

# 325

## Summer 2018

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The *SFRA Review* encourages submissions of reviews, review essays that cover several related texts, interviews, and feature articles. Submission guidelines are available at <http://www.sfra.org/> or by inquiry to the appropriate editor. Contact the Editors for other submissions or for correspondence.

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# SFRA Review

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## In this issue

### SFRA Review Business

NuqneH! ..... 3

### SFRA Business

Post-Conference Blues ..... 3  
Ater "The Future of Labor" ..... 4  
A Bief Lesson in SF(RA) Economics ..... 4  
SFRA Meeting Minutes ..... 5  
Candidates for the 2019-2022 SFRA Executive Committee ..... 7  
    Vice-Presidential Candidates ..... 7  
    Candidates for Treasurer ..... 9

### 2017-2018 SFRA Awards

Remarks for the Pilgrim Award ..... 10  
Pilgrim Award Acceptance Speech ..... 10  
Remarks for the Thomas D. Claeson Award ..... 11  
Thomas D. Claeson Award Acceptance Speech ..... 12  
Remarks for the Pioneer Award ..... 12  
Pioneer Award Acceptance Speech ..... 13  
Remarks for the Mary Kay Bray Award ..... 13  
Mary Kay Bray Award Acceptance Speech ..... 13  
Remarks for the Student Paper Award ..... 14  
Student Paper Award Acceptance Speech ..... 14

### SF Retrospectives

Kit Reed (June 1932–Sep. 2017) ..... 15  
Gardner Dozois (July 1947–May 2018) ..... 16  
Harlan Ellison (May 1934–June 2018) ..... 17  
Steve Ditko (Nov. 1927–June 2018) ..... 18

### Feature 101

Genderlessness in a Queer Universe: On Ann Leckie's Imperial Radch Trilogy ..... 20  
The SF in Translation Universe ..... 23

### Nonfiction Reviews

Lois McMaster Bujold.....	24
Star-Begotten: A Life Lived in Science Fiction.....	25
Octavia E. Butler .....	27
Alfred Bester .....	28
<b>Fiction Reviews</b>	
Artificial Condition and Rogue Protocol .....	30
Starlings .....	32
The Vestigial Heart: A Novel of the Robot Age .....	33
<b>Media Review</b>	
The Handmaid’s Tale .....	35
Lost in Space .....	37

**NuqneH!**

Sean Guynes-Vishniac

GREETINGS and welcome to my first issue as editor of *SFRA Review*. Many thanks are first due to Chris Pak for his years of dedicated service and for providing all the materials I needed to take over the position of editor (included a handy powerpoint on how to use InDesign!).

As this is the first issue following the annual SFRA conference, there is much to be found in the pages that follow. We begin with SFRA business, where SFRA President Keren Omry and Vice-President Gerry Canavan reminisce on this year's conference while looking ahead to next year in Hawaii. We also have a treasurer's report for SFRA (ooh, we're making bank!) and minutes from the executive committee and SFRA business meetings. In addition, immediate past-president Pawel Frelik presents candidate statements for the positions of SFRA's 2019-2022 Vice-President (Fritzsche, Pak, Schmeink) and Treasurer (O'Connell, Robertson).

This issue also features the award committee remarks and winners' comments for the Pilgrim, Thomas D. Clareson, Pioneer, Mary Kay Bray, and Student Paper awards. Congrats, all! And thank you to the committees for their work.

Next we have retrospectives for several recently passed giants in sf: Kit Reed, Gardner Dozois, Harlan Ellison, and Steve Ditko.

In the Features 101 section, we offer a fascinating article by Amandine Faucheux that takes a close look at Ann Leckie's efforts to build a queer universe in the Imperial Radch trilogy. An incredible piece! And we also have the first of many contributions to a new column by Rachel Cordasco on sf in translation, where she brings us a glimpse each issue at recent and soon-to-be-published sf from non-Anglophone traditions.

And finally, but never the least, the bread and butter of *SFRA Review*: four reviews of nonfiction, three of recent fiction, and two of new TV shows.

Many thanks to Keren Omry, Gerry Canavan, Chris Pak, and the reviews editors for making this a delightful first issue to work on. Until next time!

**Post-Conference Blues**

Keren Omry

HELLO AGAIN FRIENDS. What a pleasure it was to see so many old friends and so many new faces at the annual SFRA conference! It really is a marvel each time anew. The conference is the culmination of a stream of emails across two oceans, four time-zones, and countless miles which mesh together with an impressive roster of committed members and the energies of newcomers. For those of you who had to miss it, you were missed! We had two outstanding keynotes, a dirty computer screening, some fire alarms, cascades of coffee and chatter, striking homemade T-Shirts, and, best of all, a rich and rigorous conversation on the Futures of Labor in speculative fiction. Thank you again to Gerry Canavan and Peter Sands, and their cohort, for their splendid hosting.

As you all know, we're nearing the next round of elections for Executive Committee positions. We've had an unprecedented expression of interest in the positions and you will see in the pages of this Review statements prepared by each of the candidates. We will be publishing information on the elections nearer the date, towards the end of 2018, and send out links to the relevant voting site. We've also had quite a few people putting themselves forward for award committee posts. I want to thank everyone for the willingness to chip in.

Arguably our most exciting news is that next year's conference will be held in Hawaii! While we realize this may be a pricey option for some, we hope that the advance notice and the attractive site will help members find a way to attend. We're also looking into a variety of housing options to allow for what we foresee will be a rise in spousal attendance. I also hope that this site will open new opportunities for attendance from our more Pacifically located contingents.

Deciding on conference locations is always a tricky negotiation between options and obstacles. Many of you will have already seen the survey we have sent out with which we are trying to establish the preferences and limitations of the active members

of the SFRA. If you have not already done so, please submit the form as soon as possible so that we can take your opinion into account as well as we start to map out locations for future conferences. On this note, if you are interested in hosting a conference some day in the near or far future, stay tuned. We are working on guidelines for conference-hosting proposals which will be posted online within a few weeks from now. These should spell out what we need to know for potential hosts putting in a bid.

As closing, I want to wish Sean Guynes-Vishniac the best of luck as he takes on the position of *SFRA Review* Editor!

VICE-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## Ater "The Future of Labor"

Gerry Canavan

IT'S BEEN an absolute pleasure to be the vice president of SFRA these last two years, culminating in this summer's amazing SFRA 18 conference, held on my home campus of Marquette University in Milwaukee, WI. The schedule of panels (which you can still find on our website at [sfra.org](http://sfra.org)) was incredible, with topics ranging from "the future of labor" in space opera, cyberpunk, and *Star Trek* to dedicated streams of panels on Afrofuturism and gender to author-centered panels on Octavia E. Butler, Philip K. Dick, and William Gibson to interdisciplinary considerations of ecology, economics, gaming, and adaptation to roundtables on race and franchise fiction, and many, many more. The keynotes from Peter Frase and Rebekah Sheldon were both standing-room-only blockbusters that I'll be thinking about for years to come.

As I mentioned to more than a few people before the conference, I'm not someone who really likes parties very much; I inveterately arrive late and leave early—so throwing the big annual party for SFRA was a bit of a nerve-wracking experience for me to say the least. But (from my perspective at least) it all came off without a hitch, and now I'm really looking forward to Hawaii!

My term as VP extends through the end of the year, but with the conference over and with the upcoming elections I'm definitely feeling like a lame duck. Please, continue to send me CFPs and conference announcements for social media, so I can publicize

them on the SFRA Facebook and Twitter! And let me know what future VPs might do to improve your experience of the organization; I'm happy to pass that on to whoever follows me in the role.

See you all soon!

TREASURER'S REPORT

## A Bief Lesson in SF(RA) Economics

David Higgins

### 2017 Final Account Balances

- Checking: \$59,765.42
- Savings: \$20,438.60

### 2017 Income (Journals, Memberships, Conference Registrations, Etc.)

- Total Income: \$37,582.70

### 2017 Expenditures

- Journal Subscriptions: \$14,261.63
- Wild Apricot: \$756.00
- Adobe Creative Cloud: \$254.27
- Listserv: \$21.90
- UC Regents (Conference): \$15,420.00
- Conference Guest Hotel: \$1951.32
- Conference Guest Travel: \$2329.40
- Conference Travel Grants: \$1000.00
- Conference Award Materials: \$110.75
- Postage: \$52.81

**Total Expenditures: \$36,158.08**

**Difference: (+ \$1424.62)**

# SFRA Meeting Minutes

Jenni Halpin

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

July 2, 2018 | 12-2 (Lunch) | Milwaukee, WI

Present: Keren Omry, Gerry Canavan, David Higgins, Jenni Halpin, Pawel Frelik (executive committee); invited, also present: Katherine Bishop (web director).

## 2019 Conference. Hawaii. Organizer: John Rieder.

- Dates: June 21-24, 2019, pending JR's confirmation; we hope this will allow some folks to coordinate travel to our conference with next year's ASLE in California from June 25.
- Publicity should especially make sure we are visible to Australian & other Asian SF worlds; we need to do sufficient publicity to make our usual numbers (80 to 100).
- Theme ideas: Transpacific, colonialism & indigeneity. Some LGBTQ component; 3rd sex/gender, etc.
- Possible speakers were discussed.
- Accommodation: JR is ascertaining details for a dorm housing option: en-suite bathrooms & showers; family/partner accommodations, price, etc.

## Future Conferences

- There have been half a dozen expressions of interest in hosting future conferences.
- Agreed we should solicit proposals for future years.
- Calls for proposals should include:
  - Clarification that the organizers are fully responsible for the planning and hosting.
  - \$1000 seed money provided by SFRA but expected back following the conference.
  - Made clear that conference fees go to food & things for attendees and not for speakers or the like.

- A clear preference for using our WA platform for conference registration and fees.
- Facility requirement: a space that has at least three conference rooms, in relative proximity; together with a larger space for a reception/banquet; in relative isolation.
- Reminder that conference hosts must be SFRA members.
- SFRA website to have information page for conference organizers
- Proposals should include:
  - Info on the location
  - Facilities description
  - Whether there're relevant special resources nearby: e.g. an archive, an event, a collection, etc.
  - Realistic description of travel and accommodation; clarity about what's being offered (e.g. dorms, rooms, etc.)
  - Grad students: Is there a local community that can provide support and presence in the conference?
  - What kind of institutional resources do they have to support the conference? Resources to pay both keynotes?
  - Proposed theme
  - Year availability

## Conference Fees:

- **Agreed:** up to two conference organizers are exempt from conference registration fees. The cost will be taken from the Assoc. budget.
- **Agreed:** we stay with two fee levels: Underemployed/Student (reduced); full fees. Persons whose association membership categories differ from these will be expected to choose the most appropriate registration category from the two available.

## Other Expenses

- Agreed the association will pay for a lunch for the executive committee at the conference to facilitate meeting

## Awards

- Committee members:
  - With most of the committees, asking the winner of the award to serve on the committee is pretty much the default.
  - The Pioneer member should probably be at least mid-career level
  - Committee members should also be made aware that it is a commitment to come to the conference at least during the third year to present the award as that year's committee chair.
- Awards:
  - Where possible, the following year's organizer should take the awards home with them.
  - Pawel will contact a graphic designer to replicate the designs for the plaques; will also ask about the best way of doing it: pre-pressed a plaque that's affixed to a wooden base? 3D printing? Preparing at least 10 blanks of each and sending to each conference organizer per year?

## Elections

- Pawel, as Immediate Past President will organise elections. Candidates should publish their statements in *SFRA Review* late July, early August; at least 60 days before elections.
- Katherine will create and embed a google form into Wild Apricot, making sure to be able to prevent repeat voting.
- We seek two candidates for each position.

## Communication

- Pawel would like the EC to shift to Slack (rather than email) for our primary group conversations. He will set the group up, and we will try it out.
- Membership
- As of last week we have 289 members, which is up 50 from this time last year. 81 members are from outside the U.S. (28%). 68 members are students (17—about 23%—student members are from outside the U.S.).

## SFRA BUSINESS MEETING

July 3, 2018 | 1:15pm-1:34pm | Alumni Memorial Union, Marquette University

Present: Keren Omry (President), Gerry Canavan (Vice President), David Higgins (Treasurer), Jenni Halpin (Secretary), Pawel Frelik (Past President), and approximately 25 others.

- Meeting called to order at 1:15pm.
- Appreciations (Keren Omry). Thanks to Gerry Canavan, Peter Sands, Justice Hagan, and the team for their work on this conference. Thanks to the rest of the Executive Committee. Thanks to Katherine Bishop, our webmistress. Thanks to Chris Pak, who has been the editor of *The SFRA Review* since 2013. Congratulations and welcome to Sean Guynes-Vishniac, who is the new editor.
- Membership (Jenni Halpin). As of last week, we had 289 members, which is up about 50 from this time last year. 81 of our members are international. 68 of our members are students (with a similar percentage of our student members also being international members).
- Finances (David Higgins). We have a balanced budget, with 2017 income slightly exceeding 2017 expenditures. In addition to \$20,000 in savings at the start of 2018, we had \$59,7765 in checking.
- Upcoming Elections (Keren Omry). Last year we approved a change to the terms of the members of the executive committee, to stagger new additions to the committee and increase continuity of institutional knowledge. Our current Treasurer and Vice President will be coming to the end of their terms in December. Potential candidates for these offices can read descriptions of the roles in the Bylaws (available on the website: [sfra.org](http://sfra.org)). The Treasurer will need to be US-based for banking reasons. Candidates should submit statements to Pawel Frelik by the end of July, so that they can be published in *The Review*. At least sixty days after the statements are published, electronic voting will open for a thirty-day period. The three-year terms will begin 1 January 2019. Next year we will be seeking candidates for President and

Secretary.

- Awards Committees (Keren Omry). We have five awards that are decided annually by committees of three people; these people serve staggered three-year terms, with each person serving as committee chair in the third year (and therefore expected to be present at the conference at least in that final year). Details about the awards are on the website. We are seeking volunteers to join the committees.
- Student Paper Award (Keren Omry). Stina Attebury, the incoming chair of the Student Paper Award Committee, will be emailing student presenters to submit for consideration their papers as presented.
- Support a Scholar Grant (Keren Omry). This program awards a two-year membership in the SFRA, alternating each year between a tenure-track, established scholar and a student, underemployed, or non-tenure-track scholar. This year's grantee is Emily Cox.
- Next Year's Conference (Keren Omry). John Rieder is organizing next year's conference, in Hawaii. Tentatively, it will be 21-24 June at Chaminade University with housing available there and at the nearby University of Hawaii at Manoa, with a conference theme related to colonialism and indigeneity. Details will be finalized soon.
- Future Conferences (Keren Omry). We are always looking for proposals to host future conferences. A number of people have expressed interest in 2020 and after. We will be putting a guidance document for proposals on the website, in hopes of arranging firm future plans.
- Questions. It was asked why the SFRA no longer offers *FemSpec* as one of the add-on journal options. The answer was that logistical difficulties prevented it.
- Meeting adjourned at 1:34pm.

## Candidates for the 2019-2022 SFRA Executive Committee

### Immediate Past President's Message

Pawel Frelik

BELOW, please find the statements from the candidates for two Executive Committee positions that are open this year: Vice-President and Treasurer. You may remember that during the last tranche of changes to the SFRA Bylaws we decided not only to extend all terms of office to three years but also to introduce staggered terms in order to provide better continuity to the organization. Consequently, this year we are voting for Vice-President and Treasurer, who will, naturally, serve for three years. Next year, we will hold elections for the positions of President and Secretary. So, please read and consider the candidates' statements and, when we open our online voting page in early October, cast your vote.

I would also like to take a moment and offer my appreciation to the candidates for their willingness to run for office. Like all volunteer organizations, we depend entirely on our members' efforts. While being an SFRA officer may look glamorous on paper, it is also a commitment of time and attention in the service of others. We should always remember this and acknowledge their participation – thank you Sonja, Chris, Lars, Hugh, and Ben!

### Vice-Presidential Candidates

Sonja Fritzsche

I AM DELIGHTED to stand as a candidate for the office of Vice-President of the SFRA, which I first joined as a graduate student in 2000, when I gave my first paper at the conference in Cleveland, Ohio. This organization is one that I truly cherish for it plays such a vital role in welcoming and sustaining students, independent scholars, and early career faculty with moral support and essential feedback on their projects. In this way, the SFRA functions as a safe space that has international reach. This has been my experience with the organization throughout the years and each time that I have returned to the SFRA again

and again, I have thoroughly enjoyed catching up with colleagues, making new connections, and contributing to the quality conversations that make up the conference. I would look forward to the opportunity to perpetuate this tradition and help to preserve and expand the national and international networks that have been so carefully built up by those who have already devoted so much to the society. The quality of the material on the listserv, website, and in the *SFRA Review* is such a draw for new members and I would be interested in continuing to improve the accessibility and usability for existing and prospective members. The most valuable resource, of course, are the people – the organization’s members. Indeed, I would be interested in helping to formalize some of the society’s support - if members are interested - by creating a mentoring structure accessible via the website that could potentially have global reach and also create new opportunities for recruiting.

My career up to this point has been spent in the field of science fiction studies, first in literature and more recently in cinema. As my field is German Studies, my initial work was in East German literature, but I was always careful to look beyond national borders and recognize the international community that the country’s authors perceived themselves to belong to both in the Eastern Bloc and also via titles smuggled in from the West. So quickly I found myself studying Eastern European science fiction, which led me to comparative film studies, a subject that dovetailed nicely with my developing interest in Weimar and East German cinema. My more recent work has entailed promoting younger scholars with expertise in various world science fiction cinemas and literatures through my edited book, my forthcoming co-edited book, and *World Science Fiction* book series with Peter Lang. I also collaborated with a Berlin colleague and oversaw the translation of his exhibit on East German science fiction comics and organized its display in the United States. Beginning in 2001, my first position was as a professor of German and Eastern European Studies at Illinois Wesleyan University (IWU) in Bloomington, Illinois, where I taught for fourteen years. In fall 2015, I moved to Michigan State University where I am currently Professor of German and Associate Dean in the College of Arts & Letters. I have taught everything from German 101 through to upper division German literature, film, and culture classes focusing on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>

centuries. My true love came in the courses I taught for the IWU International Studies program on comparative German and Russian utopia/science fiction literature and film and German cinema as well as a freshman seminar called *Cyborgs, Amazons, and She-Monsters*.

My first service to the SFRA was on the student paper awards committee both from 2001-2004 and 2011-2014, serving as committee chair from 2013-2014. I am pleased to currently serve on the Thomas D. Clareson Award Committee and I have published in the *SFRA Review*. I continually enjoy the opportunities that this service has afforded me to work with such high-quality and interesting colleagues and to keep informed of the cutting-edge scholarship being done by the candidates. If I were to be given the opportunity to serve as vice-president, I would continue to support and facilitate the efforts of these and the other SFRA committees to the best of my abilities.

I thank you for considering my nomination and I would look forward greatly to serving in collaboration with the President, Secretary, and Treasurer, as well as the *SFRA Review* to further the interests of the society and its members into the future. I hope to have the chance to continue to pay forward some of the support that I have received over the years.

Chris Pak

I AM DELIGHTED to announce my nomination for vice-president of the SFRA. I have been deeply involved with the organisation for over four years, both as a contributor to the *SFRA Review* and its outgoing editor, and am excited by the opportunity to continue to serve the community as vice-president.

As of September 2018 I will be a newly appointed Lecturer in Contemporary Writing and Digital Cultures at Swansea University, Wales (UK), where I shall be teaching sf and the digital humanities with an emphasis on cultures of the digital. In addition to being the current sub-editor of the *Medical Humanities* blog, I organised the SFRA's 2016 conference in Liverpool in conjunction with *Current Research in Speculative Fictions*, a conference that I co-founded in 2011. SFRA 2016 was motivated by the desire to strengthen the SFRA's international scope, an endeavour that I shall continue developing in the coming years. I believe that my experience fostering networks of sf scholarship in the UK through

## Candidates for Treasurer

Hugh O'Connell

I AM PLEASED to announce my candidacy for the position of Treasurer for the SFRA. I've been a member of the SFRA since 2012 and just completed a three-year position on the Student Paper Award Committee. Currently, I'm an assistant professor of English at the University of Massachusetts Boston, where I primarily teach a range of science fiction courses, including introductory lecture courses, upper-level special topics courses, and graduate level seminars. The SFRA was an intellectual oasis for me, providing lasting connections with other likeminded scholars as I transitioned to primarily SF scholarship. If it weren't for the support that the SFRA offered me at the earliest stages of my career, I would most likely be a very different academic today. If elected, I'd welcome the opportunity to give back to and support this association the best I can.

Benjamin J. Robertson

I AM HONORED to have been asked to run for this position. I have long planned to offer my services to the SFRA and did not expect to have been approached for such duties. As someone who has only come to the study of science fiction and genre relatively late in his academic career, I feel like I have finally found my home. It touches me that others have been so welcoming and that they believe I can make a positive contribution to the organization by serving as its treasurer.

Although I have been teaching and writing about science fiction and related genres since graduate school, it has only been in the last six or seven years that I have focused on this pursuit. Since then, I have become a regular participant at SFRA and have published in many of the important journals in the field. My first book, *None of This is Normal: The Fiction of Jeff VanderMeer*, will appear this fall from University of Minnesota Press. My second book, *Here at the end of all things: Fantasy after History*, is under contract with the Johns Hopkins University Press and will be completed in the next two or three months. Beyond that, I currently serve as an editor at *Extrapolation* and have recently accepted a tenure-track position in the English Department at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

I attribute my success to a number of things, but I

CRSF, and my work with the SFRA to date, makes me a strong candidate for vice-president of the SFRA.

Should I be elected vice-president, I look forward to working with the SFRA community, with our editors of the *SFRA Review*, our SFRA webmaster and with sf scholars outside of the immediate SFRA membership to ensure that the organisation continues to provide a space for us to meet, exchange ideas and to support our work in the field. Thank you!

Lars Schmeink

AFTER more than 10 years as a member in the SFRA, I would like to throw my hat in the ring for the vice-presidency of the SFRA and take on a stronger role in shaping the association. Many of you might know me from my stint as Managing Editor of the *SFRA Review* and its move from print to online presence or from my articles and reviews, mainly on posthuman SF and especially cyberpunk and biopunk. And some of you might know me from my ongoing editorial work for *Cyberpunk and Visual Culture* (2018) and now the *Routledge Companion to Cyberpunk Culture*. My main focus in terms of service has been the *Gesellschaft für Fantastikforschung* (Association for Research in the Fantastic) with a big international conference in 2010 in Hamburg as inauguration and all the work that followed from it. I have faithfully served as president of the GFF for 8 years now and am preparing to hand over its running to the next president in 2020. I would like to use my last term of office at the GFF as a chance at moving closer the efforts of the European scholarship in SF&F with those of the US-based associations, especially the SFRA. I would see the vice-presidency of the SFRA as an ideal position to work at internationalization and cooperation with other organizations that have become key and center in spreading SF&F into the far corners of this world. I would love a chance to continue and enhance the work that former presidents such as Pawel Frelik and current president Keren Omry have begun at making SFRA a stronger, wider, and more varied institution to represent the many shades and forms of SF from all over the world. I hope for your vote and would love a chance to serve in the SFRA. Thank you.

## Remarks for the Pilgrim Award

Keren Omry, Mark Bould, Joan Gordon

cannot emphasize enough how important the SFRA and the community of scholars it draws and supports have been to me. Without the ongoing conversations this community has afforded me, without the advice of senior scholars and editors in the field, without the warm and positive reception my work and ideas have found at the conference and elsewhere—without all of this, I would not be in the position I am in today. Because of this good fortune and because of all the SFRA has contributed to it, I would be privileged to serve you as treasurer for the next two years. I believe that my attention to detail and ability to work according to deadlines, as well as my commitment to supporting a community that has supported me, will allow me to excel in this position. Thank you.

THE PILGRIM AWARD was created in 1970 by the SFRA to honor lifetime contributions to SF and fantasy scholarship. This year's award committee, which consisted of Mark Bould, Joan Gordon, and myself, decided to present the award to Professor Carl Freedman for the role he has played in upping the ante in SF scholarship. Professor Freedman is the William A. Read Professor of English Literature at Louisiana State University and, as I'm sure we'll all agree, the breadth and depth of his scholarship has played a pivotal role in the work that many of us do. Just a few of his achievements: In 1988, Freedman co-edited a special issue of *SFS* on Philip K. Dick and, in 2004, he co-edited an issue of *PMLA* on Science Fiction and Literary Studies. He edited three in the groundbreaking Conversations series, on Samuel Delaney, Ursula Le Guin, and Isaac Asimov. His 1999 article titled "Kubrick's 2001 and the Possibility of a Science-Fiction Cinema" won our very own Pioneer Award for Excellence, confirming our community's recognition of the influence of Freedman's work. Beyond all this, it is probably *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* from 2000 that really crystallizes Professor Freedman's intervention and contribution to the field. Please join me in congratulating Carl Freedman for receiving the SFRA Pilgrim Award of 2017.

## Pilgrim Award Acceptance Speech

Carl Freedman

IT IS A DEEPLY THRILLING, and humbling, experience to be chosen by the Science Fiction Research Association to receive the Pilgrim Award: primarily, of course, because of the impressive list of brilliant men and women who have received this prize in the past. I would trespass on far too much of your time if I attempted to discuss in any detail my admiration for so many of my predecessors. But there are three

past Pilgrims that I will name: Darko Suvin, Chip Delany, and Fred Jameson: all friends and mentors of mine, and the scholars who, from the very beginning of my career, have, in their three rather different ways, defined for me science-fiction criticism at its very best. Without their achievements, my own body of work—which the SFRA has generously decided to honor tonight—would be inconceivable.

When I started in this field, it occupied an obscure and somewhat disreputable corner of the literary academy. If you told your departmental colleagues that you worked on science fiction, you were, in my experience, likely to receive a semi-blank look and a question on the order of, “Oh, you mean like *Star Wars*?”. You were then likely to receive a completely blank look if you replied by saying, “No, I mean like Philip K. Dick and Ursula Le Guin and Joanna Russ.” This situation has greatly changed for the better—something for which the SFRA deserves a significant share of the credit. Today scholarly articles on SF texts sometimes get published in journals that once would have seemed prohibitively stuffy and conservative; and I notice that many of the novels that I once read in cheaply glued-together paperbacks are now being published in the august hardback volumes put out by the utterly canonical Library of America. Today we are respectable, or at all events a great deal more respectable than we once were.

But then, you might point out that SF and SF criticism have become accepted parts of the institutional humanities at just the time that the institutional humanities—and, to a somewhat lesser degree, the academy as a whole—are under devastating attack. As my friend Mark Bould pointed out in his own Pilgrim speech two years ago, an increasingly neo-liberal capitalism is destroying higher education, transforming universities from centers of scholarship and learning and teaching into machines for the extraction of exchange-value. Of course, capitalism is destroying a great many other things as well, up to and including the physical environment without which human life as we know it will be unable to exist. It often seems as though the negative utopias with which our field is so rich have a powerfully prophetic resonance.

And so they do. Yet that is not the whole story. We who think a lot about SF naturally think a lot about the future. And the future is fascinating in large part because we can never know what it will be like. Things sometimes turn out better than we hoped, and sometimes worse than we feared: but almost

never exactly the way we expected. The most important fact about the future is that we ourselves are shaping it, in ways conscious and unconscious, every day. The great philosopher Ernst Bloch—who, without quite realizing it, became the most important theorist of science fiction—would remind us that, though we certainly can and should do without optimism, we always need, and will always *have*, hope.

I could say much more, and I could thank with total sincerity a great many people. But, you know, I have never heard anyone comment of an after-dinner speech, “I wish it had gone on longer.” So I shall not go on. I will conclude by thanking a single individual: my wife Annette, who, as it happens, has no particular interest in science fiction. Her contribution to my career has merely been to make the earth turn, the sun shine, and life, for me, worth living. And thank you all again.

#### THOMAS D. CLARESON AWARD

### **Remarks for the Thomas D. Clareson Award**

Rob Latham, Pawel Frelik, Sonja Fritzsche

THE THOMAS D. CLARESON award for Distinguished Service recognizes excellence in SF teaching, editing, reviewing, editorial writing, publishing, organizing meetings, mentoring, and leadership in SF/fantasy organizations. This year’s winner, Veronica Hollinger, has been a leader in all of these areas for decades.

At Trent University, where she has taught since 1990, Veronica has developed numerous courses and tracks in science fiction and, as an internal thesis director and external examiner, has mentored many doctoral students who have gone on to become major scholars in the field. Her intellectual influence, which has been pervasive, includes promoting a more rigorous theoretical approach to the genre and a disciplined attention to its engagement with issues of gender and sexuality.

Since 1992, Veronica has been a senior editor of the premier journal in the field, *Science Fiction Studies*, taking the lead on several of its most significant special issues, such as “Women in Science Fiction,” “Science Fiction and Queer Theory,” and the forthcoming “Science Fiction and the Climate Crisis.” She has also served on the editorial boards of *The*

*Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, *Femspec*, and *Fantastika*. Her accomplishments as editor include four major co-edited essay collections, among them *Edging into the Future* and *Parabolas of Science Fiction*, and a best-selling pedagogical text, *The Wesleyan Anthology of Science Fiction*. She has served on the board of the International Association for the Fantastic in Arts, as SF Division Head and Second Vice-President, in which role she established the SF Theory Roundtable, which continues to be a highlight of the Association's annual conference.

On top of this extensive editorial and administrative work, Veronica is one of the field's most accomplished scholars. She has published over three-dozen articles and book chapters, many of them path-breaking studies, as evidenced by the fact that several have been reprinted multiple times. Her voluminous reviews and review-essays have consistently displayed a widely informed and discriminating intelligence, providing essential guidance for students and scholars in the field. She has given over 40 invited lectures, many of them keynote addresses at major international conferences, and has been a crucial ambassador in promoting a view of SF as a global phenomenon, editing a special issue of *Science Fiction Studies* on Chinese SF and helping to organize a symposium on "The Anthropocene and Beyond" at Shue Yan University in Hong Kong.

I could go on reciting her professional accomplishments, but instead I would like to conclude with a brief recognition of her personal attributes. Since this is an award that recognizes distinguished service, it needs to be said that Veronica's most essential service to the field has been her unfailing collegiality, her ability to argue passionately without being disagreeable, and her generous willingness to share credit with other, often junior scholars. The time for shared credits, however, is over: there is only one name on this award plaque, and it is a very well-deserved one. Please join me in celebrating the 2018 winner of the Thomas D. Clareson Award, Veronica Hollinger.

## Thomas D. Clareson Award Acceptance Speech

Veronica Hollinger

DEAR FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES, thank you so much for this honour, and thanks in particular to

Rob Latham and the other members of this year's Clareson Award committee for making it happen.

My very first academic presentation was at an SFRA conference way back in the day; in fact, it was my very first conference, period. Over the years the SFRA annual conferences have become my go-to venues for keeping up with the field of science-fiction studies, for schmoozing with my favourite academic colleagues, and for finding out about the latest new thing from our brilliant graduate students and newer scholars. In my experience, the SFRA conference just keeps getting better and better. I'd also like to give a shout-out to the *SFRA* review, in particular the "Feature 101" series which I've turned to repeatedly in the past few years for both my teaching and research.

I've been blessed with an academic career that has been perfect for me, one that has entangled me in the teaching and research of many wonderful scholars. This has included, most significantly, my long-time work as a co-editor of *Science Fiction Studies*, and so I would also like to thank Art Evans, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Joan Gordon, Carol McGuirk, Lisa Swanstrom, and Sherryl Vint, our current *SFS* family. I can't think of a finer group of people with whom to play at being an academic. As that wise woman Cyndi Lauper once sang, "girls just want to have fun."

It's really unfortunate that I can't be here today. On the other hand, this spares my blushes (to sound an Austenian note). To have this recognition of my work from such esteemed colleagues is a source of pleasure and pride, with absolutely no prejudice at all.

Thank you all so much.

### PIONEER AWARD

## Remarks for the Pioneer Award

Siobhan Carroll, Scott Selisker, Joan Haran

THOMAS STRYCHACZ'S "The Political Economy of Potato Farming in Andy Weir's *The Martian*" argues for Andy Weir's popular science fiction novel as a cultural fable for the Great Recession. Situating Weir's depiction of a stranded astronaut on Mars alongside a history of public perceptions of economics, Strychacz stages a compelling argument for the novel's contradictory attempts to reconcile the isolated figure of homo economicus with the commonwealth's pursuit of a public good. Our

judges noted that Strychacz's "beautifully paced and structured" argument valuably aligns science fiction with new directions in finance studies, providing a "sharp reading of Weir's text as reflecting how we square work and value with contemporary phenomena such as the housing bubble." In its conclusion, Strychacz's analysis of the formal possibilities offered by genre fiction to economic myth-making opens up new avenues for inquiry regarding intersections between science fiction, finance, and economics in popular culture

## Pioneer Award Acceptance Speech

Thomas Strychacz

IN ANDY WEIR'S second novel, *Artemis*, which appeared in 2017, the protagonist concludes her explanation of how the department of Life Support on the moon makes money from extracting carbon dioxide from used air by stating: "It's always about economics, am I right?" I'd like to believe that Weir wrote that line after reading my article about the political economy of potatoes in his first novel, *The Martian*! Regardless: I'm deeply honored to receive the Pioneer Award from people at the SFRA who clearly did read the essay and who contribute so much to the cause of science fiction. That's what I call Life Support on Earth. Thank you so much.

MARY KAY BRAY AWARD

## Remarks for the Mary Kay Bray Award

Brittany Roberts, Stefan Rabitsch, Thomas Connolly

FOR THE RECIPIENT of the 2017 Mary Kay Bray Award, our committee considered works published in *SFRA Review* #'s 319-322. As always, choosing just one recipient among so many outstanding submissions proved a challenging task; it took our committee a bit of agonizing to settle upon even a short list of five nominees, let alone one final recipient. However, one essay in particular appeared across all of our short lists of favorite reviews: Hugh O'Connell's fine review of *Irish Science Fiction* by Jack Fennell

from issue #319, which we have unanimously selected as the winner of this year's Mary Kay Bray Award.

Hugh O'Connell's thorough and considerate review examines not only the volume's strengths, weaknesses, and contributions and interventions to the field of sf scholarship, but also O'Connell's own personal reflections on the experience of reading the work. In addition, O'Connell offers an engaging overview of the volume's key arguments about the interplay between sf, history, and myth within Irish sf and the ways in which Irish culture itself exists "on multiple hyphens" (14). However, what really impressed our committee was the ways in which O'Connell related his discussion of the volume's greatest weakness with his own reflections on the continuing relevance of Suvin's "utopian urge" when discussing the potentials of sf to not only reflect reality, but to reflect on it. O'Connell's essay thus functions not only as a considerate and thoughtful appraisal of an important work of sf scholarship, but also as a fine work of scholarship in itself.

Thank you, Hugh, for your excellent review, which was a pleasure to read, as well as for your superb contributions to previous issues of the *SFRA Review*. Congratulations on behalf of this year's Mary Kay Bray Award Committee!

## Mary Kay Bray Award Acceptance Speech

Hugh O'Connell

I WOULD LIKE to thank Jack Fennell for writing such a provocative book, everyone at the *SFRA Review* for shepherding the review through publication, and the Mary Kay Bray committee for taking the time to read and consider so many deserving pieces. Reviews are not sexy academic work, and they generally don't count towards such things as raises or tenure. However, they are important work and a necessary service to the discipline. I'm proud to be part of an organization that recognizes this often under-appreciated aspect of academic labor.

STUDENT PAPER AWARD

## Remarks for the Student Paper Award

Hugh O'Connell, Stina Attebery, Peter Sands

IT'S MY PLEASURE to represent The Student Essay Award Committee, which this year was comprised of Hugh O'Connell, Stina Attebery, and Peter Sands. This year we were delighted to have the task of deciding between a record number of competitive submissions. So much so that instead of only announcing the winner, we would also like to recognize another extraordinary submission with an honorable mention: Kylie Korsnack's "Towards a Time Travel Aesthetic: Writing-between-worlds in Okorafor, Butler, and Baledosingh." The committee was impressed with the innovative global approach that the project foregrounded and its attention to comparative study.

The winner of this year's SFRA Student Paper Award is Josh Pearson for "New Weird Frankenworlds: Speaking and Laboring Worlds in Cisco's Internet of Everything." In his deeply theoretical, yet highly captivating presentation, Pearson set himself, as well as the rest of us, the task to "think about how weird materialism and speculative realism can help us challenge the abstraction of speculative finance, and how they might help us imagine forms of non-

human intelligence that aren't animated by the logic of derivative financial instruments." Pearson's paper impressed the committee with its deep engagement with sf and critical theory, its novel approach that stretched the bounds of sf studies, as well as the way that the paper worked to incorporate aspects of other papers and conversations that we're happening at the conference. By turning critical attention to the way that informational and financial services invoke sf practices both in their formal operations as well as the content of their advertising materials, Pearson greatly expands the role for and significance of sf studies. Please join us in congratulating Josh!

## Student Paper Award Acceptance Speech

Joshua Pearson

HELLO. I'm honored to be so recognized by a community I've come to respect and to love over the last six years. I'm particularly honored and humbled considering the incredible work our graduate student colleagues are doing. I want to thank the amazing Sherryl Vint for her mentorship, support, and brilliance. I'd also like to thank those you here, too many to name individually, for your feedback, your humor, your generosity, and your comradery. To all of you, my scholarly home away from home, thank you.

*Student Paper Award Honorable Mention:*  
Kylie Korsnack

## **Kit Reed (June 1932–Sep. 2017)**

*Kit Reed: A Brief Retrospective*

Kevin McVeigh

INTRODUCING Kit Reed's 1998 retrospective collection *Weird Women, Wired Women*, Connie Willis vividly evokes that sensation of reading her first Kit Reed story. I recognised that sensation at once. For me it was "Automatic Tiger" whereas Willis was hooked by Reed's very first sff publication, "The Wait."

That story, "The Wait" appeared in 1958. The last of Reed's 140 or so short stories and 20 plus novels was published in the month of her death last year. A strong, consistent career, moving with the times but not slavishly, maintaining a sense of thematic unity, of 59 years is significant in itself. (For context Reed's active career pre and postdates Ursula Le Guin's.) But it is in the detail of that career that Reed's importance is to be found.

Although Reed would go on to write a great many better stories than "The Wait" it is a good example of several of the themes that recurred in her writing over the next half century. When a young woman and her mother find themselves stranded in a small town they are drawn into a weird cult-like society where young women are expected to "wait" fastened in rows in a field for men to choose them. The story's variant title "To Be Taken in a Strange Land" sums up the creepy main plot. As John Clute has noted, "The Wait" possibly overdoes the Shirley Jackson-lite paranoid stylings of small-town normalcy. The Jackson comparison is only valid to a point, and perhaps unfairly diminished the reception of Reed's early work. Even in "The Wait" she was developing her own voice and a barbed focus on her characteristic themes of generational domestic rivalry, women at home, body image and societal enforcement of it, and the dangerous pervasiveness of small town mores.

Throughout the 1960s Kit Reed published the stories that made her name, repeatedly satirising and poking at society's obsessions and ideas of what is important. "The New You" (1962) or "Automatic Tiger" (1964) both share an enclosed Bradbury-

esque plot around a mysterious mail-order item that changes the life, appearance, and personality of the purchaser through their self-image. There are, of course, consequences to these gains but by then protagonist and reader are drawn in with acute domestic details.

These ideas of the paranoid 20th century obsession with perfection are explicit in many of Reed's stories. Who but Reed would have created a dystopian story about teenage beauty pageants? The first-person narrator of "On Behalf of the Product" (1973) shows us this in cheery all-American tones, right up to and including the vicious final line.

That story was published in an anthology by a writer whose work occasionally resembles Reed's, Thomas Disch, and it was through editors such as Disch, Michael Moorcock at *New Worlds* and Avram Davidson (another of sf's distinctly individual writers) at *F&SF* in the 1960s that Reed became associated with sff despite many of her stories bearing an asymptotic relationship to the genre. Frequently her settings are quotidian and any fantastic element is in a skewed perception. They often exist in polders, with minimal acknowledgement of a wider world yet it is the real world.

Take one of her most famous stories "Songs of War" (1974) in which the women of a small town gradually leave home to join a camp of varyingly militant women. The cosy domesticity of small-town life that echoes sit-coms by the dozen is neatly skewered by Reed as her women take time before leaving to leave meals in the freezer, reminders of children's appointments, even to leave clean bedlins. Younger ones hang on to the last moment in case they get a prom date first. On arrival at the camp they are assigned duties based on skillset. "Oh shit, another housewife," is the response to one newcomer who finds herself doing variations of the same things she left at home, cooking potatoes, cleaning latrines. And there is no grand plan, no clear mission statement. Reed's satire is multi-edged, scathing at political movements failure to engage with ordinary lives even as she has us laughing at the hapless menfolk.

"High Rise High" (2005) features another formless rebellion in the eponymous fortified tower block school. Here parents have despatched troublesome children to be someone else's responsibility. In a brilliantly sharp black comedy somewhere between *Airplane!* and *Escape from New York* trouble starts with the new English teacher. "Frankly the riot broke

out because Bruce tried to make Johnny play a fairy in his 'Midsummer Night's Dream.' Fucking Shakespeare, what do you expect?" There's the generational divide again, but when Johnny is asked about the rioters' demands he is unsure: "Everything not sucking, that's all."

In some respects that is key to a lot of Reed's fiction. A general dissatisfaction with the domestic, the quotidian, manifested in a vague disruption.

Although her most acclaimed work was at shorter length, Reed explored many of the same ideas at novel length. *Thinner Than Thou* (2014) explicitly tackles body image and the commercial diet industry, but she touches on this in novels as diverse as the campus farce *Captain Grown-up* (1976) and the island school near-thriller *Enclave* (2009). Her *@ Expectations* (2000) presciently details use of self-contained internet communities to recreate our self-image.

She creates enclosed communities, the eponymous *Armed Camps* (1969), the insular town, the school, the internet MOOC, the Disneyland analogue of *Magic Time* (1980). Reed's penultimate novel *Where* (2015) phase shifts a small town into another dimension leaving one half of a dissatisfied married couple behind whilst his perceived rival goes. The motorcycle gang of radical nuns in *Little Sisters of the Apocalypse* (1994) are a closed community themselves, but in turn they head to an island of women.

Even the Girl Scout camp in "The Legend of Troop 13" (2013) twists the classic "lost patrol" trope in multiple knots. Once inside Reed repeatedly finds ways to make us identify somehow, only for the horrific realisation to dawn: she has made us complicit. Therein lies the darkness.

Ultimately it is in the effortless transitions from farce to pathos, her metamorphosis of the mundane to the macabre, and the dry irony of her telling, that makes Kit Reed's stories incisive, dislocating, and liberating. Her facility at writing "transgenre" (to use her own perfectly pitched phrase) brought a vital voice to sf across several literary generations. That is rare and noteworthy.

## Gardner Dozois (July 1947–May 2018)

*Gardner Dozois, Grand Master*

Rich Horton

GARDNER DOZOIS died this May 27th. It is a loss that leaves holes in our field, in numerous ways, not least the personal: many of us knew Gardner as a friendly and gracious presence (and an often boisterous one!). But here I'll look instead at his professional contributions.

In later years, I think, he was thought of first as an editor. Most of us followed his anthologies, particularly his 35 volumes of *The Year's Best Science Fiction* (from Bluejay Books and then St. Martin's Press). (He actually published 40 years of Best of the Year books, counting the last 5 volumes of a series from E.P. Dutton that he inherited from Lester Del Rey.) We also remember his other anthologies, original anthologies like 2017's *The Book of Swords*, that were always among the best books of their types, and numerous reprint anthologies, from small themed books to major volumes such as *Modern Classics of Fantasy* and *Modern Classics of Science Fiction*: books staking a place in the ongoing canon-forming/reforming conversation. He was of course for nearly 20 years the tremendously successful editor of *Asimov's Science Fiction*, setting a record for most Hugo/Nebula winners first published by any editor.

As an editor, Dozois managed in a less flashy way to influence the field of science fiction at a level nearly as profound as that John W. Campbell, Jr., managed with *Astounding*; or Michael Moorcock with *New Worlds*. Dozois wasn't a revolutionary or a firebrand of an editor – terms that could be applied (much as Campbell at least would probably have disapproved) to those two. But the ubiquity of Dozois's contributions, the way he managed to combine an insistence on literary values with a like insistence on the virtues of core science fiction as a genre, as well as the way the aesthetic of his magazines and original anthologies was reinforced by his reprint anthologies, created a sense of a consistent historical story of sf.

The very act of editing anthologies like his "Modern Classics" books, then, is an act of constructive criticism. And we forget that Dozois was a writer about sf—a critic—as well as a writer and editor of

sf. This wasn't ever the prime thrust of his career, but it bears remembering. One rather massive effort in this area was his famously huge introductions to the *Year's Best* books—essays that exhaustively captured the state of sf from numerous angle—not just short fiction but novels, movies, TV, and more—each year. Dozois was also my colleague at Locus for almost a decade, writing a monthly review column on short fiction. He wrote a significant essay on James Tiptree, Jr. But for me, much of the best of his writing about sf was more informal and ephemeral—a series of posts and comments on various internet fora in which he discussed and argued about the history of sf with all sorts of people.

Finally, Gardner Dozois came to notice first as a writer, and a very significant writer. Stories like “Strangers,” “A Special Kind of Morning,” “A Dream at Noonday,” “The Visible Man,” “Horse of Air,” “A Kingdom by the Sea,” “Chains of the Sea,” his Nebula winners “The Peacemaker” and “Morning Child,” his excellent later story “A Knight of Ghosts and Shadows” and many others are exceptionally written, imaginatively powerful, very moving—truly an *oeuvre*, at shorter lengths, to stand with the best writers of his generation.

Dozois was never a prolific writer, and in particular he wrote relatively little at novel length. Two of his novels were collaborations: the early *Nightmare Blue* (with George Alec Effinger), a minor work which he tended to affectionately disparage, and the late *Hunter's Run* (with George R.R. Martin and Daniel Abraham), which is professional and entertaining but nothing special. His one solo novel, *Strangers*, is much better, but it is an expansion of a novella that was sufficient in itself.

So the best of his fiction is the short fiction (perhaps not surprisingly for a man who became so well known for editing and anthologizing short fiction). And a re-examination of this work is bracing and valuable—a reminder of Dozois' brilliance. The fiction is particularly remarkable for its bleakness—not a virtue in itself, but the telling—the prose, the particularized characters, the honesty—make the bleakness earned. These are ironically sad stories from a man whose public persona was so sunny.

It was suggested, just months before his death, that Gardner Dozois, for his contributions to Science Fiction—the remarkable fiction and the influential editing—should be considered for the SFWA Grand Master Award. Gardner, of course, reacted with typi-

cally self-deprecating rebuttal of the notion, but now that he's not here to object, and now that it's too late, I'll endorse that suggestion, and add that, for me, Gardner Dozois was a Grand Master.

## Harlan Ellison (May 1934–June 2018)

*I'll Bet You a Death: Ellison's Legacies*

Andrew M. Butler

THE FIRST TIME I knew of Harlan Ellison was at a university sf meeting, listening to a recording of a guest of honor speech in which he related a joke about leprechaun nuns and an anecdote about revenge on an editor that culminated in sending first bricks and then a dead gopher through the mail. I laughed, I admit, but later wondered if the editor really deserved it.

I had seen Ellison's *Deathbird Stories* (1975/1984) in a remainder bookshop and I must have seen his *Star Trek* episode, ‘City on the Edge of Forever’ (1967), but the scriptwriter's name at that time meant as much to me as those of Theodore Sturgeon or Robert Bloch ... or D.C. Fontana. I hadn't heard of *Dangerous Visions*, although I'd read some of the *New Worlds* anthologies. I later read a few Ellison stories and enjoyed the film *A Boy and his Dog* (1975), even if I began to find its attitudes to women troubling. Ellison's reputation eclipsed his work.

And so when Ellison died, it was inevitably controversies that sprang to mind. Various authors – mostly but not all male—wrote about how kind he had been to them, how he had inspired him, and I respect their grief. In the other corner, a significant editor wrote how when they'd first met in the early 1970s, Ellison had made a clumsy pass at her, and she was far from the only person to relate such an anecdote. There's his ongoing refusal to acknowledge that *Last Dangerous Visions* was never going to happen—as chronicled by Christopher Priest in *The Last Dead-loss Visions* (1987)/*The Book on the Edge of Forever* (1994). Various lawsuits and threats of violence. There's the 2006 Hugo Awards ceremony where he groped Connie Willis. And in 2009, responding to criticisms of the newly relaunched *Realms of Fantasy* he attributed to K. Tempest Bradford, he declared that she

is apparently a Woman of Color (which REALLY makes me want to bee-atch-slap her, being the guy who discovered and encouraged one of the finest writers and Women of Color who ever lived, my friend, the recently-deceased Octavia Estelle Butler). And she plays that card endlessly, which is supposed to exorcise anyone suggesting she is a badmouth ignoramus, or even a NWA. Ooooh, did I say that?

And so on.

*Too soon to say anything*, people said after he died.  
*Can't you take a joke?*

*The life is not the work. Stop being a puritan. Stop virtue signaling.*

To a point. In a review of Ellen Weil and Gary K. Wolfe's *Harlan Ellison: The Edge of Forever* (2002), Michael Levy suggests Ellison's 'intensely personal fiction pretty much demands that critics adopt a biographical approach.' His life, his childhood, his campaigning, his marriages and so on are refracted in his fiction and the lengthy introductions and notes to *Dangerous Visions* (1967) and *Again, Dangerous Visions* (1973) clearly emphasized his own significance. Levy notes that Ellison appeared on chat shows and wrote fiction in shop windows, and was the 'closest thing science fiction has ever had to a true media celebrity'. In Stephen King's *Danse Macabre* (1981), Ellison writes 'From time to time some denigrater or critic with umbrage will say of my work, "He only wrote that to shock." I smile and nod. Precisely.'

You reap what you sow.

Science fiction doesn't exist in a vacuum. Over the last couple of years we've had the #metoo movement and allegations made against Harvey Weinstein and Kevin Spacey, and before that the cases of Roman Polanski and Woody Allen. Closer to home, the allegations made about Marion Zimmer Bradley, the attitudes to homosexuality of Orson Scott Card, the whole swamp of the Sad and Rabid Puppies. There are those – and I completely respect this – who feel that we should boycott their work. You can choose not to consume. Spend your money elsewhere. There's plenty of other writers to support.

This raises the objection of history being rewritten – see the long arguments about whether H.P. Lovecraft was a racist and the new bust for the World Fantasy Award. Or over the Laura Ingalls Wilder Medal being renamed the Children's Literature Leg-

acy Award. Or that this is suddenly politicizing science fiction (as if Shelley or Wells were not political).

If, as Lester del Rey wrote, Ellison's 'mission seemed to be to make science fiction relevant to the events going on around him at the time,' then we have to note that times have changed. Radicalism in the 1960s and 1970s does not give you a free pass to be unpleasant now. Dismissing an incident as just a joke or blaming the victim or apologizing for offence *taken* rather than offence *given* is not enough. And that has to be part of the stories of our genre.

## Steve Ditko (Nov. 1927–June 2018)

Zack Kruse

FOR SIXTY-FIVE YEARS, Steve Ditko carefully spun many of the threads that were woven into the American cultural tapestry. The superheroes he lent his hand and mind to have become a part of a global vocabulary, now driven by the largest media companies in the world. Among those efforts were his creation of Dr. Strange and his co-creation of Spider-Man for Marvel Comics in the 1960s. However, because Ditko eschewed publicity and did not participate in press interviews, an aura of mystery began to be attached to him by fans. The perpetuation of that sense of mystery was typically fueled by rumor and assumptions framed by accusations of misanthropy, or at least that he was a recluse. That his business address and phone number were listed in the phone book. To his dying day, he responded to letters from fans with regularity and at a rapid pace, and he often accepted visitors (even if begrudgingly). Unfortunately, these activities were either neglected or unknown by many. Perhaps, it was an ugly case where the legend became fact and so was printed.

After studying under cartoonist Jerry Robinson (co-creator of The Joker and Robin), Ditko's first published work was released in 1953 in *Daring Love*. He went on to work in a variety of genres, most prolifically in horror and weird suspense tales, with a significant portion of his output being released by Charlton Comics, a publisher well-known for its lower pay scale but looser editorial practices. It was at Charlton where, for many fans, Ditko came into his own. Alongside his efforts at Charlton, Ditko's contributions to the horror com-

ics produced by Warren Publications are also considered to be among his very best. At Warren, Ditko worked with writer and editor Archie Goodwin, producing a number of memorable stories in a variety of styles, with his ink-wash work being some of the most beautiful the nascent publisher had yet seen.

While Ditko is most famous for the work he produced at Marvel Comics in the 1960s, after he left Marvel, he developed a revitalized version of the Blue Beetle, created The Question, and reinvigorated Captain Atom (a superhero he previously worked on) for Charlton. At DC also created The Creeper, Shade the Changing Man, and co-created Hawk and Dove. All these characters are now owned and published by DC Comics. Although these characters are relatively well known amongst pop culture and comics readers, Ditko also spent a substantial amount of time developing influential creator-owned properties, the most prominent of which was Mr. A, whose outlook was premised on the Objectivist philosophy of Ayn Rand. Ditko released several other creator-owned characters, including Static and the Mocker for alternative comics publishers throughout the 1980s, flanked by work-for-hire projects at Marvel, DC, and elsewhere throughout the 1980s and early 1990s.

The bulk of Ditko's output over the last thirty-five years has been with long-time co-publisher Robin Snyder in a series of self-published, small press works, featuring regular, new content alongside reprints and essays from Ditko. The most recent of which will be released later in the summer of 2018, with posthumous works on the horizon. In the Snyder-Ditko publications, Ditko created and developed a number of new characters while also revisiting previous creations like Mr. A. Also contained within the Snyder-Ditko publications are a large number of essays by Ditko, which consider philosophic matters, violence in the media, toxic fandom, and the stolen art market that arose after the artwork of Ditko, Jack Kirby, and many others were stolen from the Marvel offices. Amongst those essays, Ditko also provided a multi-part history of his time at Marvel, including the long-suspected over reasons for his departure from the company in 1965.

Unlike the operatic bombast of comics by contemporaries like Jack Kirby, for whom Ditko shared a mutual respect, Ditko took on a consistently introspective approach to his narratives. Instead of exploring the outermost reaches of the cosmos, like Kirby's Fantastic Four or New Gods, Ditko's characters ex-

cavated the limitless pocket dimensions of a cosmic inner space—a sometimes disquieting realm where characters had to confront their own demons and were congratulated by their better angels as they searched for themselves. In perhaps his most widely recognized sequence of pages, Ditko puts a fine point on this notion. In the famous lifting sequence from *Amazing Spider-Man* #33, Spider-Man offers the reader an outward expression of his inner self. Instead of heroes that were aliens, unimaginably wealthy, Ditko offered his readers heroes that they could be. Spider-Man is not a hero because of his costume, not because of his powers, not because of his gadgets, and not because he got the girl. Ditko's Spider-Man, the reader cannot avoid, is a hero because of his heart.

Steve Ditko passed away on June 29, 2018. A complete list of his work, including available self-published titles, and forthcoming posthumous work can be found at the following link (<http://ditko.blogspot.com>), or by contacting Ditko's publishing partner, Robin Snyder.

## Genderlessness in a Queer Universe: On Ann Leckie's Imperial Radch Trilogy

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In the Imperial Radch trilogy (composed of *Ancillary Justice* [2013], *Ancillary Sword* [2014], and *Ancillary Mercy* [2015]), Ann Leckie creates a world in which gender does not exist and therefore the sexual particularities of bodies are inconsequential; as a result, there is also no need to tell the readers of the characters' sex. Not since Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1968), to which Leckie most certainly owes the idea, has there been a more thoroughly compelling attempt at deconstructing the pervasiveness of the gender binary system. In this essay, I argue that Leckie successfully produces gender neutrality or genderlessness by paradoxically creating a "gynocentric" language. Because of the very unusual nature of reading an entire text with only feminine pronouns, the reader has no choice but to constantly remember that "she" does not necessarily indicate "woman." In this way, the reader is challenged to question gender itself as a viable category of identity. In her radical universalization of the feminine pronoun, Leckie thus criticizes the fallibility of language to accurately represent the social construction of identity. Consequently, she also creates what I call an ideal queer universe by pronominally disrupting the possibility of reading heterosexuality. Such a feat radically transforms the reading process from the usual schema (the reader does the reading) to a situation in which the text itself "queers" the reader.

In the trilogy, Breq tells the story of her struggle against Anaander Mianaii, the Lord of the galactic mega-empire called the Radch. Breq was once part of *Justice of Toren*, a two thousand-year-old artificially intelligent ship whose single consciousness lived through several hundreds of bodies at once (the eponymous "ancillaries"). After Mianaii, who herself exists as a single person living in thousands of

bodies, destroyed *Justice of Toren* and left Breq as its sole surviving individual entity, Breq set about to kill Mianaii by any means necessary. The story begins on the icy planet of Nilt—an obvious reference to Le Guin's Gethen—where Breq must communicate with its inhabitants, the Nilters, who have an archaic way of distinguishing individuals: by gender. In the Radchaii culture, gender is considered largely barbaric; in fact, the Radchaii language "does not mark gender in any way" (*Justice* 3). Consequently, Breq must assess the Nilters' gender identity based on cultural cues. In a sentence equivalent to *Left Hand of Darkness's* shocking "the king was pregnant," Breq asserts, "She [the Nilter] was probably male to judge from the angular mazelike patterns quilting her shirt" (*Justice* 3). This sentence serves to provide the reader early on with an array of information concerning the reading process for the rest of the book. Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, that "she" is the only pronoun available in Radchaii to talk about people. Secondly, more subtly, that gender identity is assessed by gender expression—here, the shirt—rather than physical attributes—the fact that the Nilter is "bulkier" than Breq is only incidental and not considered a cue either way. Finally, that even with cues, in gendered languages and cultures Breq is always only guessing ("probably") someone's gender identity—and, throughout the trilogy, often wrongly. The fact that a two-thousand year old highly intelligent AI, who is so knowledgeable about humanity that she can pass as human for a good deal of the trilogy, cannot get people's gender identity right is a testament to the arbitrariness and absurdity of gender norms.

Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*, a staple of queer and feminist science fiction, attempts to portray a world of gender neutrality, but fails, I contend, precisely because it uses masculine pronouns to describe agenderism. Although Le Guin's characters are physically entirely androgynous (they "become" male or female during *kemmer*, that is to say when they are in heat, but are otherwise without sexual organs), they are mostly referred to as "he," due in no small part to the patriarchal preconceptions of the human character from whose perspective the story is told. In Le Guin's 1976 essay "Is Gender Necessary?," in which she reflects on the incredible success of her novel, she defends this decision precisely because "he" is the "generic pronoun in English" (169) and thus makes the most sense to describe even the

agender Gethenians—though in the 1988 “Redux” of this same essay, Le Guin recognizes that the “generic pronoun” did “exclude women from discourse” (169). But the genericity of the masculine pronoun does not necessarily translate into the kind of “gender neutrality” that *Left Hand of Darkness* aspires to. In “Redux,” Le Guin comments on her regret at not having shown her androgynous characters’ more “feminine” side: “If I’d known how the pronouns I used shaped, directed, controlled my own thinking, I might have been ‘cleverer’” (170). In other words, the impact of the masculine pronoun is more important than characters’ performances of gender, even if that performance is “gender neutral.” She writes further, “the frequent criticism I received [is] that the Gethenians seem like *men*, instead of *menwomen*” (169). And the fact that readers imagined these androgynous characters as male is not surprising, since imagination is largely dependent on language.

Leckie’s trilogy succeeds primarily because of its reliance on feminine pronouns. It is precisely because “she,” the signifier of the feminine, can never represent universality or neutrality under patriarchy, that it paradoxically achieves the gender neutrality that Le Guin’s novel attempted, but ultimately failed, to represent. By the very unusualness of reading an entire text written only with female pronouns, Leckie produces in the reader a perpetual sense of pronominal dysphoria. Even the most recalcitrant reader would have to question, indeed, why the use of only one pronoun, so commonly “he,” seems so strange and unfamiliar with “she.” One method of dealing with that unease is to remember that in the very specific context of the Radchaii universe, “she” does not necessarily mean “woman.” It is only in dissociating the meaning of linguistic gender with actual sex/gender that the reader can cope with the overwhelming dominance of the pronoun “she” in the text. As a result, the reader is constantly reasserting the genderlessness of the characters in the text. In other terms, the reader must always remember that gender really does not exist in the novels.

Of course, Leckie is not the first novelist to play with linguistic gender. In *Pronoun Envy: Literary Uses of Linguistic Gender*, Anna Livia makes a compelling analysis of French and English novels and their different tactics to get rid of gender in language. She makes a non-exhaustive list of twenty-six novels written between 1868 (Herculine Barbin’s *Mes Souvenirs*) and 1999 (her own novel, *Bruised Fruit*) that

“experiment with or challenge the linguistic gender system” (20). Unsurprisingly, the extreme majority of these novels are either queer or science fictional (I would argue the Imperial Radch trilogy is both). Livia’s study highlights the fact that gender is such an essential component of language that to create anything genderless is to risk incomprehensibility. As opposed to race and ability (both potential physical markers of identity), which must be mentioned explicitly in the text, gender is an inescapable, “tyrannical” element of speech. In other words, a character whose race and physical ability are not mentioned will be read as white and able-bodied; but in order for an author to make a character’s gender secret, in-existent, or irrelevant, he or she must manipulate language to great extents. However, *Ancillary Justice* and its sequels are different precisely because their single most defining characteristic is not a substitution or another type of deterrence, but the universalization of “she” as the only pronoun available in Radchaii. Once or twice throughout the trilogy, Breq must speak in a gendered language, and thus designate characters that have always been called “she” as “he.” This is not an incidental coincidence: Leckie creates these key moments precisely so that the reader remembers that he or she *cannot* trust language to determine someone’s sex/gender. It is thus in using the universalization of the female pronoun, with occasional exceptions, that Leckie can point out to the fallibility of a language constructed upon a gender binary.

Because of such sudden and unusual switches in language, the text creates unresolved paradoxes: the reader must constantly negotiate contradictory information about the gender of the characters. Seivarden, Breq’s sidekick in the first novel, for example, is designated as male at the very beginning but then, like everyone else, referred to as “she” (*Justice* 3). Seivarden is one of the only characters whose sex is given (along with Mianaii and a few minor characters), which I argue Leckie uses as an explicit point of unease for the reader. If none of the characters’ sexes were “discovered,” the reader could easily concede to imagining all characters as women (although that might also cause its set of problems). Instead, in providing the reader with Seivarden’s sexual identity, Leckie gives them no choice but to have to uneasily negotiate the paradox of calling a person of the male sex “she.” This constant contradiction is a clever rhetorical measure to avoid falling into the relatively

easier task of imagining an all-female world; with Seivarden, the reader is perpetually reminded that the pronoun “she” does not hold the same authority as it does in other texts and in language in general.

In getting rid of gender altogether, Leckie also annihilates the possibility of classifying sexualities and desires into the hetero/homosexual binary, thereby creating an ideal queer universe. The impossibility to “tell” the sex/gender identity of characters necessarily impedes the recognition of sexual and romantic relationships as heterosexual (or nonheterosexual). Consequently, Leckie quite literally destroys what Adrienne Rich has called compulsory heterosexuality and Judith Butler designated as the heterosexual matrix, and recreates sexuality entirely independently to sexual identity. Facetiously, Leckie even deconstructs the gendered eroticization of the body (i.e., highly sexualized body parts such as breasts) by displacing desire onto something as innocent (and genderless) as hands: since in Radchaii culture every good citizen is expected to wear gloves, bare hands are considered highly erotic. Leckie’s impossibly queer text actually transforms quite uniquely the meaning of “queering” a text. In the groundbreaking collection *Queer Universes: Sexualities and Science Fiction*, Wendy Gay Pearson makes a compelling argument to “read queerly” science fiction texts. She writes, “Reading sf queerly, we queer it as much as we are queered by it. As readers, we become different through the act of reading, of opening ourselves to the flow of possibilities, of new ideas, of new bodies” (73). I would argue that Leckie not only demands the reader to read her text queerly, but makes it *impossible not to do so*.

To read the Imperial Radch trilogy is to queer oneself, to “become different through the act of reading.” Not even the most persistent and resistant readers who, as Leckie claims in a recent podcast, use sex scenes in the novels to affirm a character’s sex/gender and thus “heterosexualize” these relationships, can succeed entirely (“Geek’s Guide to the Galaxy”). Precisely because of the element of “not-knowing,” of never having confirmation, reinforced by the extreme predominance of the feminine pronoun, the reader can never fully “convert” relationships between characters to heterosexuality. In other words, it is not the fact that these characters might happen to be female or male-bodied that makes their relationships and identities queer; it is the idea that sex/

gender are entirely irrelevant to their desires and relationships.

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# The SF in Translation Universe

*Editor's Note: "The SF in Translation Universe" is a regular column appearing in the Feature 101 section of SFRA Review (beginning with issue #325)*

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HELLO AND WELCOME to the *SFRA Review's* inaugural "SF in Translation" (SFT) column. I'd like to thank Sean for graciously offering this space to me to discuss the exciting universe of non-Anglophone speculative fiction and keep you up to date on upcoming novels and collections, as well as recently-published short fiction. In this ongoing column I'll also highlight the translators and publishers who bring us these texts, and the conventions and conferences across the country that have started including SFT in their programs.

For this first installment, though, I'll restrict myself to catching you up on the SFT that's out this summer (believe me, I could go on for *pages*). As usual, we have a solid selection of Japanese SFT, out from Haikasoru and the University of Minnesota Press (Kurodahan and Vertical, two other regular publishers of Japanese SFT, are represented earlier and later in the year).

From Haikasoru comes Tobi Hirotaka's *The Thousand Year Beach* (tr. Matt Treyvaud), in which mysterious spiders attack a thousand-year-old virtual-reality resort; and volume 7 of Yoshiki Tanaka's ten-volume space opera *Legend of the Galactic Heroes*. Talented translators Daniel Huddleston and Tyran Grillo are taking turns bringing this story of galactic conquest and ambition into English, and once you start this series, you'll certainly want to finish it. Thankfully, it looks like we'll get the final three volumes in the near future.

Minnesota is offering us a very different kind of Japanese SFT with Mariko Ōhara's *Hybrid Child* (tr. Jodie Beck), a rare example of feminist Japanese sf in which a cyborg assumes the "form and spirit" of a girl murdered by her mother. First published in 1990, it went on to win the Seiun Award, which recognizes the best Japanese science fiction published during the previous year. *Hybrid Child* is, not surprisingly, at the top of my TBR pile.

Spanish-language SFT is also well-represented this summer, as it is every year. Award-winning Spanish author and editor Cristina Jurado (*SuperSonic Magazine*, *Apex Magazine*) is out with a collection of stories that range in focus from upgraded humans to monsters. A

big thank-you to Nevsky Books for bringing *Alphaland* to Anglophone readers. Cuban SF author Yoss is out once more from Restless Books with the "raucous" and racy *Condomnauts* (tr. David Frye), a story about sexual mores on an intergalactic scale. Two of Yoss's other novels—*A Planet For Rent* and *Super Extra Grande*—have come out from Restless within the past few years as part of their initiative to translate Cuban sf.

Jumping over to Argentina, we find *Comemadre* by Roque Larraquy (tr. Heather Cleary), which explores how far humans are willing to go in quest of transcendence. Larraquy joins a distinguished list of Argentine sf authors (including Rodrigo Fresan and Angelica Gorodischer) whose entrancing books and stories have made their way into English in recent years.

And if you think that's all we're getting this summer, think again. You'll be able to get your hands on SFT from Italy, Serbia, Quebec, Sweden, Finland, Portugal, Russia, Brazil, and China, as well. Francesco Verso's transhumanist cyberpunk novel *Nexhuman* (tr. Sally McCorry) is coming out from Apex, Olena Bormashenko's updated translation of the Strugatsky brothers' *The Snail on the Slope* is headed our way from the Chicago Review Press, and acclaimed Chinese author Liu Cixin (the Three-Body Problem Trilogy) is out with *Ball Lightning* (tr. Joel Martinsen). And for all you Zoran Živković fans, there's a new edition of the Serbian author's *Fourth Circle* (tr. Mary Popović) out from Cadmus Press, part of the Zoran Živković collection, which includes breathtaking cover art.

If you're more of a short SFT reader, you're in luck as well, because 2018 (especially September) is full of anthologies: *Solarpunk* from Brazil and Portugal; *Zion's Fiction* from Israel; *The Reincarnated Giant* from China; *Steampunk International* from Finland, Portugal, and the UK; and the long-awaited fifth volume of the *Apex Book of World SF*. There's never been such a variety of voices, languages, and cultures in sf available to Anglophone readers.

For those of you who like to read short fiction online, you have much to choose from, thanks to publications like *Clarkesworld*, *World Literature Today*, *Words Without Borders*, *Apex Magazine*, *Samovar*, and many others. Sf translated from the Chinese, Korean, French, Bengali, Italian, Yiddish, Dutch, Spanish . . . it's all available to read for free. And with stories about such things as an approaching planet-destroying asteroid, a hallucinated silver tiger, and a revolt against machine overlords, you'll have no excuse to be bored this summer.

I see your brains exploding and your TBR piles toppling, so I'll stop here. Until next time in the SFT universe!

## Lois McMaster Bujold

Bruce A. Beatie

Edward James. *Lois McMaster Bujold*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2015 (Modern Masters of Science Fiction). Xvi + 208 pages. Hardcover: ISBN 978-0-252-08085-2, \$85.00. Trade paperback: ISBN 978-0-252-03932-4, \$25.00.

Edward James offers an illuminating, if sometimes misleading, addition to Bujold criticism. The first chapter introduces us to the influence of Tolkien on her work. She “bought the first volume of *The Lord of the Rings* in the pirated Ace paperback edition” (3), and James quotes Bujold’s reaction to reading the minstrel’s singing at the Field of Cormallen: “I could crawl on my knees through broken glass for the gift of words that pierce like those” (4). Her connection with Tolkien is not trivial; throughout the book James makes reference to *The Lord of the Rings*. After commenting on Bujold’s life so far as creator of fictions, he reaches a conclusion that, to me, is misleading: “Bujold’s problem, *if she has one*, is that she has not been a reliable writer of traditional space opera. She plays with its conventions, she subverts them” (16-17, emphasis mine). Though he mentions space opera in every chapter, he usually discounts its importance in her work. Indeed, her connection with that genre seems denied on the next page, when he concludes the chapter with a list of scenes in the Vorkosigan saga that he finds “emotionally powerful” (17). “These are sometimes versions of Tolkien’s eucatastrophe: that moment of joy when something happens to divert a threatened tragic ending” (18).

The book’s obsession with space opera begins on the second page of chapter two (“The Science Fiction”): “Bujold began writing during a major flourishing of the subgenre. Space opera was dominant among Hugo-winning novels between 1981 and the mid-1900s. The popularity may stem from the remarkable success of Frank Herbert’s *Dune*” (20). This is the book’s only mention of Herbert, and to connect him to space opera seems equally misleading; the seven *Dune* books are set almost exclusively on planets and have more parallels to Tolkien’s Middle-earth than to space opera. James admits that “[v]

ery few of Bujold’s books deal with adventure and conflict in space, the traditional subject matter of space opera” (22), and that “she has largely restricted herself to writing about people from one family, coming from one society, Barrayar, over a period of some 40 years” (21).

His comments on Bujold’s “Fantasy Worlds” (chapter three), *The Spirit Ring* (stand-alone novel), the Chalion trilogy, and the *Sharing Knife* sequence, are excellent. He cites John Lennard’s insightful discussion of the *Sharing Knife* in Croft’s 2013 collection of articles on Bujold, and his commentary on the Chalion books goes well beyond David D. Oberhelman’s essay in Croft. He suggests that “the theme of the whole [*Sharing Knife*] series is drawn from the lyrics of *Oklahoma*: ‘Oh, the farmer and the cowman should be friends’” (66), and that “[t]he culture of the Lakewalkers has its parallels with that of Native Americans (and indeed of Tolkien’s Rangers)” (66, cf. 71).

The remaining chapters of the book discuss particular (and quite general) themes in Bujold’s works. In chapter four (“Cultural Critique”) James considers Bujold’s presentation of the various planetary cultures: Barrayar, Beta Colony, Cetaganda, Komarr, Earth. “Running through all these descriptions of planets,” he concludes, “is the firm sense that for Bujold, cultures shape individuals as much as environmental or genetic determinants do. [...] this is the principle on which she constructs the characters that live on these worlds” (93).

The second paragraph of chapter five (“Character”) begins: “The question of whether character is a product of nurture or nature is [...] alluded to often in the Vorkosigan books” (94). The last paragraph begins: “This chapter began with Miles’s genes being taken for the gene bank on Cetaganda, yet the books conclude overwhelmingly with an argument for nature” (118). But the last *words* are: “‘Nature’ versus ‘Nurture’ is a debate that, in our world too, is as much political as scientific” (119). One of the few annoyances is James’s overuse, especially in this chapter, of the jargon terms “focalize” and its nominal derivatives, which he pulls from Gérard Genette; first introduced in chapter two, its various forms occur no less than nine times on page 105, for example, though he does use the more transparent term “point-of-view” on the same page.

Chapter six (“Disability and Genetic Modification”) discusses “an idea that resonates throughout the

Vorkosigan sequence,” namely that “a person’s humanity can be measured by the way that person regards and treats those who are marked out through disability or some other characteristic” (135). Though there are four articles on the theme of disability in Croft’s 2013 book, James cites only Kelso’s cyborg-oriented essay (125) and Linda Wight’s look at society’s views of the masculine (134); more often cited is a 1997 interview with Mike Levy (notes 6-11, pp. 122-124).

More interesting is chapter 7 (“Women, Uterine Replicators, and Sexuality”), not least because its themes are central to *Gentleman Jole and the Red Queen* (2013), Bujold’s most recent Vorkosigan book—a possibility James seems not to expect, and which he does not mention. However, a comment in this chapter seems to anticipate it; he says that “[w]hat makes Bujold’s works stand out in the context of contemporary science fiction and fantasy is not the number of women or their strength of personality; it is the importance of pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood in her narratives” (138). He concludes the chapter with a discussion of the physical hermaphrodite Bel Thorne and the literally neuter Cetagandan “ba” figures “at the heart of the plot [...] in both *Cetaganda* and *Diplomatic Immunity*” (155).

James’s book has no real conclusion, though its final sentence points to one. “Miles, both as person and as representative, is Cordelia’s victory over a Barrayar she once entered as a barely tolerated foreigner” (169). *Cordelia’s Honor* is mentioned only twice in James’s book—“as an omnibus” of *Shards of Honor* and *Barrayar* (36), and later (139) he quotes Bujold’s “Author’s Afterword” in evidence of the “omnibus” being “about the price of becoming a parent.”

James spends more than a page (165-166) of the final chapter discussing “Aftermaths,” the “independent short story that is attached to *Shards of Honor*.” After the destruction of the Barrayaran fleet at Escobar, a small Escobaran ship manned by a pilot officer and a female Medtech is combing the area for “corpse-sicles” (245). In a final extended search they find the body of an Escobaran woman officer. The pilot reacts badly to the Medtech’s loving care of the body, but when he realizes that the body is the Medtech’s daughter, he apologizes and asks to help. “Certainly,” she says, “An honor is not diminished for being shared.” He helps, “as shy as an apprentice saint washing his first leper,” and she consoles him. His last thought, the end of the story, is that

“the good face pain. But the great—they embrace it” (253). “This,” says James, “is the stunning end to that first Vorkosigan novel” (166). The pilot’s words could also be an appropriate comment not only on *Gentleman Jole*, but on the whole series thus far.

The book is well-written and clear, save for the occasional venture into Genettian jargon. For the general reader, it is a fine introduction to the total work of Bujold, not just for fans of the Vorkosigan saga. James’s substantial insights, especially the discussions of Bujold’s fantasy novels, are of value to the critic and scholar alike; they should stimulate those, like the majority of the works in the “Critical Bibliography,” who comment only on the sf novels. Indeed, James’s commentary argues for consideration of Bujold’s oeuvre, not simply as generic sf/fantasy, but as serious literature.

## Star-Begotten: A Life Lived in Science Fiction

Amanda Lerner

James Gunn. *Star-Begotten: A Life Lived in Science Fiction*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2017. Paperback, 223 pages, \$25.00, ISBN 978-1-4766-7026-3.

In the world of American sf, few figures loom larger than James Gunn. As he himself notes—somewhat bemusedly—he is one of the last living writers of the Golden Age of sf. Though Gunn is a prolific writer and purveyor of short stories, serialized novels, and novelettes to the many sf serials that abounded in the 1950s and 1960s, his contributions are perhaps even greater in the academic study of the genre. Gunn single-handedly created the Center for the Study of Science Fiction at the University of Kansas. The Center, formally established through an endowment in 1982, emerged from Gunn’s own summer workshops and academic courses on how to read, write, and understand sf. He served as president of the SFWA and the SFRA, has won the John W. Campbell Memorial Award and the Theodore Sturgeon Award, was honored as a Grand Master of Science Fiction by the SFWA in 2007 and was inducted into the Science Fiction and Fantasy Hall of Fame in 2015. He is, in short, the embodiment of American sf.

Gunn's deep, and somewhat accidental, immersion into science fiction is precisely what makes his story so compelling. Born in 1923, Gunn lived through the Great Depression, World War II, and the Korean and Vietnam Wars—you name it, he not only lived it but went on to write about it. A Midwesterner through and through, Gunn traveled the world only to find himself comfortably raising a family, and creating an academic field, in Lawrence, Kansas. Kansas appears in his works over and over again, and his career as an academic in Lawrence especially influenced his fiction. This can be seen especially in his seminal work *Kampus* (1977), which grapples with student activism on college campuses (and which is remarkably prescient in today's climate).

Given Gunn's extraordinary life, the construction of a fluid and accessible autobiography is no easy task. Gunn helps his readers along the way, providing regular photos that range from his grandparents' wedding portrait to the day he was inducted into the SF&F Hall of Fame. Reading *Star-Begotten* feels like stepping into an old friend's living room and settling in to reminisce. His prose feels almost like a stream of consciousness, winding this way and that and hitting upon some remarkable anecdotes along the way. It's a comforting, if slightly confusing at times, way to learn about someone's life story.

Though his journey into science fiction is woven throughout his life, the first few chapters of his autobiography, unsurprisingly, focus on his childhood. These chapters are the most confusing, in large part because Gunn's life was never static. He describes growing up and moving, joining the army and moving, meeting his wife and moving—he was constantly on the move prior to settling down in Lawrence. Gunn also has an excellent memory for detail, describing in-depth the topography of each of his residences and the names and personalities of many acquaintances throughout the first part of his life. As a result, it can be somewhat difficult to follow his movements up until Lawrence.

Though in his earlier days he had had brief aspirations to become a playwright, Gunn quickly found his milieu in teaching and producing (science) fiction. Gunn was involved in a wide variety of sf activities, from the short stories that he shopped around to nearly every sf periodical, to the screenplays he wrote or co-wrote, to the various associations and conferences in which he took part. Gunn is inextricable from the history of the development of American

sf; indeed, he writes at length about his trips abroad for the U.S. Information Agency to, essentially, evangelize for science fiction. Gunn makes the argument, clear and strong, that through sf we can bridge divides, we can imagine a better tomorrow, and we can learn more about ourselves. As Gunn is fond of saying, "Let's save the world through science fiction."

The sheer number of incredible stories that Gunn has accrued, however, sometimes crowd out the most interesting anecdotes. Gunn devotes one paragraph to the SFWA's award, and subsequent withdrawal, of honorary membership to Stanisław Lem. This was a huge and controversial event, yet Gunn devotes only a few sentences to it. Likewise, he glosses over his interactions with Boris Strugatsky, one of the most famous sf writers to come out of the Soviet Union. One wishes that he would spend a little bit of time dwelling on these meetings, giving the reader a glimpse into what it was really like to meet, know, and even argue with the great powerhouses of world sf.

Gunn intersperses his autobiography with contemporaneous accounts of trips he's made, speeches for awards he has been given, and memorials of the deaths of his loved ones. These are marked by the use of a different typeface, although it would be easy for the casual reader to miss the small note on the first page that explains this device (I did and spent two chapters very confused before hunting for an explanation). It is in these more formal accounts that Gunn's voice shines. His speeches, particularly his Grand Master Award Remarks and the speech given at the donation of the Theodore Sturgeon Papers at Kansas University, offer a roadmap to his favorite phrase—he encourages his audience not just to save the world through science fiction, but describes his own contributions to that quest. However, the placement of these asides within the book is not always intuitive, leaving the reader confused and pulled out of the narrative. They often repeat information immediately preceding or following them, which unfortunately diminishes their rhetorical strength. In that way, though they are perhaps the best parts of the book, they often feel almost unnecessary.

Overall, Gunn's contributions to the development of the genre, and subsequent academic study, of science fiction make his autobiography a fascinating window into a different, rapidly evolving world. Much like the sf that Gunn himself wrote, his own life has followed the arc of the promise for a better, brighter tomorrow.

# Octavia E. Butler

Kevin Pinkham

Gerry Canavan. *Octavia E. Butler*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2016. Paperback, 248 pages, \$22.00, ISBN 9780252082160. EBook ASIN B01N0412UY.

When the Huntington Library made its archive of Octavia Butler's papers available in 2013, it opened the doors to the world behind the worlds that Butler had created. As Gerry Canavan makes clear, that world behind the worlds is immense: "The *finding aid* for the collection is five hundred pages long; the number of pages contained within boxes at the Huntington numbers in the tens of thousands (at least)" (176, emphasis in original). While many scholars may eagerly rub their hands together at the thought of exploring a mountain of Butler's unpublished writing, not all of us can garner the time or the resources to pore over that much paper. Fortunately, Canavan has written a sort of Baedeker to the archive, providing readers with an exploration of the documents that reads like a highlights tour illuminating the excruciating writing process of many of Butler's texts, offering glimpses into the mind and heart of Butler, and tantalizing even the non-academic reader with dreams of undiscovered treasures that must remain in the archive. Canavan's immensely accessible book acts as a mini-biography of Butler, an overview of the many readings of her work, and an examination of Butler's thoughts regarding sf, race, feminism, the state of the world, and much more.

The book is organized chronologically, after Canavan's insightful introduction that wrestles with the ethics of publishing excerpts from works that were ostensibly intended to be private: her voluminous journals, rough drafts, notes, and other ephemera. While Canavan does reveal amusing insights gleaned from the archive, such as Butler's crush on William Shatner and a brief mention of Butler's *Star Trek* fan fiction (16), he has striven (rather successfully) to respect Butler's apparent wishes and has done "the best [he] can to remain on the proper side of the line and to eschew voyeurism, vulturism, and graverobbing" (12).

Canavan deftly traces the evolution of Butler's ideas from her earliest dabblings to her final works, including her drafts for the unfinished *Parable of*

*the Trickster*, which Canavan claims he was the first academic to have seen when he unboxed the drafts in December 2013 (144). In each discussion of her texts, Canavan offers a brief but illuminating summary, such that those who have never read that particular text will have an adequate introduction to it, and those who have read that text will appreciate the succinct, insightful reminder.

Each chapter is titled after either a significant work published during the period the chapter represents or alternate titles to or scenes from those works. For example, chapter one, "Childfinder (1947-1971)," is named after the short story that Harlan Ellison purchased from Butler in 1971 for his still unpublished *The Last Dangerous Visions*, and chapter three, "To Keep Thee in All Thy Ways (1976-1980)," is named after Butler's preferred title for *Kindred* (66).

Chapter one establishes a pattern for future chapters, in which Canavan will present biographical information, interwoven with critical reflections on the works of that period and their intersections with later works. In this chapter, Canavan reveals Butler was an "avid collector of comics" (16), thus explaining the fascination with supermen that dominates many of her later texts. In chapter one, Canavan summarizes a number of Butler's early juvenilia, including stories that mention a character named "Doro," who will appear in a more developed form in her Patternist works, as well as early incarnations of characters that evolve into more familiar figures in Butler's later writing. One of the most intriguing insights in this chapter might be Canavan's observation that "Almost literally everything Butler would ever write spiraled out of those early stories, which can be networked together into a singular whole, almost into a kind of Butlerian 'mythos' [...]. Butler constantly adapted and remixed her own fiction, especially to rescue material that didn't work in its original context" (17-18). Canavan returns to this observation throughout the book.

One strength of Canavan's work is providing readers with a hypermetropic view of Butler's writing, pointing out patterns permeating her texts that might be inscrutable to casual readers. Thus, he can connect Butler's life experiences as recorded in her journals with her published work, highlighting recurring themes and tropes, such as her "insight[s] into the nature of survival—survival as the only choice, survival as itself a kind of resistance, a triumph—[that] structures much of Butler's work" (60).

Canavan's excavation of the archives often allows him to chronicle Butler's roller-coaster ride through success and failure. Chapter four, "Blindsight (1980-1987)," chronicles an especially turbulent period of Butler's life, in which she won the Hugo for her short story "Speech Sounds" and the Hugo, the Nebula, and the Locus awards for her novelette "Bloodchild" but struggled with the unpublished novel *Blindsight* and the never-completed anthology *Black Futures*. This was also the period in which Butler published her essay, "Lost Races of Science Fiction," the full text of which is included in an appendix in Canavan's book. The essay has been out of print since 1980 and presents Butler's critique of race and sf, ideas that had clearly informed her work but she had not yet stated so explicitly.

In chapter six, "God of Clay (1989-2006)," Canavan again muses on the conflicts of loss and success, addressing two significant events: Butler winning the MacArthur genius grant and the death of her mother. Canavan observes that her mother's death influenced Butler's drafts of *Parable of the Trickster*, as Butler attempted to tell the story of a "daughter struggl[ing] as best she could to carry on the legacy of a beloved lost mother" (143). What little is in the archives concerning the MacArthur grant reveals that Butler could barely believe she was awarded the grant and that she was worried that the award had "possibly even become an impediment to her writing" (142).

In the final chapters, Canavan discusses Butler's growing fame and continual struggle with pessimism. He collects the threads of Butler's work that culminate in *Fledgling* and examines the final unpublished texts. Canavan concludes by tracing both the works that were published after Butler's death and works by other authors that completed or continued Butler's work, even while she was alive, such as *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements*, dedicated to and clearly inspired by Butler, and *Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora*, which realized Butler's frustrated attempts at editing an African-American sf anthology.

Canavan's observations from the journals and letters, combined with analyses of the rough drafts and critical receptions of the published works, paint a portrait of a gifted but often lonely writer who suffered from tremendous self-doubt and pessimism, whose life and professional work seemed to be a

series of alternating failures and successes. Fortunately for readers, the successes vastly outweigh the (often, only perceived) failures, and Butler has left a trove of texts that will offer fans and academics ambiguous, ambivalent joy for many years to come. This book deserves a place of honor on the shelf of every fan or scholar of Butler's work and should be acquired by every institution with the resources to do so, from the smallest local library to the most heavily endowed research university.

## Alfred Bester

Jerome Winter

Jad Smith. *Alfred Bester*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2016. Paperback, 208 pages, \$22.00, ISBN 9780252082139.

Jad Smith's *Alfred Bester* is one of the latest volumes in the Modern Masters of Science Fiction series from the University of Illinois Press, now currently under the series editorship of Gary K. Wolfe. A highlight of this ever-growing series is the authoritative bibliographies, and this most recent installment proves to be no exception. The bibliography includes not only the two major novels that are still in print and the major short fiction and scattered criticism but also the forgotten and neglected work such as the later novels, the un-anthologized short fiction, interviews, and radio plays, gleaned from extensive research into special collections and rare-books archives across several universities. Awareness of a broad swath of cultural production is necessary for a project such as this one. For Smith underscores in the conclusion to this volume that the latter-day revival of Bester's prestige rests in part on the author's wide-ranging, sticky-fingered absorption of a postmodern medley of genres, communities, and industries.

In the 1950s through 1970s, the savvy New Yorker Bester personally worked in a number of the flourishing writing-related professions, scripting comic books such as *The Phantom* and *Green Lantern*, radio plays such as *The Shadow* and *Nick Carter* serials, and teleplays such as *Tom Corbett*, *Space Cadet*. After what Smith refers to as the "Eureka Years" of the fifties when Bester produced his most remembered work, Bester also worked regularly for the magazine

*Holiday* as a columnist. While not closely examining the actual trans-medial texts of this eclectic career, Smith frames Bester's self-conception as an "everything writer" (qtd. in Smith 25, emphasis in original) to understand the twin-braided concerns of this volume. Firstly, Smith analyzes Bester as the "quintessential insider's outsider" (2) to the print-sf genre of his immediate milieu. Secondly, Smith parses Bester as a magpie purveyor of pastiche, bricolage, and parody who deftly demolishes formal and generic boundaries of print sf.

The double optics of both Bester's passive-aggressive relationship with the print-sf genre and his bold stylistic experimentalism evades some of the common pitfalls of single-author studies of this sort, namely, the marked tendency to rehash rote plot summary or to lapse into tangential biographical woolgathering. One other related pitfall this otherwise excellent volume does not quite escape, though, is a paucity of historical context that shapes Bester's work beyond glancing mentions of "Depression-era realities" (18) or "McCarthy-era politics" (123). The social and historical underpinnings of Bester's work remain relatively unexplored here, leading to some glaring interpretative lacunae such as Bester's prescient critique of the expansion of corporate oligarchies or the later feminist interrogation of the degrading objectification of women in his fiction.

Nevertheless, Jad Smith's work is a seminal study of Alfred Bester, given its close, extended readings of the author's whole oeuvre, with a duly pronounced emphasis on Bester's critically overlooked masterworks of *The Demolished Man* (1954) and *The Stars, My Destination* (1956). Smith attributes the routine dismissal of Bester's stature in sf genre history to the author's hip outsider edginess. Perhaps such a dismissal is best typified by Alexei Panshin's broadsides against what he critic saw as the awkward incursions of an interloping dilettante. Bester's self-cultivated image of himself as a maverick disruptor of sf genre protocols solidified relatively early, as Smith shows, with a fateful meeting with John W. Campbell following the submission of the short story "Oddy and Id" (first published as "The Devil's Invention," 1950) in *Astounding* magazine. The ham-fisted attempt to edit the Freudian-inflected story to be in keeping with Campbell's belief in Dianetics forced Bester to develop "an antipatico" (qtd. in Smith 5) with the particular brand of hard sf that Campbell promoted. Likewise, throughout this volume, Smith

positions his readings of Bester's work as critical re-adoptions of Campbell's genre paradigm, whether it is the non-linear time-travel storytelling of "The Probable Man" (1941), the decadent travesty of the post-apocalyptic rekindling-of-civilization trope in "Adam and No Eve" (1941), a cheeky parody of Asimovian future history in "The Push of a Finger" (1942), the skewering of escapist fantasies in "Hobson's Choice" (1952), the psychopathic robot parable of "Fondly Fahrenheit" (1954), all culminating in the scathing rebukes of the morally murky telepathic police in *The Demolished Man* and the darkly ambiguous cosmic messiah of Gully Foyle in *The Stars, My Destination*.

It could be argued that Bester's stylistic techniques were not all that innovative or experimental given that he self-consciously cribbed them from the previous generations of Modernist writers such as James Joyce or e.e. cummings. With reference to a speech Bester delivered to the University of Chicago, "Science Fiction and the Renaissance Man" (1957), Smith contends, though, that Bester anticipates the New Wave by constructing texts so polysemous and overdetermined that the sf genre community was alternately enthralled and aggravated. And Smith's sustained reading of Bester's work is powerfully and continually driven by close attention to such "overcoding" (39) of stylistic excess. For instance, Smith suggests that the unreliable narration focalized around Ben Reich in *The Demolished Man* not only vividly renders the abnormal psychology of dissociative disorder but "holds up technically" (109). Smith shows that through this technical mastery Bester heightens his readers' pleasure as co-author of an overdetermined text by revealing that Ben Reich objectively misinterprets the acceptance of corporate merger as a rejection. The reader can therefore slowly piece together that such a flimsy pretext for murder in a post-homicide future masks a coiled spring of repressed oedipal rage. Likewise, Smith lucidly glosses the nonstandard orthography, synesthesia, and concrete poetry of *The Stars, My Destination* as decentering anthropocentrism, "gesturing toward a gap between the cosmos itself and human experience of it [...that] signals Foyle's budding awareness of a larger reality" (153). Smith argues that by such a technical move Bester did not succumb to a credulous faith in crackpot Jungian mysticism; rather, Bester simply relishes the opportunity to "experiment with technique on science-fic-

tional terms, but also to foster a philosophical sense of time reminiscent of Olaf Stapledon's *Star Maker* (1937)" (148).

All in all, this volume is a badly needed overview of Alfred Bester's fiction. It will be of keen interest to seasoned sf scholars as well as uninitiated readers looking for a quick introduction to this under-studied but influential sf author in addition to his often overlooked contribution to midcentury fiction.

## **Artificial Condition and Rogue Protocol**

Cait Coker

Martha Wells. *Artificial Condition*. New York: Tor.com, 2018. 160 pages, hardback. \$16.99. ISBN 978-1-250-18692-8.

Martha Wells. *Rogue Protocol*. New York: Tor.com, 2018. 160 pages, hardback. \$16.99. ISBN 978-1-250-19178-6.

Hot on the heels of her Hugo nomination for the first novella in *The Murderbot Diaries*, *All Systems Red* (2017), which won the 2018 Nebula Award for Best Novella, Martha Wells returns with not one but *two* sequels this summer. *Artificial Condition* and *Rogue Protocol* continue the adventures of the eponymous self-named "Murderbot," a SecUnit that has developed self-awareness along with a moral code and a functional depression. (In case you're wondering, Murderbot is possibly the furthest character you can get from that other famous depressed robot, Marvin; rather than being of a lachrymose disposition, Murderbot has intense social anxiety and would much prefer to binge-watch its favorite media serials than constantly save pesky humans—which it does often, sometimes against its own better judgment.) Wells's trademark gift for writing genuinely alien points of view (also demonstrated aptly in her other Hugo nominee this year, *Books of the Raksura*, which received a Best Series nomination) is showcased both through Murderbot and the other artificial intelligences with which it engages in communication feeds; the character is always humane but never *human*.

*Artificial Condition* takes place just after *All Systems Red*, with Murderbot on the run. In the first installment, we learned that Murderbot came to consciousness in the aftermath of a heinous accident that left a number of humans dead. Since then, it has cautiously gone through the motions of daily bot "life" while keeping its free will a secret. At the end of *All Systems Red*, Murderbot was purchased by Dr.

Mensah, one of the humans it saved, who is aware of its consciousness. While acknowledging that Mensah has only the best of intentions, Murderbot goes on the run to assure its own free will and destiny. The start of *Artificial Condition* finds Murderbot weighing the best possibilities for travel as far away from Mensah as it can get, while contemplating how and why the original accident happened. Almost immediately after stowing away on a transport ship, Murderbot meets an unexpected friend and ally, ART (Asshole Research Transport, at least in Murderbot's nomenclature).

ART immediately identifies Murderbot as a rogue bot, and despite Murderbot's misgivings, the two end up bonding over shared media. (As a sidenote, robots-as-fans is becoming a minor genre motif right now—Vina Jie-Min Prasad's "Fandom for Robots" is also up for a Hugo this year in the short story category—and it is a story element throughout the Murderbot stories that reveals so much about the character itself.) ART also assists Murderbot in a series of "upgrades" that add organic matter and make it possible for Murderbot to pass as an augmented human, though Murderbot staunchly refuses to add sexual organs: "No, thank you, no. No" (50). From there Murderbot undertakes another journey, this one to the mining facility where everything went wrong to begin with, masquerading as an individual security contractor (bodyguard) for a trio of workers who have themselves been abused by a shady company. Uncovering conspiracies and stolen data is never an easy process; expectedly, the mission goes sideways, and while Murderbot gets the data it needs and protects its humans along the way, it faces the new challenge of pretending to be human—one it doesn't care for at all.

*Rogue Protocol* takes place a few weeks after *Artificial Condition*, with Murderbot still pretending to be an augmented human. This is an exhausting job in and of itself, as Murderbot has to not only interact with real humans, but is called upon as a sort of arbitrator/authority when breaking up fights physical and verbal. "The good thing about pretending to be an augmented human security consultant instead of a construct Sec-Unit is that you can tell humans to shut up," Murderbot dryly observes (11). Following closely on the heels of a media report in which Dr. Mensah reveals that the GrayCris Corporation may have been illegally excavating alien bio-matter and murdering people as a cover-up, Murderbot sets

off to investigate. It silently tags along with an exploratory team and makes a new ally—of sorts. Miki is a human-form bot who belongs to Don Abene, a scientist whose team is going to a terraforming facility for a data assessment. The relationship between Miki and Abene baffles and bewilders Murderbot; it is an affectionate one, more than that of a pet and master, almost like a child and parent. Miki is accordingly naive, happy to trust that Murderbot, when it makes contact, is another security consultant looking out for Abene's welfare. Murderbot—cynical, pessimistic, and sarcastic as ever—is thrown into repeated fits of jealousy and anger as it witnesses the overt affection between the two: "I could count the number of times I sat on a human chair and it was never in front of clients" Murderbot observes with great acidity (55-56).

Again, the mission goes sideways, and this time Murderbot pretends to be a normal SecUnit, limited to mission parameters to keep its designated humans safe, as it appears that corporate conspiracy goes much farther, and is willing to sacrifice even more, than might be expected. At the end, Murderbot reluctantly concludes that it should return to Dr. Mensah, and perhaps bring everything full circle. The fourth Murderbot novella, *Exit Strategy*, comes out in October 2018; until then the reader is left on the edge of her seat.

The Murderbot Diaries as a series is the best hard sf I have read in ages; these books give the lie to the old adage that genre novels can have either strong ideas *or* strong characters and story: these stories have both in spades. The essential otherness of Murderbot can be read as a stand-in for any number of markers, be they race, gender, or sexuality (indeed, a recent blog post on Tor.com by Anya Johanna DeNiro makes a fascinating case for reading Murderbot as a trans woman). The expansive plots of company conspiracy and espionage in a space opera setting speak not just to our contemporary political concerns but also the interests for any number of Marxist critics. Indeed, a critic of any school will likely find these books fruitful ground for analysis and insights.

Murderbot itself is one of the most relatable fictional characters I've read, let alone most relatable fictional robot. Anyone designing a course around fictional AI would do well to include Wells on their syllabus; Murderbot will probably be of interest to those who study posthumanism and transhumanism as well. Both genre fans and scholars will find a

great deal of interest in these novellas; Wells packs a great deal of punch into each short work. While it's difficult to make further pronouncements given that the series is ongoing, it should be noted that, unlike many authors, Wells does not extend the story for its own sake: Each volume has its own story to tell, and does, without the pace or suspense ever faltering; her economic prose takes no prisoners and needs no padding. *Artificial Condition* and *Rogue Protocol* may be sequels that must be read in chronological order, but they do carry the story on meaningfully in a way that too many series do not. I for one can't wait to find out what happens next!

## Starlings

John J. Pierce

Jo Walton. *Starlings*. San Francisco: Tachyon, 2018. 272 pages, trade paperback, \$15.95. ISBN 978-1-61696-056-8

This first collection of Jo Walton's short works—stories, poems, even a play—is hard to characterize... and even harder to put down. Walton is best known as a novelist with a wide range. Her works include *Tooth and Claw* (2003), a spoof of the Victorian novel of manners, but with dragons; *Lifelode* (2009), set in a fantasy world of fluid sexual relationships; the *Small Change* trilogy, an alternate world dystopia where the Nazis won World War II; *My Real Children* (2014), in which the heroine lives in two alternate realities—one better for her personally, the other better for the world; and the *Thessaly* trilogy (2015-2016), in which Greek gods contrive to create a Platonic utopia on ancient Island of Thera.

Born in Wales but now living in Canada, Walton is also a witty sf/fantasy reviewer and critic in posts for her Tor Books blog, many collected in *What Makes This Book So Great?* (2014). That is a role she worked into her Hugo and Nebula award-winning novel *Among Others* (2011), set in a fantasy world—but one where the heroine Morwenna is part of an sf fan community whose members discuss genre works (which are the same in her world as in ours) from a fannish rather than an academic point of view. For Morwenna, as for Walton, sf is an *experience* rather than a study. Having just learned that James Tiptree,

Jr., is a woman, Morwenna remarks—"My goodness, Robert Silverberg must have egg all over his face" (Silverberg had written an introduction to her *Warm Worlds and Otherwise* declaring that Tiptree could only be a man.). But she complains that none of the Tiptree stories she's read recently were "quite up to 'The Girl Who Was Plugged In.'" Of John Brunner's *The Shockwave Rider*, she thinks it isn't up to his *Stand on Zanzibar*: "I wonder what it's like to have written your masterpiece, and to know you'll never do it again?" And while she finds Samuel R. Delany's *Triton*, "amazing," she doesn't focus on the novel's sexual politics and all that; rather, on the characters as *characters*: "the more I think about it, the less I understand why Bron lied to Audri."

In a January 2010 article on "SF Reading Protocols" for Tor.com, Walton embraces Delany's approach to understanding sf based on "reading protocols:" "Delany has a long passage about how your brain expands while reading the sentence 'The red sun is high, the blue low'—how it fills in doubled purple shadows on the planet of a binary star. I think it goes beyond that, beyond the physical into the delight of reading about people who come from other societies and have different expectations." But she elaborates on the "skillsets" sf writers have developed to get all that across, and which readers have to understand in order to appreciate genre works. "Because there's a lot of information to get across and you don't want to stop the story more than you can help, we have techniques for doing it. We have signals for what you can take for granted, we have signals for what's important. We're used to seeing people's names and place names and product-names as information. We know what needs to be explained and what doesn't." Walton cites the case of one reader hung up on how the tachyon drive was supposed to work in Joe Haldeman's *The Forever War*. He couldn't grasp that Haldeman's story is "about going away to fight aliens and coming back to find that home is alien, and the tachyon drive is absolutely essential to the story but the way it works—forget it, that's not important."

Walton is relatively new to short fiction, as opposed to novels, but is trying to follow the protocols as a writer to appeal to readers who are familiar with them from experience, even if they are not familiar with the term. Some of her work is purely fannish, but most is devoted to making other people and other societies seem real, and that is the case with her fairy tales as well as her sf.

The deadly serious story “A Burden Shared” turns a metaphor about sharing pain into a literal reality thanks to technology. Penny spends Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays enduring the pain of her daughter Ann (born with a painful, incurable joint condition); her husband Lionel is a ballet dancer who simply *can’t* both share the burden *and* pursue his career. Penny’s ex-husband Noah usually fills in—but there can be scheduling conflicts. And now Penny learns that she is dying. Ann insists she’ll find a way to cope, but Penny doubts it, feeling “as helpless in the face of her daughter’s suffering as any parent had ever been.”

“The Need to Stay the Same” is a mock review of the latest story in a fictional series by the alien Si about “humans,” who “have a kaleidoscopic variety of options as far as gender, sexuality and bodies go.” Dorui, the reviewer, “describing the sensations of humanity [...] even touch, the hardest to imagine of all,” but has to “admit it’s a long way removed from real life.” It’s time for Si to move on, Dorui suggests, to “ideas just as alien as the concept of physical flesh, but new.”

“Turnover” turns on a common sf trope, though the reader may fail to realize at first what it is. The story takes place in what seems to be a spinning wheel space colony with different gravity levels (as is another story in this collection, “The Panda Coin”) and which is really about the Eye (AI) running things there. “Turnover” gets into obvious issues like population control, as well as customs like opting to follow old Earth languages and cultures. But low-gravity ‘Ballette’ dancer Fedra is upset about losing her career when the *Speranza* reaches the New World – yes, she and the rest are on a generation ship. Can they do anything for those who don’t want to join the colony, but remain on the ship and send it heading back to Earth? Putting their heads together, they find a way. But that solution isn’t an ending one. As Mei Ju puts it, “we can’t say what our descendants will want, any more than our ancestors knew what we want.” Then again, “somebody might invent something that changes everything.” “That could always happen, at any moment,” responds an engineer whose name, Genly, will be recognized by anyone familiar with Ursula K. Le Guin. He seems to speak for Walton and how she views the spirit of sf: “I want to keep everyone’s options as open as possible, so that people can make their own choices when it’s the right time.”

Walton similarly plays with the protocols of fantasy.

“Three Shouts on a Hill” (the play) is a send-up of the traditional fairy tale-romantic quest story, with players that include both King Arthur and Oliver Cromwell. The objects of the quest range from magic apples guarded by a dragon to the largest cannon in the world (owned by the Pope), and the means of obtaining them is absurd. But then, as the seekers learn from the Queen of the Cats at the story’s end, “You’re fighting for the world of fantasy [...] But what a patchwork world, full of half-understood feudalism, kings and conquests and magic items you quest for and don’t even use.”

There are other riffs on traditional fairy tales, and some items stray even further. “Joyful and Triumphant and St. Zenobius and the Aliens” and “What Joseph Felt” are riffs on Bible stories, but not in the same way: the first imagines multiple incarnations of God on alien worlds, while the second is a comic take on the one here.

Yet what these pieces nevertheless have in common is their *approach* to writing sf and fantasy, a fannish *playfulness*. Walton has no obvious agenda, no political ideology or critical theory to share. She believes in stories rather than texts, and that genre fiction can be a literary experience even when we pursue it as an object of study. *Starlings* provides an important perspective we would do well to remember.

## The Vestigial Heart: A Novel of the Robot Age

Sara Martín

Carme Torras. *The Vestigial Heart: A Novel of the Robot Age*. Translated by Josephine Swarbrick. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018. 253 pages, paperback, \$19.95. ISBN 978 0262037778

*The Vestigial Heart: A Novel of the Robot Age* is the English title of a Catalan novel originally published in 2008 by Carme Torras: the acclaimed *La Mutació Sentimental*. The “mutation of the affects” she describes refers to the way in which dependence on robotic personal assistants causes human beings to develop in a few decades a new set of tepid, low-intensity feelings rather than our current deeper emotions. In Torras’s 22nd century individuals behave in a diffident, aloof way, which readers may find per-

plexing.

Traces of the trope of time travelling are visible in this novel. The plot events are triggered by the “unfreezing” of 13-year-old Celia, a girl saved from a lethal tumor thanks to cryogenic life suspension. Now an orphan, her return to life one hundred years later to be cured makes her a singular type of time traveler. The direct way in which she expresses her warm feelings upsets not only the lives of her new circle of protectors—her adoptive mother Lu, her therapist Silvana, and the bioengineer Leo—but also the whole structure of this dull brave new world.

Carme Torras is a well-known author in her native Catalan context. She has already published four novels, two of which are science fiction: *The Vestigial Heart* and her most recent work, *Enxarxats* (Enmeshed, 2017), a novel that explores whether we have a right to keep our digital identity active posthumously. Torras’s cutting-edge sf is closely connected with her research at the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya: she is a leading robotics engineer with a high international reputation. Torras specializes in developing software for assistant robots of the kind that soon might be common in all domestic environments and public caring facilities. Her novel appears now in English—in Josephine Swarbrick’s competent translation—as part of MIT’s work connecting robotics with ethics, a topic to which Torras is also making an important contribution. *The Vestigial Heart* includes an Appendix with questions for reading groups, which she herself has authored, aimed at enhancing the awareness of so-called “roboethics.”

Torras expresses in *The Vestigial Heart* her discomfort with the irrational emotional attachments that we tend to develop whenever we interact with robots in care-related situations. This is a common reaction among persons of all ages, from the very young to the elderly, as Sherry Turkle’s research has shown (see her volume *Alone Together*, 2011). Logically, a robotics engineer can hardly be a technophobic Luddite. Torras’s message is not a protest against the widespread use of personal robots but a warning about how such use should be put into operation and why. Interestingly, although smartphones are never mentioned in *The Vestigial Heart*, the reader will soon notice the many similarities between our current concerns about our dependence on them and Torras’ worries about the much more sophisticated robots we are sure to develop in the near future. Anti-techno therapist Silvana is the character

that carries the burden of defending a negative position that is toned down by the end of the story (as scientific exploration cannot simply be stopped). At the opposite end of the technological spectrum, the acerbic Dr. Craft—a Steve Jobs figure—embodies the irresponsible greedy capitalism that has sold our affects to the machines, no matter how smart they may be; as he ultimately discovers, he is as trapped as the rest of his clients by this numbing milieu. The plot, a minimalist tale of how Celia’s old-fashioned feelings send shockwaves through the system, leads towards a reconciliation of opposites, with robotics reformulated as a tool for enhanced human creativity rather than for a sinister process of symbiosis, all the more disturbing because it is willingly embraced rather than compulsory.

*The Vestigial Heart* is, then, not only a novel shaped by the current state of robot ethics but also, secondarily, by affect theory. Against the supposition that human affect is universal and ahistorical, Torras argues that feelings and emotions have a history of their own which can be altered. In a way, the problem of the constant company of robots’ influences on human behavior by radically changing the understanding of privacy and autonomy, is just an excuse to consider whether we may ever lose the capacity to feel emotion. In Torras’s society, people do not touch each other except for sex and in therapy (which becomes necessary precisely because the human skin is failing to transmit positive sensations.) Individuals behave in a robotic way whereas their anthropomorphic metallic assistants show an increasing ability to care—so near to what humans were like once that there is a risk of emotional inversion, with the machines deciding for us on the basis of a digital logic paradoxically not so different from real human concern.

Ironically, and this is something that Torras can hardly prevent, many readers would certainly be happy to incorporate a robotic aide to their daily lives, now that service is a relic of the past which only the very rich can afford. On the other hand, the more advanced use of robots as creative prostheses, which Torras endorses, exposes a sad reality: both artists and researchers may be performing below their abilities for lack of stimulation from their too-busy human peers. Many would purchase Dr Craft’s creative prosthesis if made available for the same reasons we buy smartphones: to foster the comforting illusion that we are not alone. Perhaps it is no

coincidence that Torras was at work writing *The Vestigial Heart* in 2007, the year when Apple launched the first iPhone. More than ten years later, we can now say for certain that this is what the future will bring: a greater dependence on privacy-invading machines that might reduce our heart to just a vestigial remnant.

## Media Reviews

### **The Handmaid's Tale** Season One

Lisa Macklem

Miller, Bruce, creator. *The Handmaid's Tale*. Second season. Daniel Wilson Productions, Inc., The Littlefield Company, White Oak Pictures, and MGM Television, 2018.

The second season of *The Handmaid's Tale* picks up where season one left off and essentially where Margaret Atwood's novel ends. This season continues to examine women's disenfranchisement within the dystopian universe of Gilead. Gilead is a totalitarian state and a theonomic, military dictatorship. Miller expands Atwood's universe, including a look at the Colonies and Gilead's presence on the world stage. The second season also explores the plight of the refugees, another theme that resonates with current events.

The final shot of season one is a close up of June's face in the back of a van as she thinks she is getting out of Gilead, as she does in the novel. However, season two opens on June's face as her hopes are dashed; she's actually being taken to the Red Center to be punished for not having stoned Janine to death. The entire season will circle back to a close up of June's face. By the end of the season, she is able to get her baby out of Gilead with Emily, but June now chooses to stay in Gilead and continue to fight it from within. The season shows June and the other women moving from a position of needing to rely on outside forces to a position of solidarity with each other and personal empowerment.

At the beginning of the season, the handmaids are both psychologically and physically tortured for disobeying the order to kill Janine. June and the others are mock-hanged and forced to kneel in the rain, as if praying for forgiveness. June is spared further torture when Aunt Lydia discovers June is pregnant. Her joy in ringing the Red Center bell after learning of June's pregnancy is an almost religious experience. June later enlists Aunt Lydia's help to protect her baby once it is taken from her. She asks both Aunt Lydia and Rita to act as godmothers of sorts.

Aunt Lydia reveals that she was once a godmother to her sister's son, but that he died at only four days. It's clear that she was not responsible, but feels that she was, adding depth to her character and actions. Aunt Lydia is obsessed with the baby and the pregnancy, but all of her handmaid examinations revolve around the health of the baby.

Women bonding over children and their procreative role is not a new phenomenon, but much of the justification for Gilead is based upon this procreative imperative. Serena's, and Gilead's, reliance on the Bible also underscores the religious justification for many of the characters' actions. Gilead revolves around solving the infertility problem, so June is afforded a slightly higher status and more leniency while pregnant. In a flashback, Serena is shown being shot at a University where she's been asked to speak about her book, *A Woman's Place*. Serena's impassioned speech is all about solving the infertility problem through domestic feminism. Later, when she and Fred search desperately for June, she tells him that she gave up everything in order to get a baby and that she has nothing without that baby. The series never explains, as Atwood's novel does, that Serena Joy is actually a stage name, taken to underscore the benefits of domestic feminism. Serena Joy is neither serene nor joyful until we see her with the baby. However, it's also the baby that fundamentally changes Serena's understanding of and attitude toward the society that she's helped to create.

Eden's death, whose name is religiously significant, representing the fall from innocence and the expulsion from the garden, is a huge turning point for the women. Thrust into a loveless marriage with Nick, Eden chooses to drown with her lover Isaac rather than renounce her love. Gilead provides Eden with no understanding of the Bible in which she's written copious and illegal notes. June finds and brings the Bible to Serena, who then gathers the support of the other wives to confront the all-male Council to seek permission to teach the girls of Gilead to read – and understand – the Bible. Reading from the Bible results in Serena's finger being cut off by Fred. Even more than the beating she receives from him earlier in the season for helping to perform his duties while he was in hospital, this convinces Serena that baby Nicole will not be safe in Gilead nor will she ever have a true understanding of God or freedom to love. In the end, Serena allows June to leave with the baby. Rita helps June to escape due to her own

guilt over not being kinder to Eden. All of this is done at great personal risk, as the bombing earlier in the season resulted in the death of the suspected wives and Marthas. Rita and Serena's actions demonstrate the power that June has to effect change and bring together the community of women.

The use of naming as personal empowerment is an important thematic element. June shares her real name with Emily when she returns from the colonies, sparking all of the handmaids to reclaim the power of their own names by sharing them with each other, again creating that community of women. June names the baby Holly after her activist mother, but Serena changes it to Nicole, which could be a veiled nod to the baby's father, Nick. However, when June gives the baby to Emily to take out of Gilead, she tells her to call the baby Nicole, acknowledging the community that has liberated her daughter. When Fred and Serena visit Toronto on their diplomatic mission, Moira confronts Fred through the car window with a placard that says "My name is Moira" taking back her own name. We see her struggle earlier in the season, picking up a woman in a bar and having sex with her in the bathroom, giving her name as Ruby: the name she was given at Jezebel's. Women are identified by name in the refugee center after the bombing in "After," and particular emphasis is given to Ofglen who detonated the bombing, whose real name is Lillie Fuller. The episode before ends with Lillie clicking the detonator on the bomb, her only way of making a noise after her tongue is cut out for speaking to save Janine from being stoned to death. In a wonderful parallel, "After" ends with June clicking a pen as she and Serena break the law by doing Fred's paperwork, taking back a voice in Gilead.

The series underscores its themes with cinematic and musical choices, and close attention can be given to the use of color in the show: red for the handmaids and June's almost bleeding out in despair in "Seeds," emphasizing the life giving properties of the handmaids; green for the wives and Serena's obsession with gardening and her greenhouse; grey for the Marthas and the Unwomen of the colonies emphasizing the colorless drudgery of their lives; and brown for the Aunts, a symbol of their being the nurturing soil of the handmaids.

The series presents topics that are ripe for discussion within numerous disciplines. On a basic level the series makes an interesting comparison to Atwood's novel, sparking questions of how the series

speaks to current world affairs. Human rights and women's rights in particular are topics that would further discussion within political science, women's studies, law, or sociology.

## Lost in Space Season One

Walter Andrew Shephard

*Lost in Space*. Developed by Matt Sazama and Burk Sharpless. Based on characters created by Irwin Allen. Perf. Molly Parker, Toby Stephens, Maxwell Jenkins, Parker Posey. Netflix. 2018.

In the spring of 2018, Netflix launched the latest reimagining of Irwin Allen's classic science fiction series *Lost in Space* (1965-68), the franchise's third reboot after Stephen Hopkins' poorly received film adaptation from 1998 and John Woo's unaired television pilot from 2004. This latest iteration is helmed by Matt Sazama and Burk Sharpless, a writing duo best known for the Vin Diesel urban fantasy vehicle *The Last Witch Hunter* (2015). Also onboard as a producer is Neil Marshall, best known for his cult horror film *The Descent* (2006) and several critically acclaimed episodes of HBO's *Game of Thrones* (2011-), notably Season 2's "Blackwater". The basic premise remains the same: In the year 2048 (like the original series, Netflix's series takes place thirty years from its contemporary moment), the Robinson family is selected for a mission aboard the Jupiter-2, an interstellar vessel designed to carry them to colonize a new world in the Alpha Centauri system after a scarcity of resources threaten to make Earth uninhabitable. Before they can reach their intended destination, their vehicle is sabotaged by a malfunctioning robot, forcing them to crash land on the nearest habitable planet. Light-years away from possible rescue, the family must navigate the dangers posed by this new world, including harsh elements, hostile aliens, and the schemes of Dr. Smith, a saboteur stowaway who alternates between ally and nemesis for the Robinson clan.

Many critics and commentators have remarked that science fictional futures are generally reflective of the era in which they were conceived, and the *Lost in Space* franchise is no exception to this truism. In

contrast to the multicultural cooperation of its contemporary, *Star Trek, Lost in Space's* politics were a little more conservative—essentially, transporting an idealized portrait of the American nuclear family into deep space. The Robinson family, as initially conceived, was an elite bunch "selected from more than two million volunteers for its unique balance of scientific achievement, emotional stability, and pioneer resourcefulness" ("No Place").

The Netflix series moves away from this premise. Instead of the Jupiter-2 being alone in outer space, it belongs to a larger mothership called the Resolute, which is populated by many families from all over the world—thus the Robinsons share their predicament with thousands of other people who have crash-landed on this strange new planet. Though our focus is still primarily on the Robinsons, the series makes it clear that this is an international effort rather than an American one. Likewise, the implicit classism of the original series is highlighted in the lottery system which prioritizes only the most "useful" families to leave Earth—a significant plot point for both Don West and Dr. Smith in this version.

Additionally, the series updates its format for the conventions of modern viewers in key ways, particularly in terms of tone—always a matter of contention within the franchise. The original series started as a more or less straightforward adventure tale, with Dr. Smith as a distinctly threatening presence in the Robinsons' lives. As the season went on and the writers had to justify the character's continued presence, Smith threw his lot in with the Robinsons and became more of a comedic figure, one characterized more by cowardice and harmless antics than intentional acts of sabotage. The science, never the most realistic to begin with, became increasingly less rigorous in correspondence to the whimsicality of the plots. Later storylines revolved around ghosts, Viking warriors, space knights in medieval armor who chase dragons, and perhaps most improbably, Dr. Smith's even more unscrupulous cousin who also managed to make his way into outer space.

The Netflix series is, comparatively speaking, more grounded. Astrophysics and how they might affect the weather patterns of this world play a significant role in the arc of this season; sapient alien life, other than the Robot and his mechanoid kin have so far yet to be seen, and the organic lifeforms encountered thus far evince a sincere effort to imagine creatures that might have evolved on another world. (Sadly,

this means that Penny Robinson's pet space chimp, Debbie the Bloop, is unlikely to put in an appearance, though she is paid homage in form of the pet chicken also named Debbie that Don rescues from the wreckage of the *Resolute*.) Overall, the tone of the series puts a strong emphasis on scientific problem solving, similar to Andy Weir's *The Martian* and its filmic adaptation by Ridley Scott. The new series is also more heavily serialized than its predecessor, with all ten episodes of the first season forming a continuous storyline and gestures towards a larger mytharc surrounding the Robot's origins and the motives behind his mysterious attack on the *Resolute*.

Perhaps the most significant change in this version of the franchise is its handling of gender. The original series largely sidelined its female cast members. John and Don were the two undisputed authority figures, and conflicts within the group largely revolved around disagreements between the two of them over course of action—either to proceed in the spirit of scientific endeavor or militaristic caution. As Dr. Smith took off in popularity, the show's later seasons often focused on the dynamic between him, Will, and the Robot. As Molly Parker, the actress who portrays Maureen in the 2018 series, notes in a recent interview: "Maureen Robinson in the '60s show spent a lot of time asking people if she could make them a sandwich. They're in space, there's aliens, but that's it" (Hamad). The women ostensibly possessed more agency in the 1990s film incarnation; notably, Judy's occupation is revised from a career in musical theatre as mentioned in the unaired pilot, to that of a medical doctor, a change which is carried over into the new adaptation. However, much of the film's action still revolves around the male characters exploring and adventuring while the women tend to the ship. Indeed, the film's plot hinges on a future Will Robinson's attempts to use time travel to prevent a timeline in which the Robinson women are murdered, essentially reducing them to the status of MacGuffins.

By contrast, the women of the new series are far more prominent. The role of the ship's astrophysicist and defacto mission commander is awarded to Parker's Maureen this time around, while Toby Stephens' John is reimagined as an ex-Navy SEAL who served during the violent uprisings which occurred in the wake of the meteor impact which has caused the Earth's declining conditions. The scientist vs. soldier conflict of the original series is thus mapped onto

their dynamic, in contrast to the relatively conflict-free relationship of the original series. Mina Sundwall's Penny, aged up to adolescence, eschews the scientific interests of her '60s incarnation in favor of literature but acquires considerable more gumption in the process—rescuing both her parents and her love interest in a pair of memorable set-pieces.

The series makes similar efforts with regard to other forms of diversity. The Judy Robinson of the new series is played by African-Canadian actress Taylor Russell (*Falling Skies*), the racial disparity between her and her siblings explained by her having a different biological father. Don West undergoes a similar change. Played by Argentine-American actor Ignacio Serrachio (*Witches of East End*), the character is reinvented as a mechanic and Han Solo-esque rogue who sidelines as a smuggler. When Judy criticizes his mercenary tendencies, Don mounts convincing defense: "You get a ticket to the New World, what do I get? A hearty handshake and ticket back to a dying world with no future. So forgive me, princess, if I ask for a little compensation" ("Eulogy").

These changes can be attributed to the overall trend towards greater diversity in genre material which has been prevalent over the last few years, as exemplified by Rian Johnson's *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* (2017) and the various racially and gender swapped characters in the Marvel Studios films. However, *Lost in Space* (2018) also confounds gendered expectations in more subtle ways. Stephens' John may be the brawny action hero of the group, but he also exhibits an emotional intelligence that Maureen sometimes lacks. Notably, he's the one who identifies Judy's PTSD following a life-threatening encounter early in their stint on the planet and successfully helps her to manage it. Likewise, the revelation that Will failed his entrance psych exam and his struggles with the often harrowing circumstances in which the family find themselves lends him a vulnerability that his precociously adventurous counterparts often lacked. It's a significant departure from the young boy who guns down a giant alien to rescue his father in the unaired pilot of the original series and, arguably, a more interesting one.

In many ways, the handling of Dr. Smith is the most emblematic of the new series' ethos. Jonathan Harris' wily saboteur turned comic relief was a belated addition to the original series, one added to the second pilot commissioned by CBS when the network decided that "some human drama was needed" (Ab-

bott 114). His motives were originally tied to Cold War-era conflict with the Soviets through vague allusions to “other nations with an even more desperate need for breathing room on our critically overcrowded planet” (“Reluctant”). Gary Oldman’s take on the character in the 1998 film was equally indebted to both the campiness of Harris’ portrayal in the later seasons and the calculating villainy of the initial five episode “mini-series”. However, the Netflix series takes something of a muted approach to the Smith character, who is now a woman portrayed by familiar character actress Parker Posey (House of Yes; Blade: Trinity). Instead of a saboteur working for a political cause, she’s a criminal who schemes her way aboard the *Resolute* by stealing the identity of her younger sister (“Infestation”). Her acts of treachery are often more rooted in an amoral desire for self-preservation than intentional malice. In explaining herself to Maureen, Smith describes her motivations thus: “To stop running, stop pretending... [to] just be myself. [...] I’m not the villain of this story, I’m the hero” (“Resurrection”). In all iterations of *Lost in Space*, Smith serves as kind of a shadow self, someone who represents the less seemingly impulses of human nature in a crisis situation but who nonetheless cannot be entirely disavowed. This version of the story attributes such tendencies more to weakness than “evil” in a more Manichean sense. In some respects, this incarnation of Smith merits comparison to characters such as *Battlestar Galactica*’s (2004) Gaius Baltar or *Interstellar*’s (2014) meaningfully named Dr. Mann.

*Lost in Space* (2018) will likely be of interest to those studying any of the earlier incarnations, particularly the 1960s series. Scholars with an interest

in issues of diversity and representation in the media and the speculative genres may also find it worthy of their consideration. And, as the series has recently been renewed for a second season, interested parties should have plenty of opportunity to examine it in the future.

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