large audience. Roberts says he used eight factors to select stories, including "readability and fun." Is readability measured by Flesch scales? What is "fun"? Is John Norman fun or horrific? "Expert opinion of professional authors of F&SF" seems OK, but "Hardcover fan enthusiasm for each story" is a bit suspect.

He does not define SF and its subgenres adequately. The succinct story headnotes are not much better, merely identifying the subgenre and giving some biographical information, but leaving historical narratives and judgments largely un glossed. While I believe the faults of inadequate explanation and unwarranted capitalization are serious enough to prevent this being used as a teaching text, I must admit to some fondness for Robert's selections. I also agree that the concluding group of lists is the most useful feature. They reveal many of the same strengths and weaknesses as the rest of the volume. I wish the list were more traditionally compiled, but I admire the broad range of Robert's reading.

[Bruce Beattie wrote the mostly descriptive text, while Peter Sands, the evaluative text below, both of which I edited for concision and to eliminate duplication. There are three in-print competitors to Roberts, listed below. All three were the subject of an essay review by Peter Sands in *SFRAR* 233 (June 1998; at www.sfra.org/sands.html). Hartwell and Wolf was discussed in detail in *SFRAR* 250 (Jan/Feb 2001). Le Guin and Attebery was the subject of a detailed, unsympathetic analysis by George Slusser, "The Politically Correct Book of Science Fiction: Le Guin's Norton Collection" in *Foundation* 60 (Spring 1994, p. 67-84).

Ursula Le Guin & Brian Attebery, eds. *The Norton Book of Science Fiction: North American Science Fiction, 1960-1990*. Norton, 1993. 67 stories, 864 p.; 129 page teacher's guide by Attebery. \$34.10 pa (says amazon.com).

David Hartwell & Milton Wolf, eds. *Visions of Wonder: The SFRA Anthology*. Tor, 1996. 32 stories, 9 essays. bibliographic essay. 798 p. \$24.95 pa

Applewhite Minyard, ed. *Decades of Science Fiction*. NTC Publishing Group, 1997. 557 p. + instructor manual. \$33.67 pa (amazon.com)]

NONFICTION REVIEW

THE COMPLETE WAR OF THE WORLDS: MARS' INVASION OF EARTH FROM H.G. WELLS TO ORSON WELLES

Neil Barron

Holmsten, Brian & Alex Lubertozzi, eds. *The Complete War of the Worlds: Mars' Invasion of Earth from H.G. Wells to Orson Welles*. Sourcebooks, Box 4410, Naperville, IL 60567-4410, April 2001. xiii + 202 p. + audio CD. \$39.95. 1-57071-714-1. Orders to 800-432-7444.

The fourth of Wells' scientific romances, *The War of the Worlds*, may be his best known because of the 1938 Halloween radio dramatization by Orson Welles and his Mercury Theatre of the Air. The program was estimated to have been heard by about six million people, of whom about one million were alarmed or terrified. Psychologist Hadley Cantril's account in his *The Invasion from Mars* (Princeton, 1940) is a fascinating case study, and the editors of the comprehensive overview draw upon it and upon stories in local and regional newspapers in the initial section preceding the Howard Koch script whose pages are bookended by quotes from listeners and other sources. A chapter discusses Welles' family and career, noting that by far his best known works were this broadcast and *Citizen Kane*, both created before he turned twenty-six.

A chapter places the novel and broadcast in historical context. Italian astronomer Schiaparelli's term for the dark lines on the surface of Mars, "canali" (channels), was mistranslated as canals, which implies intelligence. Percival Lowell's book, *Mars*, was published in 1895 and publicized the notion of intelligent Martians on a dying planet. Wells relied on these ideas, in the *fin de siècle* notion of a collapse of the moral order and a general social dissolution and the fear of a Continental invasion, a notion fueled by many future war novels of the late nineteenth century, notably George Chesney's *The Battle of Dorking*, 1871. Wells' own political views are implicit in the novel, which suggests to his fellow Brits how it might feel to be forcibly colonized by "intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic." Similar views were in the radio script, which transposed the action to the US, which had also been a colonial power in the Philippines and Latin America, and which was growing uneasy at the threat of impending war in Europe.

The editors summarize the 1835 moon hoax, which indicated a gullible readership, and discuss lesser-known sequels to the 1938 broadcast. A 1944 broadcast in Chile alarmed many citizens. Much worse was the one from Quito, Ecuador, in February 1949, when the newspaper building housing the broadcast studios was torched and the police and army had to quell the riots, which resulted in twenty deaths. In spite of an intensive promotional campaign, a 1968 update version broadcast in Buffalo caused four thousand people to phone police, newspapers, and radio/television stations, and a county civil defense unit was put on alert. Prior to the European release of *Independence Day* in 1996, a Spanish ad agency ran television ads for the film that simulated news bulletins, generating hundreds of telephone calls. The two Viking probes in the mid-70's did little to calm public fears, and photographs of a rock formation were interpreted by the tabloids as a face.

The reprinted novel includes the excellent illustrations by Warwick Goble from the nine-part 1897 serial in *Pearson's*, which, oddly, were omitted from the first British edition in 1898 but included in the first US edition later that year. Ben Bova, who wrote a 1992 novel titled *Mars*, contributes a useful sketch of the scientific Mars. The two-page bibliography lists many of the contemporary and later accounts of the radio show, including twenty-five Websites, but not much about the novel, such as the useful critical edition issued by Indiana University Press in 1993, edited by David Y. Hughes and Harry M. Geduld. (A review of Leon Stover's annotated edition will appear in an upcoming issue of the *Review*.)

An audio CD attached to the inside front cover includes James Calloway introducing the 1938 broadcast (long available on cassette, earlier on vinyl), next day's press conference with Welles, a radio interview with Wells and Welles, and excerpt from the Buffalo version, and an NBC interview with Welles in about 1978, seven years before his death. (The broadcast runs an hour; the other four pieces total fourteen minutes, including the narrative introductions.) For obvious reasons, including legal, Welles always feigned innocence and surprise. In his 1992 (posthumous) book of interview with Peter Bogdanovich, *This is Orson Welles*, Welles finally admitted the broadcast was intended to frighten listeners.

I'm surprised it took so long to put together an attractive package like this, well-designed, printed on coated stock, with well-selected photos, and reasonably priced. Strongly recommended to public and school libraries, which will have to keep an eye on the CD, and to universities with programs in media studies.

NONFICTION REVIEW

WHAT IF OUR WORLD IS THEIR HEAVEN? THE FINAL CONVERSATIONS OF PHILIP K. DICK

Andrew Butler

Lee, Gwen and Doris Elaine Sauter, eds. *What If Our World Is Their Heaven? The Final Conversations of Philip K. Dick*. Overlook Press, 386 West Broadway, Fourth Floor, New York, NY 10012-4302, March 2001. 204 p. \$26.95. 1-58567-009-X.

In January 1982 a young journalist, Gwen Lee, decided that the project that would make her name would be to interview Philip K. Dick, then resident in Fullerton. Dick had newly returned from the set of *Blade Runner*, which, as directed by Ridley Scott, seemed likely to make a big splash. A tie-in edition of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* was to be released; his quasi-mainstream novel *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* was at the publisher; and a new novel, *The Owl in the Daylight*, was being planned. What neither Dick nor Lee knew then, of course, was that just as they were joking about Dick's writing methods killing him, he would be dead less than two months later.

Here is a transcript of a series of conversations with Dick in a relatively upbeat mood, enthusiastic about the rushes and the special effects he'd seen, confident about the success of the film, and spinning off ideas for the new novel. A composer is fitted with a biochip containing the personality of an alien and starts writing music that is beyond his capabilities to compose, absorbing information from the musical world around him and beaming it back to the mother ship. It is a narrative glimpsed in other places, such as Gregg Rickman's *Philip K. Dick: In His Own Words* and in *In Pursuit of VALIS*.

While all this is interesting in itself, the decision to transcribe as-is reveals both the strengths and weaknesses of the book. The evasion, sidetracks, and repetitions give some idea of how much Dick lived in the present, being sincere at the time, and contradicted himself later. One conversation occurs twice in slightly different form, potentially showing this revisionism in process. The transcription also leads to some mistakes (Syd Mead is misspelled Sid Mead.), and the lack of annotation doesn't refer us to, say, Dick's attack on Ridley Scott in his local television listings magazine (discussed in Lawrence Sutin's *The Shifting Realities of Philip K. Dick: Selected Literary and Philosophical Writings*) or his feelings of being left out of the project.

The sharp focus is admirable, but the book lacks the narrative drive of Paul William's *Only Apparently Real* (1986) or Gregg Rickman's survey interview *In His Own Words* (second edition, 1988). Nor does it have the obsessive depth of Rickman's *The Last Testament* (1985), describing the mystical events of March 1974, which may have befallen Dick. And since that contains interview material *after* Lee's (February 1982), the book under review is surely mistitled.

If you already have all the aforementioned books, you'll probably want to get this anyway. I don't think it's a very good place to start, and its bibliography leaves out much of the posthumous fiction. But if you just fancy spending a few hours eavesdropping on Dick performing, then this is a pleasant read.

[Dick film buffs will be interested in the forthcoming version of the 1956 story, "Minority Report," starring Tom Cruise and directed by Stephen Spielberg, which began filming in March 2001. — Ed.]

NONFICTION REVIEW

AT MILLENNIUM'S END: NEW ESSAYS ON THE WORK OF KURT VONNEGUT

Philip Kaveny

Boon, Kevin A., ed. *At Millennium's End: New Essays on the Work of Kurt Vonnegut*. SUNY Press, 90 State Street, Suite 700, Albany, NY 12207, March 2001. xii + 204 p. \$54.50. 0-7914-4929-7; \$17.95, trade paper, 0-7914-4930-0. Orders to 800-666-2211.

Boon (Penn State's Mont Alto campus) assembles eleven essays to enhance our understanding of Vonnegut's place in both popular consciousness and in academe. In his 700-word introduction, Vonnegut described himself as a moralist in the Twain mold and displays his stylistic skills, little evident in the prose of the academic contributors. The tone here is more celebratory than critical, as the subject's literary career nears its end. Contrast the tone of the similar collections edited by Marc Leeds and Peter J. Reed in *Kurt Vonnegut: Images and Representations* (Greenwood, 2000, 198 p., \$55) and their 1996 Greenwood collection, *The Vonnegut Chronicles*.

Boon and David Pringle's essay on films based on Vonnegut's fictions compares cinematic and literary audience expectations and how they impact the films' success or failure. Long-time Vonnegut scholar Jerome Klinkowitz's essay shows how Vonnegut maintained contact with his publics over a long career. (I judge Klinkowitz's *Vonnegut in Fact: The Public Spokesman of Personal Fiction*, 1998, the best monograph to date.) Lawrence Broer illuminates Vonnegut's ability to parody

and deconstructs Hemingway's notion of the masculine and the heroic. Hartley Spat shows the continuities between the earlier and later works and resists attempts at periodizing his subject.

Vonnegut remains a popular subject for papers and books (my recent search of the MLA database revealed about four hundred items, four times that for Heinlein). Tom Shippey suggested in his recent study of Tolkien that it was useful to group Vonnegut, Tolkien, Orwell, Le Guin, and C. S. Lewis together as authors who used the fantastic to confront the darkest aspects of the twentieth century. A better than average survey of Vonnegut's place in modern literature and recommended for larger academic libraries.

NONFICTION REVIEW

COMMUNITIES OF THE HEART: THE RHETORIC OF MYTH IN THE FICTION OF URSULA K. LE GUIN

Betsy P. Harfst

Rochelle, Warren G. *Communities of the Heart: The Rhetoric of Myth in the Fiction of Ursula K. Le Guin*. Liverpool University Press, 4 Cambridge Street, Liverpool L69 7ZU, England, January 2001. xii + 195 p. £32.95. 0-85323-876-6; £15.95 trade paper, 0-85323-886-3. North American orders to ISBS, 800-944-6196, \$54.95 and \$26.95.

In this study, derived from a doctoral thesis and excerpted in *Extrapolation*, Rochelle examines how Le Guin reimagines and subverts Jung's and Campbell's myths of the hero and the quest, and the myth of utopia, as a way of showing the importance of personally understanding what it means to be human and feminine. He asserts that her purpose is instructive social criticism accomplished through effective rhetorical persuasion. It's this rhetorical usage of myth that he explores.

Rochelle believes that Le Guin's fiction is a literature of ideas. In its proper historical and sociocultural context, it is rooted in the American romantic/pragmatic rhetoric of Emerson, Thoreau, and Dewey. It's a persuasive technique that argues for value to be given to the subjective, the personal, the small, and the feminine.

He initially defines his basic terms and concepts: sign, language as story, language as myth, religious and philosophical forms of myth, functions of myth, the collective unconscious and archetypal images and their specific elements before he applies them to Le Guin's fiction. Later chapters amplify the definitions. One describes the phases of the monomyth and how Le Guin's emerging feminist thought reshaped some of the generic conventions in the tale of the hero and the quest in *The Dispossessed* and the Earthsea cycle. Another, with the book's title, considers the central metaphors, symbols, and mythic patterns that Le Guin uses repeatedly so that they become rhetorical in themselves, such as community and connection.

Rochelle's thesis will generate thoughtful reflection and discussion of current social trends in modern society and whether his views on the changes in Le Guin's perspective and personal philosophy are as socially critical as he argues. The book is thoroughly documented and draws on and supplements the 1984 study by James Bittner, *Approaches to the Fiction of Ursula K. Le Guin*. University libraries should consider.

NONFICTION REVIEW

EXPLORING C. S. LEWIS'S THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA

Rebecca Thomas Ankey

Beetz, Kirk H. *Exploring C. S. Lewis's The Chronicles of Narnia*. Beacham Publishing, Box 830, Osprey, FL 34229, February 2001. xi + 625 p. \$45. 0-933833-63-6; \$16.95, trade paper, 0-933833-58-X.

This second in a series of sourcebooks helps children (primarily) explore the sources and themes of selected works. It was preceded by one devoted to Harry Potter (2000) and will be followed by one devoted to the Oz books. Beetz provides biographical, theological, mythological, and historical background material and explores the genesis and development of Narnia. He gives a chapter each to the foods, characters, geography, and each separate book in the series, concluding with bibliographies for young and adult readers, including Internet resources.

The helpful aspects include Beetz's obvious love for the series and his exploration of the Norse and Greco-Roman mythologies that Lewis loved. He also provides much information about the Christian/Biblical parallels and worldview implicit in the stories. The biography and history are helpful in putting the chronologies in context, especially for readers not already familiar with Lewis and/or the mythologies. He writes in a amiable, first-person style.

Less helpful and even problematic are the time lines that muddle the distinction between the history of World War II included in the series and the history of the world Lewis was living in, which might confuse children. The prose is

sometimes muddy, and misspellings (Caldron for Cauldron, Reepicheep as Reepicheek) should have been caught.

Beetz's emphasis on Lewis' theology results in a tendency to allegorize, which limits the imaginative possibilities.

Beetz provides many answers, but perhaps he is most valuable when he suggests questions still remaining, such as how the chronicles portray the problem of evil. Taken with a pinch of critical thinking, Beetz's survey will broaden the reader's understanding of Lewis' achievement.

FICTION REVIEW

ZOLLOCCO: A NOVEL OF ANOTHER UNIVERSE

Raymond T. Anderson

Cynthia Joyce Clay. *Zolocco: A Novel of Another Universe*. Connecticut: Bookbooters Press, 2000. 242 pages. Trade paperback. ISBN 1-931297-07-X.

A solar system of sentient forest worlds, some of which have chosen to host human refugees from across the galaxy, is the setting for *Zolocco*, a comedic science-fiction fantasy in which a human woman finds herself transported from a dying Earth to the forest world of Ipernia, a place where plants and trees walk and forest life behaves as a collective consciousness. Hunted for her value as an exotic pet by an interplanetary corporation, she travels between cities and worlds, serving as a priestess of the forests. Interspersed with the adventures of the priestess are letters describing the ruination of the earth and the attempts to save it. Thus, *Zolocco* sets eco-feminism within the star-and-planet journeying type of science fiction, while exploring the union of technology and nature through a religious theme of nature-wise mysticism.

As a new author, Clay has only one other book available, a collection of short stories called *New Myths of the Feminine Divine*. As the title of the collection suggests, Clay's exploration of feminism is in the area of spirituality. The context of Clay's work then differs markedly from such feminist science fiction authors as Ursula LeGuin, whose concerns are the social implications of gender roles. While Clay's female characters engage in all occupations from housewives to professors to ship captains, it is not their occupations that are of concern but how their occupations are an expression of their ethos, spirituality, or religious nature. The feminist question Clay poses is not LeGuin's of how gender roles may be broadened but how divinity is expressed through the feminine.

The feminist context of women as enslaved creatures, a theme of Octavia Butler's work and of Margaret Atwood's in *The Handmaid's Tale*, also appears in Clay's novel where the priestess is hunted down by the corporation to be sold as an exotic pet. Yet, unlike Butler's and Atwood's tales in which women are enslaved to be controlled as a needed reproductive technology, Clay's female protagonist is to be enslaved because she represents a potent divine force that enslavement will diminish.

Zolocco also differs from the "separatist paradigm" of some feminist science fiction, such as Pamela Sargent's *The Shore of Women*, Joan Slonczewski's *A Door Into Ocean*, Sheri Tepper's *The Gate to Women's*, and Charlotte Gilman's *Herland*. The separatist science fiction tends to regard men as so basically dangerously aggressive and uncontrollable that a utopia must be devoid of them. *Zolocco*, in contrast, does not treat men as a problem to be gotten rid of, but as being more properly oriented towards the service of women and the values associated with women.

As a science-fiction novel that has nature as a fundamental element, *Zolocco* can be placed in the context of those works of speculative fiction which center upon a forest, such as the stories in the anthology *Enchanted Forests*. Stories about forests frequently characterize the forest as a conscious entity, either malevolent or benevolent. Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis* trilogy also features nature. However, in *The Xenogenesis* trilogy, nature is not a character, an independent being with its own will; nature is separate from intelligent life and so is completely disposable to the needs of intelligent life. *Zolocco*, following the notion of forest as sentient, contradicts *The Xenogenesis* trilogy in its insistence that human life is part of natural life and that the sickness and death of nature result in the sickness and death of human life.

Zolocco is also to be placed in the context of speculative fiction by women that takes religion as a subject matter. On the one hand, there are the *Archangel* novels of Sharon Shinn, where the motifs are all Old Testament and the characters worship a spaceship, thinking it is a god; and on the other hand, there is Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon* in which a Pagan Goddess religion holds the truth about the Holy Grail. *Zolocco* expresses neither a futuristic form of Christianity as in Shinn's books, nor a rebellious "older" religion as in *The Mists of Avalon*. For all the priests and priestesses, divinely attuned sorceresses, and ritualistic customs of the societies, *Zolocco's* religiousness or spirituality is non-sectarian with very few mentions of beliefs and a disavowal of dogma.

The scholarly and academic potential of Cynthia Joyce Clay's *Zolocco: A Novel of Another Universe* lies in three areas. First, *Zolocco* is a departure from much of feminist speculative fiction in its thrust that the spiritual nature of women must be freed for a utopian society to arise, not the issues of gender roles and women as enslaved reproductive technologies that feminists usually address as the reason for society's ills. Second, *Zolocco* resurrects the Romantics' notion that nature is a living spirit, links that notion to women by making the heroine a powerful priestess because she is "a forest creature," and extends

the notion to assert that the survival of humanity is dependent upon understanding of and communion with nature. Third, *Zolocco* has aesthetic value. There is attention to the beauties of the English language, craftsmanship in the depiction of different types of scenes through different language styles, and a careful shaping of pacing. *Zolocco: A Novel of Another Universe* by Cynthia Joyce Clay can be studied as a fine literary piece, as new expression of feminist thought, and as response to those science fiction works that view men, nature, or parts of nature as disposable.

FICTION REVIEW

PASSAGE

Janice M. Bostad

Willis, Connie. *Passage*. New York: Bantam Books, 2001. 608 p. \$23.95. Trade cloth. ISBN 0553111248.

In a long and sometimes ponderous book, Willis links into not one but two subjects of great popular interest: the Titanic and Near Death Experiences (or Near Afterlife Experiences). As a medical mystery, in fact, it is reminiscent of books like *Coma* by Robin Cook. This alone would sustain a reader's interest in a novel which goes over the same ground (or water) a number of times, incorporating research on NDE's with research on the Titanic disaster. Dr. Joanna Lander, clinical psychologist, is the protagonist. Her troubles occur mostly because she is pursued by two men, but not as a romantic attachment (that is hinted at later). The first is Maurice Mandrake who wants her to join him in his research with patients in Mercy General, the hospital in which they all work. Joanna does a great many strange things in order to escape his pestering. From the beginning of the book, she is fleeing his attempts to enlist her on his side of the NDE debates. It is clear that she finds his methodology to be suspect AND to interfere with her more clinical approach with NDE patients. This isn't always very difficult as Mercy General was built over generations and getting from one floor to another is a test of one's skill. In fact, the obscurity of locations segue's nicely into the passage to an NDE.

The second is Dr. Richard Wright, a neurologist who has secured funding to make brain scans of NDE's, which he induces with a drug. Other characters, those who come for the study, those who work in the hospital (like Joanna's best friend Vielle), and those who are patients, provide a rich background, including comedy and drama, to Joanna's research. Many of the subjects are unsuitable, since they have been polluted by Dr. Mandrake or his books. Others, due to some unacknowledged terrible experience during their NDE, drop out. As the pool of reliable subjects gets depleted (Joanna and Dr. Wright find out many of the subjects who volunteered for the study have hidden agendas), they decide that Joanna should be a subject. She takes up the challenge and becomes obsessed with it.

In each successive repetition of an induced NDE, Joanna herself comes through a dark passage and onto the Titanic just as it has hit the iceberg. While in this drug-induced state, she somehow has enough presence of mind to carry out research assignments by walking to different parts of the sinking ship and observing others she finds there. The novel is set up, in fact, to follow the pathways of researchers as they work on a mystery. She parallels this "drug induced research" with clues about the Titanic that might not be common knowledge, trying to determine if she is "really there" and why. Even after Joanna is no longer able to help (and I won't tell you why, because that would spoil the plot), Dr. Wright and several of her friends follow the clues in an attempt to understand what constitutes a near death experience. The success of their research is exemplified in their ability to save the life of a young girl, Maisie, who has to wait a little too long for a heart transplant.

The novel has plenty of action and could more easily be classified as a medical mystery than a science fiction novel. I think Joanna and Dr. Wright would agree with me that one should not take her conclusions as medical fact but as a more solid possibility than some of the stories of bright lights, angels, and life reviews that we read about in the popular press. The many twists of plot and introduction of humorous characters offset the repetitious NDE's and make this novel an entertaining, if drawn-out, reading experience.

FICTION REVIEW

THE EXCHANGE, BY NICHOLAS SPOLENDER, ILLUSTRATED BY LOUIS VERDEN

Michael Levy

VanderMeer, Jeff. *The Exchange, by Nicholas Spolender, illustrated by Louis Verden*, illustrated by Eric Schaller. Tallahassee, FL: Hoegbotton & Sons, 2001. unpaginated, chapbook. Regular edition, in an elegant envelope with squid stamp, and an Appoggiatura sheet, \$6.99 post paid. U.S.; \$7.99 postpaid foreign orders. A very strange Deluxe Limited Signed edition is also available for \$20.00. For details on both editions visit www.vandermeer.redsine.com.

Some members of the SFRA may be familiar with Jeff VanderMeer as one of the better reviewers writing for the *NY Review of SF*. He is also, an incredibly talented creator of fantasy short stories and metafiction, many of them set in the imaginary city of Ambergris. Last year his Ambergris tale *The Transformation of Martin Lake* won the World Fantasy Award. Other works in the series include the magnificent novella *Dradin in Love* and the wonderfully titled *Hoegbotton Guide to the Early History of Ambergris, by Duncan Shriek*. VanderMeer's latest offering, *The Exchange, by Nicholas Spolender, illustrated by Louis Verden*, features exquisite illustrations by Eric Schaller which strongly suggest the influence of art nouveau and Aubrey Beardsley. The story concerns a loving, elderly couple who, in honor of the Festival of the Freshwater Squid, a celebration that features prominently in several of VanderMeer's Ambergris stories, first share a dinner of salad and seafood (the latter still struggling on their plates), and then exchange finely-wrapped and very strange gifts. The volume concludes with biographies of the non-existent Spolender and Verden, as well as a series of advertisements for such things as Hoegbotton Safe Houses, Profal's Memory Capsules, The Boat Bound Psychiatrists, and more than a dozen Hoegbotton Guides, only one of which, the aforementioned *Early History*, actually exists. At its best VanderMeer's work calls to mind the dry wit of both Saki and Lord Dunsany, though with a decidedly postmodern twist. This is wonderful stuff for connoisseurs of sophisticated and somewhat horrific whimsy.

FICTION REVIEW

THE FRESCO

Robin Anne Reid

Tepper, Sheri S. *The Fresco*. New York: EOS/HarperCollins, 2000. 406 pages. \$24.00. Hardcover. ISBN: 0-380-97879-2.

Tepper's latest novel is feminist speculative fiction, with a strong eco-feminist elements, and develops themes Tepper has been exploring for some time: the oppression women face in patriarchal cultures and the exploitation of the natural world which has led extinction of other species. Some differences, which may signal new developments, especially with regard to ethnicity, seem important to note.

Benita Alvarez-Shipton is notable among Tepper's many strong protagonists for being Mexican-American and working-class. Nearly forty, struggling with the question of how to leave an abusive husband now that her children are in college, she meets two aliens, representatives from the Pistach people, who ask her to serve as Intermediary to help them make contact with human beings. The complexities of Mexican-American and Hispanic identity are an important part of the novel. *The Fresco* also develops an alien's point of view, through the device of a diary written by Chiddy, one of the Pistach, for Benita. The novel deals with the alien perspective in the same way that *Family Tree* does.

The Fresco is a first-contact novel, one set in the near-future. While the actual date of the action is not clearly identified, characters refer to political events during the "nineties," clearly the 1990s; the described technology and lifestyles are similar to those of the United States in 2000. The American space program has dispatched exploratory devices beyond the solar system, but have not colonized other planets. Other species have become aware of life on Earth, and the status of Earth must be determined with regard to its relationship with the galactic Confederation Chiddy and Vess represent. They are athyci, defined as those who design "remedies for societies, including our own, that [do] not work well" (135).

The Pistach have sent representatives to help Earth achieve "Tassifoduma," translated as "Neighborliness." If Earth cannot achieve this standard, membership in the Confederation will be denied. Not achieving membership means isolation on the home planet and that certain predator races will be allowed to hunt at will on the planet although this information is revealed until late in the novel. "Neighborliness" means as having "a society in which almost all individuals achieve contentment," and "not upsetting people" (167-68). When challenged to prove their power, the Pistach first cause Jerusalem to disappear until the political conflicts over it cease, and then cause all women in Afghanistan, under the rule of the Taliban, to appear as bald, ugly and sexless. Since no man could lust after them, they can have freedom, which, the Pistach promise, will

result in the women returning to their original appearance. Any violent act against one of the women in Afghanistan is turned against the aggressor.

The Pistach are more technologically advanced than any nation on Earth, but Tepper's main narrative focus is on ethical behavior on a planetary level. The fact that the Pistach athyci (who are non-gendered members of their species, which look like large insects, although they can morph into different forms) choose a working-class Mexican-American woman as their Intermediary proves to be a problem for all the male politicians.

However the Pistach are not perfect. A crisis occurs at Pistach when Benita is visiting. The sacred text, The Fresco, upon which the Pistach base their ethical imperatives, is cleaned by a group of revolutionaries. The revolutionaries, who turn out to have been helped by certain predator races, reveal through cleaning that The Fresco proves the Pistach past as including colonial oppression of conquered subject races. When the true nature of The Fresco is revealed, the Pistach start to withdraw from the process of bringing Earth into the Confederation. Benita is the one who thinks of the solution, restoring The Fresco to the way an early commentator described it, which restores the Pistach to their sense of ethical behavior.

This novel would be interesting to pair with other first-contact stories, films, or television shows, especially those which assume that humans will always be the advanced species in space, or those in which insectoid aliens are assumed to be monsters. Tepper's novel is part of the recent trend in sf in which an "alien" and often critical point of view is part of the story. Chiddy's diary, written for Benita but not given to her until late in the novel, describes Pistach culture, family structure (inceptor, receptor and nootch), gender (most individuals seem to be neuter, with only inceptors and receptors being active sexually, although individuals can opt out of the sexualized categories later on), Pistach history, and Confederation politics. His journal reveals a good deal about the values of Neighborliness: one of the greatest error is to cause the extinction of another species (152).

Tepper's themes would work well with feminist, gender, and postcolonial approaches. The issue of women's oppression informs the novel. When the Secretary of State (who is female) asks Benita whether or not she thinks a mark on people's hand which appears when a questionnaire distributed by the Pistach has been filled out infringes on individual liberty, Benita says no. Instead, Benita tells her that Bert (her husband) apparently had the liberty to abuse her, drive drunk, and kill people, without any penalty, and a judge had the liberty to jail Benita when she protested his sentence assigning Bert to house arrest. As a result, Benita argues, she had no liberty and nobody would defend her. Chiddy, in his journal, notes his belief: that "predators are those who most often assert absolute rights to personal freedom"(151). By the end of the novel, Benita is free of her abusive marriage and in a happy (but surprising) relationship as well as continuing to work as the Intermediary. Her husband has been helped to change by the new social policies that have replaced the old system where abused women often die at the hands of their husbands.

The Pistach biological structure strongly contrasts with human/mammal patterns. The Pistach still have a hierarchical status, but gender does not determine it; however, at one point, members of a Congressional committee do not seem to be able to accept that an individual can lack gender and decide that the Pistach athyci must be gay. Finally, postcolonial questions about what happens when a culture meets a more technologically advanced one can be applied: the Pistach choose the United States as the first culture to contact because they say its culture is both what they define as "tasty" or "infective" (defined by other cultures as "imperialism"), and is inclusive and tolerant (especially with regard to language and religion) than limiting or intolerant. The question of how the Pistach "help" change Earth cultures is directly connected to postcolonial questions.

FICTION REVIEW

QUARTET: FOUR TALES FROM THE CROSSROADS

Matthew Wolf-Meyer

Martin, George R. R. *Quartet: Four Tales from the Crossroads*. Framingham, MA: NESFA, 2001. 448 pages. \$25.00. Cloth. ISBN: 1-886778-31-0.

As the title implies, *Quartet* is a collection of four of George R. R. Martin's earlier works, two of them previously unpublished, the other two previously uncollected. "The Skin Trade" and "Blood of the Dragon", both previously published, are award winning works, the former a horror story, the latter high fantasy; "Black and White and Red All Over", the initial selection in the collection, is an unfinished historical novel regarding Jack the Ripper's exploits in New York around the end of the nineteenth century; the most interesting piece in the collection is the script for the unproduced television show, "Starport." Introducing the collection is a short piece by long time Martin collaborator, Melinda Snodgrass, and Martin introduces each of the selections with brief biographical notes, all of which are rather interesting as he plots his transition from novelist to screenwriter to novelist again, spanning nearly a decade. The collection, for both Martin enthusiasts and novices alike, holds quite a bit of worth, although "Black and White and Red All Over" provides a bit of a barrier to the rest of the collection.

While interesting, Martin's historical recreation of the Ripper's supposed exploits in New York, based in part on the mysterious, and historically accurate, death of a prostitute by the name of Old Shakespeare in emulation of Jack the Ripper is rather difficult to overcome, possibly because the reader knows that the novel, and the mystery, remain unfinished. Although entertaining, and well crafted, simply knowing that the mystery has no solution, like Charles Dickens's *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, makes intellectual investment in the narrative and the characters rather difficult. If the novel is ever completed, it will surely stand with the best of Ripper fiction, alongside such works as Alan Moore's *From Hell* (2000), as well as among the best of Martin's own work.

Martin's werewolf novella, "The Skin Trade", is the most engaging of the collection's work: It's a traditional page-turner horror novella, with the pacing of a well-plotted action film. The characters are interesting, the mystery well constructed, if not slightly transparent, and Martin handles lycanthropy with aplomb. Like the equally well-plotted "Blood of the Dragon", a novella that factors in to Martin's high fantasy opus, *A Song of Fire and Ice*, which won a Hugo for best novella in 1997, "The Skin Trade" is a wonderful read for both Martin fans and not. But having both been previously published, it is the script for "Starport" that makes this collection worth owning.

As Martin details in his introduction to the 168-page script, which comprises the most space of any of the selections in the collection, "Starport" was the proposed SF series to replace *Alien Nation* on Fox in the early 1990's. Explicitly a cop drama, much like *Hill Street Blues*, but more in line with Alan Moore's recent *Top 10* comic book series, "Starport" concerns a near-future Chicago police department that concerns themselves with the vast influx of alien races that have begun trade with Earth, with Chicago acting as one of the three "starports" on Earth to facilitate such. The cast is an ensemble of characters, most of which are human police officers and detectives, but accentuated with alien diplomats, merchants, and workers. The sheer inventiveness of the fictional world that Martin created in "Starport" is amazing, more so than his carefully constructed alter-Earth in the *Wild Cards* series, and while reading the script, it's hard not to mourn the loss of such an amazing entry into SF television. Engaging, funny, intelligent, the only aspect of "Starport" that is a little trying is the Klingon-esque Angels that play alien foils to the human cops with their arcane honor based culture. But "Starport" is an amazing piece of work, and hopefully one day Fox will realize their loss. But until then, at least "Starport" is published, alongside some other outstanding work from Martin's most important phases of development.

FICTION REVIEW

**THE DREAMTHIEF'S DAUGHTER:
A TALE OF THE ALBINO**

Warren G. Rochelle

Moorcock, Michael. *The Dreamthief's Daughter: A Tale of the Albino*. New York: Warner Books, 2001. 343 pages. \$24.95. Cloth. ISBN: 0-446-5261-5

Moorcock fans will recognize the familiar white faces and "strange ruby eyes" of *The Dreamthief's Daughter's* heroes, Elric, the Eternal Champion, "the last Sorcerer Emperor of Melniboné," and Ulric von Bek, "the last Graf von Bek." Both are albinos, or rather *The Albino*, Ulric manifested in the reality of Nazi Germany and Elric, that of Tanelorn, the Eternal City—all of which is contained within the Multiverse. The plot is familiar. The Beks, over the centuries, have been the guardians of the Raven Sword, or Raven Brand, a "queerly wrought old longsword inscribed with mysterious runic verses," said to have "turned the tide at Roncesvalles . . ." (3). And the family, according to legend, once kept the Holy Grail, "a golden bowl that had the properties of glass and metals combined," a treasure now lost (28). Ulric, taught the art of swordfighting by his old tutor, "old von Ausch, black, shrunken, and gnarled," treasures the sword, whose "noble destiny," Ulric believes, is to "fight for the ultimate—against oblivion" (3). The Nazis, seeing Christianity as a faith for the weak, are trying to revive Norse myth and to regain the power of such treasures for the Third Reich. Ulric's cousin, Gaynor von Minct, now an SS captain, comes for the sword, which, for the Nazis, belongs to Germany, "a symbol of [the country's] ancient power and valor" (29).

Ulric refuses, and so the battle begins, fought in 1940's Germany, in Tanelorn the Eternal City, in the city of Mu Ooria, in the "Mittelmarch, the borderlands between the human world and Faery"—in many of the "infinite realities of the Multiverse" (112). Ulric fights with Elric, his otherworld avatar, wielder of an equally powerful, semi-sentient sword, the Stormbringer, and at times they inhabit the same white flesh. They fight Gaynor the Damned, whose avatars have combined for "considerably greater power," to stop him from controlling the swords and eventually the Grail, as he "[manipulates] space, time, Chaos, and Law," coming perilously close to destroying the entire Multiverse. The champions do not fight alone—their chief companion is Oona, Elric's albino daughter, and the daughter of a dreamthief, "a famous one" who

stole “some mighty dreams” (133).

Moorcock is working with both popular and cultural mythology and history here. That Elric and Ulric are each other’s doppelgangers, or avatars, makes them akin to Campbell’s thousand-faced hero. Their quest is nothing less than saving the “fundamental fabric of existence,” as the novel’s controlling theme is the premier one of fantasy: the struggle between good and evil, here played on both a local scale, Germany and Britain, and a cosmic scale, the Multiverse. Moorcock takes advantage of the almost mythic status of the Nazis as evil incarnate, weaving into this sword-and-sorcery tale such actual historic events as Hess’s mysterious 1941 flight to Scotland, and the Battle of Britain (“unexpectedly won” by England—in this tale with the aid of powerful dragons and champions). Hess, Hitler, and other highly ranked Nazis, are part of the climatic fight for possession of the Grail (found hidden in Ulric’s ancestral home). Moorcock, in an echo of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, also takes advantage of the Nazis’ fascination with Nordic and Teutonic myth. Indiana Jones, who is nothing, if not a mythic hero, contending with various evils in his storied career, could be said to be another avatar of the Eternal Champion. The story itself is cinematic: zooming in to the battles, the intense confrontations, the encounters between characters, and the zooming out to the Multiverse, “Its great lattice [filling] all the myriad dimensions, its branches stretched into infinity. And its light shone down on this little cottage” (where Elric learns Oona is his daughter) (190).

Moorcock is again his own mythology, that of the Eternal Champion, and the von Beks, and this story brings them together, as logically it seems they should be, into one tale of an ongoing mythos, which Moorcock has been creating, evolving, imagining, and reimagining since the early 1960’s. How then, does this new tale, this new myth fit into the mythos? Are Elric, and his Nazi-era avatar as Elric is described *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*: “a direct parody of Conan; he is an albino weakling, introspective, haunted, treacherous, and the tool of his own soul-drinking sword, Stormbringer” (658)? Does Elric/Ulric redeem his/themselves for the treachery (in another tale) that brings down Melnibone? Is this Moorcock’s re-examination of this character and what he represents? Is Moorcock again, as *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* asserts, questioning the nature of the hero, the relationship of the hero to their world, worlds (and lives) which the hero “desperately wish to escape” (657)?

The Dreamthief’s Daughter can be read as straight sword-and-sorcery, as another tale of the Eternal Champion. It can be read as a reimagining of the story of the Hero and the Quest, Joseph Campbell’s Monomyth. It can be read as something of a warning against the evil of the Nazis—a warning that seems obvious enough, but only if one ignores the genocides that have occurred since World War II. As is almost all heroic fantasy—sword-and-sorcery—the novel is a tale of the struggle of Good versus Evil, a struggle that seems habitual to humankind. I am not a big fan of sword-and-sorcery (a term, which should be noted, was coined, in 1961, by Fritz Leiber, at Moorcock’s request). I have not read much Moorcock, and this is my first tale of the Eternal Champion. But given the various questions and ideas that can be gleaned from the story, it would seem that this is a must for Moorcock’s fans and scholars, and certainly to be considered by any student of fantasy.

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FICTION REVIEW

THE YEAR’S BEST SCIENCE FICTION: SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL COLLECTION

Philip E. Smith

Dozois, Gardner, ed. *The Year’s Best Science Fiction: Seventeenth Annual Collection*. New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2000. 625 pages. Trade paper. \$17.95. ISBN: 0-312-26417-8.

Gardner Dozois’ *Seventeenth Annual Collection* includes twenty-seven stories published in 1999, together with the editor’s essay of more than forty pages summarizing the year’s work in SF publishing, video, and film; listing the winners of annual awards; and providing brief obituaries for significant figures in the field who died during the year. Dozois’ large-scale trade-size volumes are the most comprehensive annual anthologies of SF short stories, rivaled for excellence only by David Hartwell’s shorter and smaller (mass-market size) *Year’s Best SF* series. Both series are distinguished for their editors’ outstanding selections of short-form SF, often with significant differences between them, and SFRA members should find that both are well suited for assignment in SF classes as compendiums of recent work in the field.

It would be almost impossible not to find several stories in Dozois’ *Seventeenth Annual Collection*, which would support any instructor’s approaches to teaching science fiction. For example, there are several stories that examine the

question of what constitutes human identity in futures where technology allows replication. David Marusek's "The Wedding Album" considers the possibilities and foibles of human replication through virtual-reality simulacra: a couple might turn the events of their life, for example their wedding, into a series of VR videos featuring "sims" of themselves. Told from the points-of-view of sims and reals, the story twists expectations about what constitutes "real" identity and its survival in flesh or digital form. It would pair nicely with Greg Egan's "Border Guards," a story of "immortals" who have downloaded the essentials of a personality into transferable "jewels" which can be preserved past the death of ordinary flesh. But does the extension of life prevent new friendships? And is there a difference between those who remember death's dominion and those newer immortals whose lives have been led over the border of immortality? Both of these stories lead to the questions raised in Walter Jon Williams' "Daddy's World," an excellent story reminiscent of Neal Stephenson's *The Diamond Age* in its use of VR game-realms for education, but also one which is congruent with the premises of the Marusek and Egan stories because it imagines that humans might have their brains downloaded into these realities. The cluster can be extended with Sean Williams' "Evermore," which considers what might happen to computerized engrams of original human intelligences after centuries aboard a lost and drifting slower-than-light speed starship. Should they alter the core program that preserves them as unchanging, if incomplete, copies of their human originals? Or should they attempt and accept change which might lead to salvation, or to suicide? There are further thematic connections with Tanith Lee's beautifully crafted "The Sky-Green Blues," which concentrates upon the point-of-view character, a reporter named Frances, sent to an exotic jungle planet enduring a revolution to interview a famous author. The question of identity emerges with a Pirandellian twist when she discovers that she may be connected to the author in ways that realize his imagination and not hers. Any or all of the stories in this cluster might be taught in conjunction with classic novels or stories by writers like Philip K. Dick, Damon Knight, or Alfred Bester.

Dozois' anthology includes four other clusters suitable for teaching. First, Karl Schroeder's "The Dragon of Pripyat" and M. John Harrison's "Suicide Coast" imagine the possibilities for paraplegics to extend their experiences through mental control of machines or game-like virtual realities. Second, three time-travel stories, Michael Swanwick's "Scherzo with Tyrannosaur," Robert Grossbach's "Of Scorned Women and Causal Loops," and Kage Baker's "Son Observe the Time," take different perspectives on the paradoxes and possibilities of visiting the past. A third cluster of stories concerns the possibilities for survival after catastrophic environmental changes caused by humans. Stephen Baxter's "People Came from Earth" describes life on the moon after a nanoweapon has consumed every scrap of worked metal; Paul J. McAuley's "How We Lost the Moon, a True Story by Frank W. Allen" is an Allen Steelesque first-person procedural detailing the progress of what begins as a hydrogen-atom-sized black hole accidentally created at a fusion reactor on the moon's far side; Kim Stanley Robinson's "A Martian Romance" provides a coda to his Mars trilogy in which humans from several generations confront the failure (or is it?) of the terraforming program.

The fourth cluster suitable for teaching centers around initiation into adulthood. Eleanor Arnason's "Dapple: a *Hwarbath* Historical Romance" is set in her *Ring of Swords* universe but this self-contained story evocatively focuses on the thematics of gender in recounting a young woman's dramatic (in more than one sense) coming of age. Sage Walker's darkly lyrical "Hunting Mother" imagines another kind of coming-of-age ceremony on a generation starship on which humans experiment with animal adaptations reminiscent of Wells' *Island of Dr. Moreau*. Geoff Ryman's "Everywhere" uses first-person point of view and some Newcastle dialect quite effectively to suggest how a boy deals with the death of his grandfather and with the secular-scientific possibility of transcending death.

Finally, there are excellent single stories that could be paired or clustered with other texts in an SF course. Robert Reed's "Winemaster" takes the themes of Sturgeon's "Microcosmic God" and Bear's *Blood Music* and mixes them inventively with an escape-from-dystopia plot. Charles Sheffield's "Phallicide" takes up the themes of genetic research and polygamous fundamentalism in a near-future procedural story with an appropriately Tiptreesque outcome.

Dozois' anthology is recommended for individual and institutional libraries and for adoption by teachers.

FICTION REVIEW

Calculating God

Janice M. Bogstad

Sawyer, Robert J. *Calculating God*. New York: TOR Books, June, 2000. 334 pages. Cloth, \$23.95. ISBN: 0-312-86713-1.

Sawyer's tortured hero in *Calculating God* provides the hungry reader with self-searching moral and philosophical speculation, as well as solidly grounded scientific theory that characterizes good hard-science science fiction. The plot centers around alien first-contact, but this time, the aliens, two varieties, have come to earth to add evidence to their proof of the existence of god and it is to the paleontologists that they appear first. This forms a bit of luck for an otherwise downtrodden Thomas Jericho, head paleontologist at the Royal Ontario Natural History museum in Toronto. At the time he meets the

first alien, Hollus, a big sphere with multiple, multi-function legs, he is working for a museum director who does not accept his 'educational' view of a museum's function and he is dying of cancer. His status is immensely increased and he is given a chance to see the galaxy before he dies because Hollus is on 'his' side of the fight for the preservation of real scientific information in museums instead of media-hype types of productions.

Now I am not a great fan of science fiction as a religious argument, but I have to agree whole-heartedly with Thomas' position of a number of issues, most especially on the lamentable direction, which natural history museums seem to be taking. The majesty, scope, philosophical depth, and yes, even the tantalizing mystery of science is being leached out of museums, replaced by the representation of knowledge as if it were sound bites and simple tricks. At the last world science-fiction convention, I was pleased to accompany some friends and their two boys (7 and 10), to the Chicago Natural History Museum. I have loved this museum passionately since my first visits as a child (hard to arrange, because we lived 7 hours away in Northern Wisconsin and my family had lots of kids and never had much money). I LOVE the dinosaurs and the dinosaur murals and the dioramas of the geologic ages, but guess what? They're mostly gone, replaced by simple 'manipulables' advertised by geologic history videos that make geology seem like a television news program. They're hideous. The kids battle with each other to play with the toys and mostly end up getting in fights and certainly don't learn anything from it. This tragic management position is reflected in *Calculating God*, and its long-term effects on knowledge-horizons of children are explored.

So Sawyer's book, which united geology and cosmology, was a refreshing glimpse of what we have lost in our public pursuit of glitz over knowledge. It doesn't hurt that the aliens are 'really' alien, that there is a cosmological crisis which is averted by 'god-like' actions, and that the downtrodden hero is valorized and then 'saved'. So, while I don't agree with some of the science, some of the theology and some of the conclusions, I found this book to be a delightful reading experience because, to read it, you have to think about some pervasive human questions that cut across a range of intellectual disciplines. Though simply written, it is almost a paradigm for a kind of classic SF novel of thought, and reminiscent of the impact one could expect from early Arthur C. Clarke or even early Asimov. Sawyer returns to us the sense that the universe is huge and unexplored, and as full of hope as it doom. It also arouses passion for right and against wrong, makes aliens more sympathetic than many humans, and appeals to our basic sense of wonder. Yet it is a simple, straightforward story, as enchanting to a teenager as to a woman in her fifties.

Science Fiction Research Association

www.sfra.org

The SFRA is the oldest professional organization for the study of science fiction and fantasy literature and film. Founded in 1970, the SFRA was organized to improve classroom teaching; to encourage and assist scholarship; and to evaluate and publicize new books and magazines dealing with fantastic literature and film, teaching methods and materials, and allied media performances. Among the membership are people from many countries—students, teachers, professors, librarians, futurologists, readers, authors, book-sellers, editors, publishers, archivists, and scholars in many disciplines. Academic affiliation is not a requirement for membership.

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SFRA Executive Committee

President

Michael M. Levy
Department of English
University of Wisconsin—Stout
Menomonie, WI 54751
<levym@uwstout.edu>

Vice President

Peter Brigg
#120 Budgell Terrace
Toronto, Ontario M6S 1B4, Canada
<pbrigg@uoguelph.ca>

Secretary

Wendy Bousfield
Reference Department, Bird Library
Syracuse University
Syracuse NY, 13244-2010
<wbbousfi@library.syr.edu>

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Arts and Humanities
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6300 Ocean Drive
Corpus Cristi, TX 78412
<Dave.Mead@iris.tamucc.edu>

Immediate Past President

Alan Elms
Psychology Department
U of California—Davis
Davis, CA 95616-8686
<acelms@ucdavis.edu>



SFRA Review

Shelley Rodrigo Blanchard
6842 S. 40th Place
Phoenix, AZ 85281

shelley.rb@asu.edu

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