

SFRA Review

A publication of the Science Fiction Research Association

Editors

Karen Hellekson

16 Rolling Rdg.

Jay, ME 04239

karenhellekson@karenhellekson.com

sfrareview@gmail.com

Craig Jacobsen

English Department

Mesa Community College

1833 West Southern Ave.

Mesa, AZ 85202

jacobsen@mail.mc.maricopa.edu

sfrareview@gmail.com

Managing Editor

Janice M. Bogstad

McIntyre Library-CD

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

105 Garfield Ave.

Eau Claire, WI 54702-5010

bogstajm@uwec.edu

Nonfiction Editor

Ed McKnight

113 Cannon Lane

Taylors, SC 29687

emcknight@gardner-webb.edu

Fiction Editor

Edward Carmien

29 Sterling Rd.

Princeton, NJ 08540

sfracfiction@mac.com

Media Editor

Ritch Calvin

16A Erland Rd.

Stony Brook, NY 11790-1114

rcalvink@ic.sunysb.edu



In This Issue

SFRA Review Business

<i>SFRA Review</i> Editors Seize Power	2
On Media Reviews	2

SFRA Business

New <i>SFRA Review</i> Editors on Board	2
The Year 2007 in Review	3
SFRA Annual Meeting Moved	3

Feature Article

Science Studies 101	4
---------------------	---

Nonfiction Reviews

Three Perspectives on Tolkien	7
-------------------------------	---

Fiction Reviews

The Way the Future Was	9
<i>The Elysium Commission</i> and <i>Viewpoints Critical</i>	10
<i>Fleet of Worlds</i>	12
<i>Lighthouse at the End of the World</i>	13
<i>Eifelheim</i> and <i>Farthing</i>	13
<i>Victory Conditions</i>	14
Electronic Literature	15

Media Reviews

Putting the Virtual into Science Fiction	16
<i>Doctor Who: The Mind's Eye</i>	17
<i>Blade Runner: The Final Cut</i>	18
The Twilight and the Terror	19

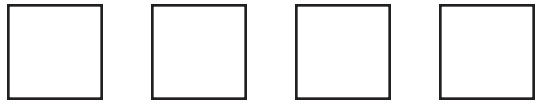
Calls for papers	20
-------------------------	----

The *SFRA Review* (ISSN 1068-395X) is published four times a year by the Science Fiction Research Association (SFRA), and distributed to SFRA members. Individual issues are not for sale; however, all issues after 256 are published to SFRA's Web site (<http://www.sfra.org/>) no fewer than 10 weeks after paper publication. For information about SFRA and membership, see the back cover.

SFRA thanks the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire for its assistance in producing the *SFRAReview*.

SUBMISSIONS

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 Editors (information inside front cover) for other submissions or correspondence.



SFRA Review Business

EDITORS' MESSAGE

SFRA Review Editors Seize Power

Karen Hellekson and Craig Jacobsen

Alert (and longtime) SFRA members will remember that we once before held the reins of power. Yes, we previously coedited the *SFRA Review* for three long years, from 1998 through 2000. In those days, the *Review* came out six times a year, not four. Craig had to bribe people to help him print, bind, and mail. Karen spent her time freaking out about properly typesetting en dashes. (That hasn't changed, by the way.) We had just moved from a little digest size to the big-paper size still in use. We edited the *Review* for two years before we ever met—then, as now, we did the whole thing online, only then, it was a cutting-edge thing to do. We are pleased to have seized the reins of power back again, because we plan, as we did before, to give the *Review* another good shake.

In addition to a new eye-pleasing design, we also bring you two new features: media reviews, edited by Ritch Calvin, and what we're cleverly calling the 101 Feature, which aims to be a 101-level primer hitting the high points of important topics that we think are of interest to SFRA members. Patrick B. Sharp's "Science Studies 101" appears in this issue, and future essays will provide 101s for such topics as Fan Studies, Slipstream, and Comic Books. Knowledgeable (and alert) SFRA members interested in writing an overview of some area of the field should query us at sfreview@gmail.com.

The goal of these two new elements is to make the *Review* even more helpful to SFRA members, providing an ongoing review of as much of our field as we can get in print. Toward that end, all of us editors welcome expressions of interest from contributors, and .pdf files of guidelines for fiction, nonfiction, and media reviewers are available at the SFRA Web site (<http://sfra.org/>).

We extend our thanks to Christine Mains, the outgoing editor, for her work on the *Review*, and for making the transition so easy; to the content editors, Ed McKnight, Ed Carmien, and Ritch Calvin, for getting us stuff to print; and to managing editor Janice M. Bogstad for handling the printing, binding, and mailing tasks, the part of the process that once made Craig swear that he would "never again" edit the *Review*.

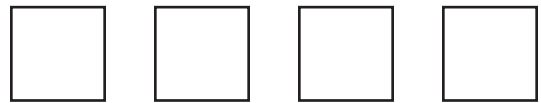
MEDIA REVIEW EDITOR'S MESSAGE

On Media Reviews

Ritch Calvin

With this issue, the *SFRA Review* begins printing media reviews. This issue features reviews of a CD-ROM, several films, and a *Doctor Who* Big Finish audio adventure. Why this

expansion of focus? Although the movement was doubtless afoot long before that, it was in Kansas City at the 2007 SFRA's annual conference that several of us discussed what we perceived to be the need to expand SFRA's focus. Traditionally, SFRA in general, and the *SFRA Review* in particular, focused on science fiction as printed matter. The *Review* covered nonfiction reviews, fiction reviews, and the teaching of science fiction, or the incorporation of science fiction into pedagogy. Indeed, at the 2006 conference in White Plains, the question was raised of whether or not science fiction is still relevant if we are, in fact, living in the world that science fiction used to predict. Furthermore, is science fiction as printed matter still relevant when so many of us—and not just our students—obtain science fiction via other means? It makes sense that, if science fiction writers/artists/creators have moved into utilizing graphic novels, film, television, the Internet, and multimedia discs, then we as critics and scholars should also be examining these new outlets. Furthermore, if these are the science fiction forms (in both senses) with which our students engage, then, I would argue, we also need to be engaged with these "texts." And besides, there is some really great stuff out there.



SFRA Business

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

New SFRA Review Editors on Board

Adam Frisch

With this issue we welcome aboard the new editors of the *SFRA Review*, Karen Hellekson and Craig Jacobsen. Actually, both of these editors conducted our journal in the past, but about a decade ago, they got off the train to gawk more closely at this zoo we call Postmodern Civilization before deciding late last fall (in desperation at what they found out there, no doubt) to jump back onto our transport. I'm guessing they'll have brought on board a lot of new-fangled steampunk notions about content, layout and design—perhaps, for example, confining this presidential message to an obscure penultimate-page footnote—but perhaps their ideas for change . . . [*—Editors' note: the rest of this sentence was considered unimpressive and was hence deleted.*]

One transformation I hope to see is an increase in serious reviews of SF in other genres. Personally, I tend to feel that I really have to ratchet up my tolerance levels for any visual forms of SF. As a life-long science fiction fan I've become the most resistant kind of reader, demanding both logical and emotional plausibility from my stories. Ian McDonald had better inundate me with believable multiverse quantum formula as well as exotic Portuguese slang terms if I'm going to buy into his imaginary world of Brasyll. (Which he does.) When I turn into a viewer at an SF

movie, I bring along the same “could-be-true” rules. And mostly that attitude doesn’t work. For example, recently I went to see the latest Will Smith vehicle, *I Am Legend*, having just finished Alan Weisman’s disturbingly speculative treatise, *The World Without Us*. While the film’s abandoned New York City scapes initially seemed stunning, I kept asking myself: “Why haven’t the subway tunnels flooded after all this time? Why hasn’t the concrete on Wall Street collapsed? What have the plague victims been eating recently? Who’s repainting the outside of the safe house?” Even classic SF films known for their attention to verisimilitude, such as *2001* or *Blade Runner*, seem to me filled with logical implausibilities. “Oh well . . .,” as my students would put it, “was the flick any fun?”

But SF viewed should be more than just entertaining. After all, the medium is at least to some extent the message, a principle I recall for (some would say “pound into”) students in my Literature and Film courses all the time. So while SF that “tells” (literature) will undoubtedly remain this journal’s principle focus for the foreseeable—and imaginable—future, there are some facets of our gem of a genre that only glitter when SF “shows,” or perhaps even “is interacted with.” I’m wanting to become more educated about how serious SF works towards serious purposes through these multiple forms. A few panels on SF films or SF graphic arts that I’ve attended at past SFRA meetings have exposed me to some innovative possibilities in this area. I hoping future submissions to the *SFRA Review* will continue my education. Perhaps our new editors, fresh on board themselves, can help in this process of retraining speculatively resistant me?

TREASURER’S MESSAGE

The Year 2007 in Review

Donald M. Hassler

The chart that follows summarizes SFRA’s current finances and speaks for itself. In past issues of the *SFRA Review*, columns by the president and the secretary’s minutes refer to certain items in the chart. For example, for the annual conference, we canceled Dublin, yet paid a little in damages, and we made a little “profit” in the Kansas City conference, as evidenced by the income/expense items for that conference. Adam and Shelley’s minutes have talked about the CD that will mature in late July of this year; we plan to set up a more systematic form of scholar support once that maturity passes.

Income

Dues and subs (311 members)	31,881.69
(since paypal takes % amounts are not even)	
Excess from K.C. Conference	1,308.13
Royalties	717.49
Scholar support gifts	825.00
Bank interest (1061.24 in 18-month CD)	1,239.67
Carryover from 12/31/06	61,632.97
Total Income	97,604.95

Expenses

President Office (stationery)	62.79
V.P. Office (wrist band promotion)	360.00
Secretary Office (some bills from ’06)	1,489.26
Treasurer Office	277.00
Executive Committee January (some paid in ’06)	1,145.40
K.C. Conference (see income above)	1,425.00
Travel support for K.C. Conference	285.00
Dublin Conference (coverage of losses)	382.98
Univ. of Kansas (Gunn AboutSF)	1,000.00
Scholar support for <i>FEMSPEC</i>	500.00
Graduate Paper Award	100.00
Bray Award	100.00
Clareson Award (costs)	87.82
Pilgrim Award (costs)	173.20
Jamie Bishop Memorial Scholarship	250.00
<i>Review</i> and Directory (print and mail)	2,100.00
Editorial costs on <i>Review</i>	330.12
<i>Science Fiction Studies</i>	5,427.00
<i>Extrapolation</i>	5,427.00
<i>NYRSF</i>	2,218.00
<i>Foundation</i>	2,559.00
<i>JFA</i>	950.00
<i>FEMSPEC</i>	525.00
<i>Locus</i>	675.60
Total Expenses	27,850.17

On Hand 12/31/07

69,754.78

SECRETARY’S MESSAGE

SFRA Annual Meeting Moved

Rochelle Rodrigo

As briefly announced in *SFRA Review* #282, the SFRA Executive Committee decided that, due to the uncertainties caused by recent currency fluctuations, the only financially prudent course was not to hold our 2008 annual meeting in Dublin, Ireland. We sincerely regret any problems this announcement caused our members, wherever they reside. It was not a decision the committee reached lightly. Whether or not we could reach sufficient prepaid registrations by preset cancellation deadlines, given the rapid decline of the U.S. dollar against foreign currencies, seemed a major uncertainty. The amount of money SFRA would have to pay in advance for registration subsidies to attract a minimal attendance seemed almost to guarantee a significant deficit, one that could grow substantially under certain conditions. The SFRA Executive Committee agreed that we should not commit to this level of expenditure at this time.

We would like to thank the Dublin Conference Group for all the hard work they have put in over the past several years on this project. We stress that it is not the fault of any of them that these plans have not worked out, but rather the declining value of

the U.S. dollar that is the major culprit here. And we stress that SFRA will continue to do all it can in the future to serve all of its membership, wherever they reside.

SFRA 2008 will be held in Lawrence, Kansas, in conjunction with the Campbell Conference on July 10–13 (Thursday through Sunday) at the University of Kansas.

If you are interested in both attending and presenting, individual abstracts or panel presentations comprising three or four papers are invited on any topic, but we particularly welcome abstracts on the conference's broad theme, "Creating, Reading, and Teaching Science Fiction." SFRA also encourages panels and papers analyzing SF in nonliterary media, a recent extension of SFRA's traditional focus. Abstracts should be sent to Karen Hellekson (karenhellekson@karenhellekson.com) either typed into the body of an e-mail or attached as a document. Moderators will be randomly chosen among the panels that are made up. Presenters who require audiovisual equipment should indicate what they will need. Proposals are due by Monday, March 31.

In addition, a proceedings volume is planned. Authors are encouraged to drop off their papers at the SFRA meeting to be considered for the printed volume. These papers will be treated as drafts, and papers chosen for inclusion in the volume will be revised before publication.

Up-to-date information about the venue, including conference hotel information and registration fees, is now available here: <http://www.continuinged.ku.edu/programs/campbell/>.



Feature Article

Science Studies 101

Patrick B. Sharp

What Is Science Studies?

Science studies is the abbreviated term for the interdisciplinary field known as science, technology, and medicine studies. The field includes a great deal of work that is safely within the traditional boundaries of disciplines such as history, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and English. However, science studies also includes an increasing amount of work that defies traditional disciplinary boundaries in its analysis of science (in all of its permutations and applications). There are now several scholarly organizations devoted to science studies, including the Society for the Social Study of Science (4S; <http://www.4sonline.org/>), the History of Science Society (HSS; <http://www.hssonline.org/>), the Society for the History of Technology (SHOT; <http://www.historyoftechnology.org/>), and the Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts (SLSA; <http://slsa.press.jhu.edu/>). In addition to annual conferences, these societies also produce a number of scholarly journals, bibliographies, and newsletters that provide the nexus for most English-language work in science studies. The conferences of these societies are open to some work on sci-

ence fiction, especially 4S and SLSA, but it is rare that the publications of these societies include science fiction scholarship. Like science fiction, however, science studies scholarship often takes the form of analyzing and explaining the importance and meaning of science (Davis and Yaszek). Given the wide range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary methodologies and areas of analysis in science studies, I focus in this essay on a few that have proven to be extremely relevant for science fiction scholarship in the new millennium.

Literature and Culture

In literary and cultural studies, where most science fiction scholarship takes place, there has been an ongoing conversation over the past several decades about the definition and status of culture. The Arnoldian notion of culture focused on "the best that has been thought and known" and emphasized the teaching of exemplary works from the canon of great literature (Arnold 70). Unfortunately, the politics of exclusive literary canons kept science fiction from being taught regularly at the university level until the 1960s (Davis and Yaszek), and many scholars in the humanities still treat science fiction as if it is merely a popular genre that is not worth critical attention. Demographic changes in English and American universities after World War II helped fuel serious challenges to the traditional assumptions about what counts as "great" literature and what aspects of culture are worthy of study. The rise of cultural studies in the last third of the twentieth century brought a more anthropological understanding of culture into many humanities departments (Moran 46–81). This broader notion of culture helped fuel both academic studies of science fiction and humanities approaches to science studies. Science fiction scholarship has expanded its scope to include film, television, comic books, video games, and a number of other forms of cultural expression. At the same time, science studies scholarship has developed an understanding that scientific production is a form of cultural production. In recent years, scholars have used these new understandings of culture to consider both science and science fiction as closely related cultural domains that shape and circulate understandings of nature (among other things).

Problems with Objectivity

Since the groundbreaking work of Thomas Kuhn in the 1960s, science studies scholars have repeatedly demonstrated that science is a social and cultural endeavor. One common theme in science studies scholarship concerns the myth of objectivity: proper scientific practice does not involve some sort of disembodied Cartesian mind that dispassionately assesses the facts through the exercise of logic (sorry, Mr. Spock). The problem that confronts scientists is that any perspective is partial (or subjective). How can a community build reliable knowledge if everyone sees things differently? If there were ten witnesses to a car accident, and they all saw the same accident, why will a police officer who interviews the witnesses be likely to get ten different stories? There are three different reasons for varying accounts of observed phenomena: 1) witnesses have different physical perspectives (no two people can occupy the same space at the same time); 2) witnesses have different interpretive frameworks; and 3) witnesses employ varying discursive structures

and strategies when communicating (Shapin 29–32). For this reason, scientific disciplines have created ways of studying phenomena that standardize the sources of variation and minimize the impact of subjectivity. Any scientific discipline will train its practitioners in proper methodology for collecting data (including standard methods of observing and measuring), proper theoretical frameworks for interpreting data, and proper writing formats for reporting results. This standard way of conducting and reporting research in a scientific field is what Kuhn referred to as a “paradigm.” In this way a proper scientist is not “being objective” by somehow being logical and detached, but rather by following the standard procedures agreed upon by the community of scientists working in the discipline. In other words, “objectivity” is really a complex social process designed to limit subjective mistakes (Shapin 24–25).

Science as a Social Process

Traditional discussions of science assumed that social and cultural influences on science were a type of impurity that must be purged. Science studies scholars such as Bruno Latour have shown how limited this understanding of science and culture can be. In *Pandora’s Hope*, Latour summarized a generation of science studies scholarship that showed how scientists themselves are key to understanding how connected scientific work is to other aspects of modern society and culture. Science studies does not try to show how scientific work is determined by social or cultural factors, but rather shows how scientists themselves conduct their work through a series of exchanges with various segments of their societies. As a part of their scientific work, scientists must do things such as convince colleagues, accrue funding and materials, and engage in ethical debates (80–112). In this process, scientists have to connect their own agendas with those of experts and nonexperts alike. For example, a key aspect of grant writing for scientists is convincing their readers that the proposed research will advance the funding institution’s agenda. As Latour points out, saying that science involves a social and cultural process does not invalidate scientific results or reject the importance of empirical verification: in fact, the “mobilization” of the material world is a crucial part of scientific argumentation and practice (99–102). Without a clear empirical anchor to the argument, other interested parties such as colleagues and funding agencies will never be convinced. What is important for Latour (and science studies) is understanding the social process, where the ultimate fate of scientific work “is in the hands of others” who may or may not accept the science as worthwhile (95). Latour’s work opens a space for understanding the relationship between science and science fiction, and helps “explain why SF has become such a vital node . . . for thinking through our contemporary matters of anxious concern” (Luckhurst, “Bruno Latour” 15).

Science as Culture

Like any group, scientific communities are subject to their work being affected by ideological predispositions. As Stephen J. Gould noted in his analysis of nineteenth century craniometry, “prior prejudice may be found anywhere, even in the basics of measuring bones and toting sums” (88). Science is conducted by human beings: even though scientific culture has developed

specialized and unique features, scientists grow up sharing the same beliefs, traditions, and narratives as the other members of their communities. Science fiction is a central part of modern culture, and has proven to be an endless source of guidance and inspiration for generations of scientists. If it exists at all, the gap between science and science fiction is not nearly as wide as some have argued in the past. For example, science fiction scholars such as Constance Penley and De Witt Douglas Kilgore have shown how deeply entwined space exploration and science fiction have been for the past several decades. Space science has become charged with the cultural visions, values, and attitudes of both scientists and science fiction writers. Scientists have brought their assumptions about colonization, exploration, the frontier, race, sex, and gender into their work. This is not a contamination of their work, but rather a central part of the purpose, motivation, and realization of their work. Science studies scholarship has provided a key for critically examining this mutually constitutive relationship between science and science fiction, and promises to provide the basis for much more such scholarship in the years to come.

Biology and Narrative

In her landmark book *Darwin’s Plots*, literature scholar Gillian Beer notes that science (and especially evolutionary biology) is driven by narrative forms of exposition. In creating their scientific narratives, scientists such as Charles Darwin draw on language, imagery, and plot structures that are familiar to them from their cultural environments. Generations of science studies historians and literature scholars have shown how stories of technology-driven progress, the rise and fall of civilizations, and the domestic romance were influential upon Darwin’s writing. At the same time, Darwin’s work synthesized a new language and narrative form for expressing some older thoughts and attitudes. The dialogue between evolutionary narrative and science fiction has been recognized for some time, but science studies approaches to this issue have consistently placed the science under the same critical scrutiny as the fiction. This approach has been marked most clearly in critical studies focusing on race and gender. Scholars such as Donna Haraway have shown how scientific formulations of the body are infused with cultural assumptions about race and gender, and how scientific discourse works actively to produce the bodies it claims to be simply describing. Evolutionary science has been particularly prone to essentialism in discussions of human bodies and behavior. Essentialism is the philosophical position that attributes unchanging characteristics to “categories of objects and genres” regardless of “individual variation” (Kaplan and Rogers 27–28). While essentialism is useful for describing things like the characteristics of water, it has proven notoriously dangerous when applied to complex phenomena such as the behavior of humans in relation to their bodies. Science fiction has served as a site where essentialist representations of the body and human behavior have been both reinforced and challenged. Feminist science fiction scholarship has paid particular attention to this issue for decades. Science studies continues to provide new avenues for feminist scholarship in this regard, particularly in discussions about the evolutionary past and the supposedly posthuman future (Mitchell). At the same time, a new body of work on race has taken a science studies

approach to understanding how both science and science fiction texts continue to circulate narratives based on racist ideas and essentialist assumptions that are often repudiated by the texts themselves (Kilgore, Sharp).

Cyborgs, Posthumanism, and Animal Studies

Probably the hottest area of science studies/science fiction scholarship is the ongoing examination of the relationship between humans and the nonhuman. Cyborg discussions inspired by Haraway's work address the evolutionary aspects of cyborg narrative, while also emphasizing how science and science fiction texts make human/nonhuman relationships seem natural and/or unnatural. Since Mary Shelley's monster and the invading Martians of H. G. Wells, science fiction has been engaged in a serious dialogue with science about the appropriate relationship between humans and technology that has centered on the body. More recently, the discourse of posthumanism had taken center stage in this cyborg body debate. In general, posthumanism is the exploration of how modern scientific and technological developments have changed life, consciousness, and identity so that we are no longer human. Cybernetics theory and cyberpunk fiction are common touchstones for posthumanist discussions. Katherine Hayles and others have criticized the limitations of many iterations of the posthuman that rely on a vilification of the human body and a glorification of a mind that transcends or escapes the body. This kind of posthumanism is problematic in that it accepts the outdated Cartesian separation of the mind and the body while rejecting the animality of embodied existence. Other versions of posthumanism take a different road, acknowledging the realities and possibilities of embodiment while rejecting the legacy of humanism and the boundaries that have been used to divide the human and nonhuman (Mitchell 115–27; Vint 182–90). Posthumanist discussions have also been extended to interrogate the full implications of Darwin's insight that humans are animals. Animal studies discourse interrogates the ways in which humans have represented and treated other animals, often in a vain attempt to establish a stable human identity that somehow transcends the animal (Wolfe 5–6). The critical examination of both science and science fiction is central to all of these ongoing scholarly discussions.

Science Studies and Science Fiction Studies

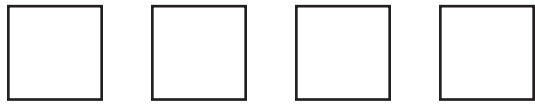
As Roger Luckhurst notes, "there is an emerging generation that reads science fiction alongside and intertwined with other literature without having tortured debates about cultural value or generic boundary" ("Introduction" 3). As a member of that generation, I would add that there are a growing number of scholars who read science fiction alongside scientific and technical texts and see them as intimately related domains of modern culture. Increasingly, we science studies/science fiction scholars are insisting upon the importance of a critical engagement with science fiction for understanding science, just as we insist upon the importance of critically engaging with science to understand science fiction. This approach has already led to valuable insights regarding everything from race and gender to nanotechnology,

global warming, and the "war on terror." Though some see this type of work as hostile to science and science fiction, the reality is that it emphasizes the importance of both science and science fiction for understanding and confronting the challenges of the twenty-first century. In a world where scientific illiteracy and technophobia are endemic, the critical engagement with science studies is playing a crucial role in extending the explanatory power and relevance of science fiction scholarship.

Bibliography

- Arnold, Matthew. *Culture and Anarchy*. 1932. Ed. J. Dover Wilson. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1960.
- Beer, Gillian. *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000.
- Davis, Doug, and Lisa Yaszek. "Reading Science Fiction's Interdisciplinary Conversation with Science and Technology Studies." *Reading Science Fiction*. Ed. James Gunn, Marleen Barr, and Matthew Candelaria. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming.
- Gould, Stephen Jay. *The Mismeasure of Man*, rev. ed. New York: W. W. Norton, 1996.
- Haraway, Donna. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Hayles, N. Katherine. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1999.
- Kaplan, Gisela, and Lesley L. Rogers. *Gene Worship: Moving beyond the Nature/Nurture Debate over Genes, Brains, and Gender*. New York: Other Press, 2003.
- Kilgore, De Witt Douglas. *Astrofuturism: Science, Race, and Visions of Utopia in Space*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2003.
- Kuhn, Thomas. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. 2nd ed. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1970.
- Latour, Bruno. *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1999.
- Luckhurst, Roger. "Bruno Latour's Scientification: Networks, Assemblages, and Tangled Objects." *Science Fiction Studies* 33.1 (March 2006): 4–17.
- . "Introduction." *Science Fiction Studies* 33.1 (March 2006): 1–3.
- Mitchell, Kaye. "Bodies that Matter: Science Fiction, Technoculture, and the Gendered Body." *Science Fiction Studies* 33.1 (March 2006): 109–28.
- Moran, Joe. *Interdisciplinarity*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Penley, Constance. *NASA/Trek: Popular Science and Sex in America*. New York: Verso, 1997.
- Shapin, Steven. *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1994.
- Sharp, Patrick B. *Savage Perils: Racial Frontiers and Nuclear Apocalypse in American Culture*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2007.
- Vint, Sherryl. *Bodies of Tomorrow: Technology, Subjectivity, Science Fiction*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2007.
- . "Science Studies." *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*. Ed. Mark Bould, Andrew Butler, and Adam

Roberts. New York: Routledge, forthcoming.
Wolfe, Cary. *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003.



Nonfiction Reviews

Three Perspectives on Tolkien

Bruce A. Beatie

Diana Pavlac Glycer. *The Company They Keep: C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien as Writers in Community*. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2007. Hardcover, xix + 293 pages, \$45, ISBN 9780873388900.

Elizabeth A. Whittingham. *The Evolution of Tolkien's Mythology: A Study of the History of Middle-earth*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2008. Paperback, xii + 220 pages, \$35, ISBN 978-0-7864-3281-3.

Dinah Hazell. *The Plants of Middle-earth: Botany and Sub-Creation*. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2006. Hardcover, x + 124 pages, \$22.95, ISBN 9780873388832.

These three books, all by women scholars and two published by the Kent State University Press, are about as different as three books (related to Tolkien) could be, but each offers something of value. I discuss them in order of narrowing focus.

I

Diana Glycer's *The Company They Keep* is the broadest in scope. It is a considerable expansion (from a 140-page dissertation to a 229-page book, not counting the appendix and final materials of the latter) of her 1993 University of Chicago dissertation of the same title. She is now a professor of English at Azusa Pacific University, and has published widely on C. S. Lewis and the Inklings.

The "dilemma" outlined in the introduction ("An Intellectual Dilemma") is that a substantial body of Inklings critics (following Humphrey Carpenter's 1979 book on the Inklings), as well as many of the Inklings themselves, deny any cross-influence within the group, and she sets out to disprove that opinion. Her first chapter ("Inklings: Building Community") describes the way the group came together, from the late 1920s through its peak in the 1940s. In the second chapter ("Influence: Assessing Impact"), she analyzes in detail the "dilemma" that is her point of departure, and she lays out the framework in which she will work, based on a 1987 book by Karen Burke LeFevre, *Invention as a Social Act*. LeFevre argues that creative social acts involve four types of participants: resonators, opponents, editors, and collaborators. Glycer's next four chapters work through these types in turn.

In the third chapter ("Resonators: Supporting Progress"), Glycer considers the Inklings as each other's audience, including their functioning as praisers, as those pressuring for progress, as models, helpers, and promoters; she discusses here the 1936 wager between Tolkien and Lewis that led to *Out of the Silent Planet* and the aborted *The Lost Road*, though considering *The Lord of the Rings* as a further product of that wager seems pushing the evidence. In the fourth chapter ("Opponents: Issuing Challenge"), she looks at the long philosophical conflict between Lewis and Barfield, at Tolkien's rejection of the Narnia books, at the challenges by Lewis, Tolkien, and Charles Williams's wife that led from Williams's incomplete *Noises* to *All Hallows' Eve*, the dislike of some Inklings for Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, and at the general disapproval that caused Tolkien (rightly!) to abandon the proposed epilogue to his epic.

Some of Glycer's most specific and convincing evidences of influence are found in her fifth and seventh chapters ("Editors: Making Changes" and "Referents: Writing about Each Other")—the latter being a type of interaction not suggested by LeFevre. Here she discusses, among other instances, Lewis's detailed critique of Tolkien's "Lay of Leithian," Tolkien's modeling of characters in "The Notion Club Papers" on fellow Inklings, and the reviews and articles that Inklings published about each other. The fifth chapter, however ("Collaborators: Working Together"), is perhaps the least convincing. She notes that of the types considered, "collaboration raises some of the most interesting questions" but "reveals many of our biases and difficulties with ideas of influence and interaction" (158). She is forced to look at the Lewis brothers' childhood collaboration on the Boxen stories, posthumous essay collections honoring a deceased Inklings, and Tolkien's "collaboration" with his son Christopher.

The final chapter ("Creativity: Appreciating Interaction") is Glycer's recapitulation of her argument. Her formal conclusion suggests that "confidence in an ongoing, interdependent creative community has a strong foundation in the Christian faith, a vital link that the Inklings had in common" (224). She relates this to Charles Williams's theories of coinherence and exchange, which she illustrates with a long quote from Thomas Howard's 1983 *The Novels of Charles Williams*. "I am persuaded," she says to end the volume, "that writers do not create text out of thin air in a fit of personal inspiration" but "as part of an ongoing dialogue between writers, readers, texts, and contexts. . . . Like filaments joined together in a web, writers work as members of larger communities. As they work, they influence and are influenced by the company they keep" (226). Considering the evidence she has presented, that is certainly true of most of the Inklings, at least for a time. She does *not* consider literature itself as a community, and so ignores influences outside of the Inklings group. (For an extensive study of such influences, see the three books by Jared Lobdell that I reviewed in *SFRA Review* 279.)

Glycer's book therefore has a great deal to contribute to the body of Inklings scholarship—not least in its appendix, "The Inklings: Their Lives and Works," an excellent set of brief biographies by David Bratman, who also compiled the index; Glycer acknowledges him as "resonator, opponent, editor, collaborator, and referent at every stage of the development of this book" (xii), which ends with an extensive works cited and an index. The book is well edited; I caught no typos or factual errors. My only quarrel with the book is that the rigid framework she has bor-

rowed from LeFevre has led to a substantial amount of repetition and overlap between the chapters, especially where it is difficult to fit particular interactions into the framework.

II

Elizabeth Whittingham's *The Evolution of Tolkien's Mythology* is also based on her dissertation, entitled "The Final Victory: The Evolution of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The History of Middle-earth*"—to which, to judge from the published abstract, it is very similar. It is at the same time something of a tour de force and a disappointment. Whittingham has carefully studied not only all twelve volumes of Christopher Tolkien's *History of Middle-earth*, but also all of Tolkien's letters and biographies and most of the recent critical literature, especially Verlyn Flieger's *Interupted Music* (2005) and Flieger's other studies. Whittingham is an adjunct lecturer at SUNY Brockport. Her only previous publication was an excellent article on the "Ainulindalë" in 1998, though she has given numerous public lectures and conference papers.

In her introduction, Whittingham notes that she has "organized the stages of Tolkien's writing into six periods . . . represented by a chart" (6, 10), and the analysis in her chapters follows these stages, though she admits that they "merely approximate the development of Tolkien's legendarium" (6); the introduction describes the stages and summarizes the content of the book's chapters. Her first chapter, "Influences in Tolkien's Life," recapitulates material available elsewhere, concluding that she will "examine the evolution of the myths on which Tolkien worked for almost sixty years to discover what motivated the changes and revisions and perhaps to identify the end toward which he was headed" (36). The titles of her five main chapters describe their content/ "Tolkien's Mythology of Creation" focuses on the *Ainulindalë*, "Tolkien's Mythology of Divine Beings" on the *Valaquenta* in its various forms, and "The Physical World of Middle-earth and of Eä" mainly on the *Ambarkanta* and the various versions of the annals. In both "Death and Immortality among Elves and Men" (the longest chapter) and "The Last Days of Middle-earth," her sources include small comments that range from Tolkien's earliest writings to his latest, though for "Death and Immortality" her main texts are the late stories "Athrabeth Finrod Ah Andreth" and "Of Finwë and Miriel."

She begins each of her chapters with a section summarizing available information and speculations about Tolkien's sources for a particular theme, and then she surveys Tolkien's texts dealing with that theme through the six periods outlined in her introduction, carefully reviewing the changes in the texts over time, quoting not only the texts but Christopher's comments on them. The process sounds simple, but she has extracted relevant materials from over 3,400 pages of volumes 1–5 and 9–12 of *The History of Middle-earth* (she doesn't consider volumes 6 to 8 and the first part of 9, which deal with the development of *The Lord of the Rings*), plus the 780 pages of *The Silmarillion* and *Unfinished Tales*. Considering that, she has done a remarkable job of summarizing and clarifying, in 200 pages, what would take most of us months of digging out of Christopher Tolkien's voluminous histories.

The last chapter, "The Final Victory," is a review of what her analysis has shown, and her concluding words suggest an

implicit bias that I noticed in her analysis from the beginning: "In particular, Tolkien's Christian faith and his hope in a final victory inspired and informed his writings and is evident in the evolution of his mythological texts within the *History of Middle-earth*" (200). She is probably right enough, but that is, I believe, a simplistic view of Tolkien's sixty years of work on his mythology, and it reflects my disappointment in the book: it contains too much textual analysis and too little interpretation. I think Whittingham is wrong to ignore, for the most part, not only the separate evolution of *The Lord of the Rings*, but of the major tales from the First Age (Beren and Lúthien, Túrin Turambar, and "The Fall of Gondolin") that make up the main body of *The Book of Lost Tales* and *The Silmarillion*, and the Second Age tale of the drowning of Númenor that appears in *The Silmarillion* as "The Akallabêth." Nonetheless, she has provided a most valuable, and remarkably concise, handbook for the study of *The History of Middle-earth*. The book concludes with a works consulted and an extensive index. I caught no typos or errors.

III

Dinah Hazell is the only one of these three authors I discuss whose book is not based on her dissertation. An independent scholar, she has published several articles on Chaucer and Marie de France; she and her husband, George W. Tuma, are editors of the currently inactive electronic journal, *Medieval Forum*. Her *The Plants of Middle-earth* is the shortest and most narrowly focused of the three books, but by no means the least interesting.

Hazell's intent, as she notes in the preface, "is to create an environment that will enhance the readers' perspective during future journeys along the roads and through the forests of Middle-earth, and to provide a place for reviving memories of those trips" (x). It is certainly a beautiful book: four different artists from the San Francisco Bay area have provided twenty-six illustrations of flowers and trees discussed, and it is imaginatively and often beautifully written. As she says in her introduction, "Using primarily [Tolkien's] letters and biographical information, we will try to envision what he saw and what had meaning for him" (3).

As in Whittingham's book, Hazell's chapter titles describe their content. In the "Hobbit Names," she discusses are mostly the flower names of hobbit girls and women, commenting, "While the bouquet of female hobbit names brings us the sweet scent and beauty of the Shire, plant personality and lore also tells us something about its inhabitants" (24). In the second chapter, she takes us "From Shire to Mordor: A Botanical Tour of Middle-earth," considering mostly the plants that the Fellowship encounters along that journey, concluding with the image of the flowers crowning the stone head of the fallen king at the crossroads near Cirith Ungol. Raising the question of whether *The Lord of the Rings* "is ultimately optimistic or pessimistic," she notes that "Tolkien explores the issue . . . not least in his botany, where he directs our gaze toward the ephemeral beauty of a single bloom and the enduring strength of nature" (43).

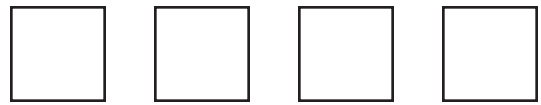
She looks then in more detail at "Ithilien: The Garden of Gondor," mostly through the eyes of Frodo and Sam, and returns to the crossroads, which are "encircled with trees" that "have a central place in [Tolkien's] creative imagination as well as in the plot, narrative technique, imagery and mythology of *The Lord*

of the Rings, which he called his ‘own internal Tree’” (60), and with that as a transition, her final analytical chapter looks at Middle-earth’s “Forests and Trees,” taking us through the Old Forest, Mirkwood, and Fangorn. Only someone with Hazell’s botanical perspective would have noticed the resemblance of the rowan trees, “the mossy stone and green turves of Quickbeam’s Ent house. . . . to the scene of Boromir’s attack on Frodo,” (81), a resemblance that is, she feels, probably not coincidental. She concludes this chapter with the parallels and contrasts between Sharkey’s Mill in the ravaged Shire and the Sarehole Mill that Tolkien knew as a child. “The technology that drives Saruman’s and Sauron’s desires for power over nature and Man is most cursed for the destruction of flora, especially trees” (86). But her concluding chapter looks at “Restoration and Recovery” at the beginning of the Fourth Age. “The concepts of renewal and recovery imply loss and change; not all losses can be restored, and some things can never be the same. . . . In ‘On Fairy Stories’ [Tolkien] defines recovery as the gaining of a renewed view of things that have become stale or taken for granted through familiarity.” This, Hazell thinks, is one of the messages of Tolkien’s work.

Her book concludes with two appendices, “About Plant Lore” and “List of Plants,” notes, a bibliography, the illustrators, and the index. The book is well edited, with a few minor errors.

IV

All three of these books are well worth reading or owning. Glycer’s book, despite its rigid approach, is a major contribution to Inklings studies. Whittingham has provided a remarkably brief, if thematically limited, overview of Christopher Tolkien’s *History of Middle Earth*, and Hazell’s study is a charming and delightful companion to a rereading of *The Lord of the Rings*. The three together offer a curious sidelight on the difficulties faced by women in academia. Glycer is the only one whose career path seems traditional (read: “typical of male academics”): BA/BS in 1978, MS in 1981, PhD in 1993, and now a (presumably) tenured full professor. Whittingham, who waited twenty-two years between her BA and MA, remains an untenured adjunct lecturer. And Hazell earned her PhD from the Union Institute, an online university formed in 1964 by, among others, Hofstra University, Bard College, Antioch College, and Sarah Lawrence College; it was accredited in Ohio in 1971. The quality of her book gives me a new respect for online universities. Even in the humanities, where women academics are sometimes a majority, women have a difficult time matching their male colleagues in progressing through the academic hierarchy. Or is it possible that, in these three instances, the combination of being female and being scholars focused on a genre out of the mainstream has augmented their difficulties?



Fiction Reviews

Erratum correcting title to *The Future We Wish We Had* appears in *SFRA Review* #284.

The Way the Future Was

Ed Carmien

Martin H. Greenberg and Rebecca Lickiss, eds. *The Way the Future Was*. New York: DAW Books, 2007. Paperback, 306 pages, \$7.99, ISBN 978-0-7564-0441-3.

There is retro afoot in science fiction these days. Consider it a natural reaction to a world awash in the things that used to be SF. Captain Kirk flips open his communicator—got that. Genetic modifications to improve . . . oh, got that too. Short of spiffy space travel (working on it—everyone saving up their \$200,000 to buy a short trip into orbit? What? Retirement? Who needs to eat when you’re retired?), the world has become a difficult place for SF writers in need of the look and feel of future life. Hence S. M. Stirling’s *The Sky People*, The SciFi Channel’s remake of *Flash Gordon*, even the alternate history movement of the past decade or so. And, so it happens, *The Way the Future Was*, an unexpected gem of an anthology, edited by Martin H. Greenberg and Rebecca Lickiss.

These 16 stories, from folks you’ve heard of such as Mike Resnick and Kristine Kathryn Rusch and others, dip into retro SF themes and go beyond. Greenberg, of Tekno Books fame, leads a cadre of book packagers based in Wisconsin. Readers of short story anthologies know his name well. With Lickiss, it seems they gave writers permission to *not* be cutting edge, permission to be old fashioned, at least in some ways.

“All the science fiction that I read,” writes Lickiss in her introduction, “clearly implied that the future would hold wonders . . . that would revolutionize our lives.” She foresaw a utopia built through technology. Sadly, she notes she doesn’t live on the moon: “Someone, somewhere along the line didn’t keep the implied promise of the future.” Hence *The Way the Future Was*.

Esther M. Friesner’s “A Rosé for Emily” leads off the collection, a discerning and witty story of what happens when simple folks are insulted by the haute cuisine tendencies of their automated kitchen. Dave Freer’s “Boys” harkens back to capitalism-gone-wrong tales of yesterday. Like a consumer of Coffiest in Pohl and Kornbluth’s *The Space Merchants*, Andrea encounters hypercapitalism at its worst, but Freer takes a lovely step beyond this setup into the realm of science—to say more would be to spoil the fun.

Risking a call from the legal world, Kevin J. Anderson writes of a delightful future family who live in a time of automated ease. George, the father, Jane, the mother, Judy and Elroy the children . . . “Oh no he didn’t,” I hear you say. Yes, Anderson *did*. Anyhow, in “Good Old Days” George’s Uncle Asimov has passed away, leaving a tax debt and a collection of old-fashioned,

unautomated things. Self-analysis and mess ensue; Rosie the maidbot cleans up after.

P. R. Frost's "Alien Voices" is a deft little tale of nano technology—and the necessity of art, in this case dance. Dean Wesley Smith's "Cold Comfort" has an echo of The X-Files, and in it humans are mining asteroids for metals, always a good start on a future that was in yesterday's SF.

Mike Resnick and James Patrick Kelly's "A Small Skirmish in the Culture War" is, given the authors, predictably hilarious. Its take on the way the future was reveals a telling insight into who we are here in the United States of America.

These six stories are accompanied by ten more that carry on in similar vein, from Annie Reed's "My Father the Popsicle" (the human element of freezing until medical science can cure) to Rusch's excellent "Good Genes" (the human element of DNA analysis and its consequences).

The Way the Future Was is an unexpected gem not because others of its ilk (Greenberg and crew package a lot of anthologies for DAW Books—fair disclosure, I appear in a few) aren't good, but because Lickiss's concept prompted writing that offers readers little jewels of SF that are unencumbered by the layers of expectation that surround much SF written today.

This makes for an anthology attractive to teachers looking for a good text for, say, middle school readers. I've already taught "Good Old Days" to a middle school honors class, eighth graders who "got" the social commentary in the story immediately and who then crafted effective essays comparing and contrasting our use of technology today with the J. family in the story. I'm also using the text in a 200-level science fiction course as a quick way to introduce basic SF concepts to students who will in general not be familiar with anything but the surface aspect of SF gleaned from TV shows and films.

Popular culture enthusiasts will find much of interest in Resnick and Kelly's "A Small Skirmish in the Culture War," while those who focus on gender and literature will discover a predominance of women writers in an anthology where none of the tales unwittingly promote yesterday's (and maybe today's, given the ongoing political campaign) biases. Julie Hyzy's "Destiny" is quietly interesting in this regard.

I can't help but channel James Tiberius Kirk when I flip my cell phone open—though the channeling tends to stop when instead of the Enterprise I'm calling to check the grocery list. Similarly, readers wrapped in decades of SF will feel a solid ping of familiarity when they read these stories, though for some the ping might sound a bit hollow. Light reading, mostly, but well crafted, and there are some deep thoughts here. Readers of short SF should look first to the remaining periodicals: *Asimov's*, *F&SF*, and so on—but in an era when perfectly awful SF appears in hardback at nearly thirty dollars a pop, paperback anthologies like this that DAW Books publish are also carrying the short fiction torch, and at a very reasonable price.

Retro is good.

The Elysium Commission and Viewpoints Critical

Janice M. Bogstad

L. E. Modesitt Jr. *The Elysium Commission*. New York: Tor, February 2007. 352 pages, \$25.95, ISBN 0765-31720-6.

L. E. Modesitt Jr. *Viewpoints Critical: Selected Stories*. New York: Tor, 2007. 368 pages, \$25.95, ISBN 978-0-7653-8857-2.

The prolific Mr. Modesitt has provided us with two firsts published in 2007: his first-ever anthology of short stories, and a novel set on a what is for him a new fictional universe. Known for science fiction series such as the Corean Chronicles and the Ecolitan Matter, and fantasy such as the Saga of the Recluse, the Spellsong Cycle, and the Ghost Books, as well as at least a dozen nonseries titles (some of my favorites included *The Ethos Effect*, *The Octagonal Raven*, and *The Eternity Artifact*), he has demonstrated his talent for unusual settings in both shorter and longer tales.

The Elysium Commission is science fiction with a mystery-detective core. The protagonist, Blaine Donne is a sort of black ops superdetective who solves complicated and dangerous problems for an elite clientele. Described as a retired military special operative, he and his supercomputer, Max, fount of all knowledge, security system for Donne's "villa" and being with his own personality, are "hired" by several clients to assist them in ways in which a legal police force are not able—a classic mystery-adventure plot. That Modesitt links together what at first seem like separate cases into a single, planet-threatening bid by one man to create his own utopia with another man's money and obsessions, is another demonstration of Modesitt's consummate skill as a world and plot builder. Told in a first-person narrative, primarily from Donne's point of view, *The Elysium Commission* is so named because Elysium is the code word for a utopian city where an unscrupulous operative of an even more unscrupulous and wholly egotistical multibillionaire has created as his own little retreat, an Elysium which will take the energy of several destroyed planets to maintain. Donne pursues cases of logo- and patent-infringement, missing-persons location, and a premarital character-background check as minor commissions while attempting to find out, for a mysterious client, a mysterious Signiora Reynarda who seems to have no past, what the connection is between entertainment mogul Legaar Eloï, civic planner Judeon Maraniss, and a project with the name "Elysium." That this last will eventually involve potential destruction of his home city, Turene, and perhaps home planet, Devanta, is only gradually revealed as a potential plot by the militaristic enemy of the Devanta's Sorores Civitas (rulers), the Frankans, to take over Devanta. All is revealed to the reader a bit more quickly than to Donne and his compatriots because we are also treated to first-person speculations of Judeon Maraniss, the archmanipulator of Frankans, Legaar Eloï and Elysium itself.

Donne provides the sympathetic perspective as a private investigator with a past. He was seriously injured in his past military life as part of a Special Services branch of the Devanta military. But his past also equipped him with technological

resources and physical and mental skills that make him both interesting and barely believable. In fact, Modesitt, who has been criticized for his lack of character development, also intersperses the narrative of Donne's paid cases with interludes when he goes out into the darker sites of Thurene and rescues the (somewhat) helpless. Donne is something of a loner, it seems, with the most regular contact going through Max, but he also has a range of influential friends and a sister, Krij who, along with her partner in a legal business, Siendra Albryt, provide valuable information and also turn out to be a bit more than they first appear. In fact, in what is doubtless another bid to expand his character development, Modesitt creates an unlikely romance for Donne out of this material.

Of course, plot development follows Modesitt's usual twists and turns. Donne is first contacted by Seldara Tozzi, "one of the grande dames of Thurene," who asks that he find out if her great-granddaughter Marie Annette Tozzi, a respected physician and wealthy heiress to Seldara's fortunes, is about to make a mistake in marrying another prominent researcher, Guillaume Richard Dyorr. It turns out she suspects the latter to be either homosexual, which would be fine except that he seems to be hiding his sexuality, or not sexual at all, an unfortunate consideration for a prospective heiress. That neither Seldara nor her daughter need face death for many decades to come does not seem to limit the great-grandmother's concern. But just as Donne is beginning this commission, he is visited by Signiora Reynarda, who wishes to hire him to find "the exact relationship between Eloi Enterprises, an apparent media consortium, Judeon Maraniss and Elysium," a pleasure planet that was created by Eloi enterprises as one of their financial endeavors. "He is already aware that this will be a dangerous job as Legaar Eloi is already informally linked to the disappearance of more than fifteen people.

Within a very short space of time, Donne is kidnapped from a secured limousine by some unusual space-time distortion, shot at and injured while attempting to investigate Legaar Eloi's Times End installation, informed of the death of one of his clients, Lemel Jerome, who was pursuing a patent-infringement at the part of Eloi, and called back into his special-ops duties by the Sorores Civitas. As he further clarifies his interrelated cases, he and some of his informational contacts are able to uncover the Eloi/Maraniss/Frankan plot and develop a daring intervention to thwart their plans, especially those of Judeon Maraniss. And almost as an afterthought, he is able to solve a logo-copyright infringement case and discover the Tozzi marriage problems, however distasteful the answer might be to great-grandmother Tozzi, all outside of court and without unpleasant public revelations. This novel is satisfying from a science-fictional perspective, with its discussions of Hawking effect displacements and intergalactic conflict, from a conceptual perspective as the reader must follow complicated reasoning processes and from a literary perspective as Modesitt reaches a new stage in the intertwining of plot and character.

If the reader wants to track Modesitt's development as a writer, or just wants to examine some of the stories that preceded and followed his several series titles, and his careers as both SF and fantasy writer, then the *Viewpoints* collection, his first ever anthology, offers a solid base for further exploration of this talented writer. The nineteen stories in *Viewpoints Critical* span Modesitt's career which began with short stories published

in *Analog* in the 1970s and have expanded to include six series of novels and seven nonseries novels for a total of fifty separate works. Of the nineteen, three are new but are linked to his existing series universes. These new offerings are a Ghosts of Columbia story, "Always Outside the Lines"; a Recluse story, "Black Ordermage"; and a Corean Chronicles story, "Beyond the Obvious Wind." The rest are reprinted from *Analog*, *Asimov's*, *On Spec*, and such story anthologies as *Flights*, *Future Weapons of War*, *UNIVERSE*, *Man vs. Machine* and *Emerald Magic*, *Slipstream*, *Low Port*, and *In the Shadow of the Wall*. Set in both science fictional and fantastic universes, the stories delight, distress, disgust, and divert. Modesitt is known for his extravagant and complex plots and wildly creative settings, as well as dark and mysterious heroes of both male and female persuasion. Most often his characters are described as predictable, nonintropective, and supercompetent. His villains have few redeeming characteristics but one can also be lead to misrecognize them due to the ambivalent relationship to law and authority found in his heroes. The Modesitt scholar or completist will enjoy "The Great American Economy," his first published story, as well as the short personal quips which precede each story in the entire anthology. In this one, he provides an early warning of electronic banking crime: "All a crooked banker has to do is a little computer manipulation. When funds are transferred, the bank computers link the send bank's computer subtracts funds from itself and the accounts involved. The receiver bank adds funds to both. Old Percy had a percentage of the funds retained when the bank sent them to another. But only on certain accounts. This created a bit of extra money" (25)—extra money that is about to destabilize the American economy.

"Iron Man, Plastic Ships," which he describes as "a direct analogue to my Vietnam era experiences as a Navy pilot," "decries the tendency of governments to cut corners on equipment and put front-line combatants in danger. This story, originally from a 1979 *Asimov's*, conjures up eerie resonances with actual stories coming back to families of current soldiers in Iraq about inadequate body armor, insufficient supplies and questionable medical care. Everything old is new again.

With a style that has doubtless contributed to Modesitt's fame, stories in his fantasy series books, tend to blur our expectations of SF and fantasy as in "Beyond the Obvious Wind," set in the fantasy world of his *Corean Chronicles*. Tech Captain Vynhal is convinced that he can clear up the inefficiencies of a remote outpost where too many "rankers" (foot soldiers) continue to be killed, and too little iron and "dreamdust" make their way from the outpost to the regional city of Faitel. His immediate assumptions about the incompetence of his local counterpart Murch form the majority of the story until he takes his own trusted men out of Murch's secured post and towards small villages where workers are collected from the ranks of criminals to work in the iron mines. He believes he's gradually solved the problem, assuming that a dearth of workers occurs because local landholders siphon them off to work on their holdings. It's only after his encounter with the natives and loss of some of his own men that he truly understands, and learns to respect, the situation in the hinterlands. It is a life-altering realization that twists a seemingly standard military adventure into a fantasy with a most unlikely hero.

"Ghost Mission," is another such story where Modesitt creates

realistic scientific explanations for the existence of ghosts and zombies, giving each existence a set of rules and a social reason. His hero must search for his own oblivion at the same time he searches for the ghost of Verial, a brilliant, young physicist who was killed by surprise and became a ghost. A puzzling and lyrical little story, this one depends on poetic lines, the only way that a ghost can communicate, as one realizes that the lines that Verial wrote before her death, the lines that unlock the mystery of her identity, are another demonstration of Modesitt's versatility, as are his many Shakespeare quotations.

One might think that readers familiar with Modesitt's work will have an easier time decoding his plots. This is not always the case, as his versatility lies in their very complexity. One appreciates his stories, as well as his novels because they present entertaining puzzles, feints within feints and misdirection at every turn. His fantasy is scientific, and his hard science fiction is lyrical. This anthology represents both of those qualities as it follows the literary development of the author. Few writers of SF and Fantasy are as skilled in both genres. In his range of creative universes, many series in both SF and fantasy, and creation of twisting plots, Modesitt is comparable to C. J. Cherryh or Robert Silverberg. And as a still relatively young writer, we can expect him to produce many more, and perhaps again totally different tales to delight, educate, and intrigue.

Fleet of Worlds

Ritch Calvin

Larry Niven and Edward M. Lerner. *Fleet of Worlds*. New York: Tor, 2007. Cloth, 299 pages, \$24.95, ISBN 978-07653-1825-1.

A couple of interesting things strike me about this book. For one, *Fleet of Worlds* is tagged as "A Sci-Fi Essential Book." Every month since January 2006, Tor and Sci-Fi have designated one of the books slated for release that month as "essential." The Essential titles have included works by Gordon Dickson, Robert Heinlein, Robert Sawyer, and Ben Bova (for *Titan*, which won the John W. Campbell Memorial Award in 2007). It has also included titles by lesser-known authors such as Cecilia Dart-Thornton, Jim Grimsley, Elizabeth Haydon, and Dave Duncan. Neither the publicity materials contained in the book nor the Sci-fi Web site clarify how these titles are chosen, what the criteria are for a book to be considered "essential," or the individuals who make these selections. Nevertheless, we are informed, via large letters and a fancy logo, that *Fleet of Worlds* is an "essential" book. And while I'm not quite prepared to declare it "essential reading," I am prepared to say that it is a very good—and very timely—book.

A second interesting thing about this book is that it is a new contribution to Niven's Known Space universe and the first collaborative effort in the series. The events of *FoW* predate the events *Ringworld* by several hundred years (2650 and 2855, respectively). Much of the focus of *Ringworld*, and much of the attention given to *Ringworld*, has centered upon the technical elements of Niven's world building, and indeed, the dust jacket

and blurbs for *FoW* also note that it continues the hard SF tradition. And while *FoW* does contain moments of scientific and technical details (how five worlds can be set in orbit around one another, how nanotechnology can create an impermeable hull for a spacecraft—though *not* how the teleportation discs function!), the vast majority of this novel deals with questions surrounding the logistics, efficaciousness, and ethics of *social engineering*.

Fleet of Worlds begins in 2197, aboard the *Explorer*, a ship sent out from Earth, equipped with a skeleton crew and genetic materials, to populate and colonize a suitable planet. Along the way, they encounter an anomaly, a planet being propelled through space. Assuming sentience, they send a message toward the planet, and they are almost immediately boarded and destroyed. The narrative then jumps to 2650 and introduces us to the Citizens/Colonists society that has developed in the interim. The Citizens (Puppeteers) had saved the human embryos from the *Explorer* and raised human beings on a satellite planet. But the Citizens were careful to indoctrinate the humans with an ingrained subservience to Citizens and to never allow them to know about their past, their origins, or even their own species name.

Since the Citizens are xenophobic, they use a Colonist crew, in the company of Nessus, to explore other planets. As they explore a planet, they discover that it is occupied by a species called the Gw'oth. They live underwater, but have been able to develop remarkable technologies, at a remarkable rate. The Gw'oth's potential frightens Nessus, and he proposes a preemptive strike against them, to neutralize any potential future threat. The Colonists, particularly the navigator Kristen Quinn-Kovacs, resists. Instead, in the first example of social engineering, the Gw'oth are threatened and then left for observation.

Meanwhile back on the Citizen planet Hearth, they are mortally afraid that humans from Earth (called "wild humans") will discover them. Nike, a major political figure, sends Nessus back to Earth to thwart the UN, and particularly Sigmund Ausfaller, from finding any traces of the Citizens. In order to divert human attention away from space, Nessus foments a rebellion on Earth by disseminating information regarding the global practice of tightly controlling reproduction. In the second instance of social engineering, Nessus spreads propaganda that reveals the inequalities in the practice, and although he wonders about the ethics of such an intervention, he agrees that Citizen well-being should be the final arbiter.

Finally, Kristen Quinn-Kovacs is able to solve the riddle of how and why the Citizens have eliminated all data concerning the *Explorer* and the origins of Colonists. Once she has convinced other Colonists, they are determined to break away from the Citizens, and demand a planet for themselves, outside of Citizen control. But as with the threat from the Gw'oth, the Citizens prefer to destroy the Colonists rather than risk any potential threat. Here again, Nessus finds himself in an ethical quandary. Should he help the Colonists that he has come to consider friends, or should he maintain his loyalty to his own species? The question of loyalty and heritage runs throughout the book: what kind of loyalty or connection would Colonists have to Earth, to humans, and to human culture? The apparent inherent taste for pepperoni pizza aside, the novel handles the question in a complex way.

In *Fleet of Worlds*, the narrative examines three interspecies relationships. As they contemplate the mystery of the Gw'oth, Nessus, for example, wonders about the ability to “see” an alien situation outside of “normal” understanding. In other words, how can individuals from one culture observe and make sense of the cultural practices of another culture? This fundamental question is crucial in, for example, current U.S. relations with Mideast nations. A second contemporary issue is government manipulation of public information and policy. The conservatives in power in the Concordance government have no problem manipulating human politics on Earth, nor do they have any compunction about manipulating Citizen politics on Hearth. For example, Nike and others wish to declare a “permanent state of emergency” in order to consolidate their power and to impose restrictions on Citizens. Furthermore, the rationale for the permanent emergency is, in fact, false, but it proves to be an effective policy strategy. While these strategies sound quite familiar, the fact that they are the policies of a hostile alien species produces the space in which to discuss them as they relate to current U.S. governmental policies. Timely, indeed.

Lighthouse at the End of the World

Stacie Hanes

Jules Verne. *Lighthouse at the End of the World: The First English Translation of Verne's Original Manuscript*. Ed. and trans. William Butcher. Lincoln: Bison Books (University of Nebraska Press), 2007. Paperback, 210 pages, \$15.95, ISBN 978-0803260078.

Jules Verne's *Lighthouse at the End of the World* isn't science fiction. Readers who must have cyborgs or nanotech would do better to swallow one of the smaller sort of MP3 player. The extent of the technology in it is a lighthouse beacon, and the most fantastic element is a very naturalistic pirate.

However, Verne is one of the nineteenth century's proto-SF authors; some of his adventure stories were sf, some were not. But *Lighthouse at the End of the World* is part of the tradition that fueled the development of sf. Thomas Clareson's essay on the emergence of science fiction points out that the most critical thing about SF is not science or technology per se, but the effects of science and technology on individuals and societies; Clareson also suggests that sharp distinctions between genres may be counterproductive. If that is the case, then there may be the faintest shadow of SF here: the lighthouse, with its modern lenses, is the thin end of the wedge of science and technology being used at the frontier of human exploration.

It is a progenitor of spacefaring SF because those stories almost inevitably resemble naval stories of the previous century; all of the same conditions apply, and the life-and-death adventure was a crucial part of early science fiction. The thematic elements of the lone protagonist, surviving against the odds by wit and courage, have always been hallmarks of the genre. That said, it's a cracking good novel, and William Butcher's commentary is superb.

There isn't enough spin in the *galaxy* to present this novel as a science fiction novel, but it can be used to discuss SF by holding it up, pointing at it, and saying, “*This* isn't science fiction, but look, it has similar markings. Note the harsh, alien environment, the pitiless, inhuman predators, and the faint stripes near the ears and tail.” *Lighthouse at the End of the World* might be useful in the classroom as an example of the direct ancestry of science fiction; this edition may be highly recommended for its excellent notes on Jules Verne's original manuscript versus Michel Verne's edited version, and would be outstanding for textual scholarship—but don't shelve it with the sf.

Eifelheim and Farthing

Janice M. Bogstad

Michael Flynn. *Eifelheim*. New York: Tor, 2006. Hardcover, 320 pages, \$25.95, ISBN 978-0765300966.

Jo Walton. *Farthing*. New York: Tor, 2006. Hardcover, 320 pages, \$25.95, ISBN 978-0765314215.

Flynn and Walton here offer us their most recent novels in a mode somewhat unusual for each of them. Walton is known for her fantasy works, but *Farthing* addresses a popular alternative history theme, a variation on Hitler's relationship to England and his success in world domination. Flynn takes us much further back, to the currently popular era of the Black Death six hundred years in the past, but both afford us an arresting revision of many contemporary assumptions about human nature.

Walton's work dwells much less on historical and physical theory than Flynn's. Her entire story is set in an alternative 1949, in and around London, and filtered through the perspective of a young woman, Lucy Kahn, whose family is one of the more important in England. She was one of the “Farthing Set” of aristocrats before she decided to marry David Kahn, an Anglicized Jewish man who has made it his passion to adopt the behaviors of his English contemporaries. He's gone to the right schools, played the right games, and now married the right girl, Lucy, who loves him so much that she's defied her socially conscious mother and her pragmatic father to be with him. While this is a science fiction story by virtue of being an alternate history, it is also a mystery story. It's alternate history because the Farthing Set have arranged to make a lasting peace with Hitler while agreeing to not interfere in his treatment of Jews on the continent. Of course, David is involved in financing some of the operations that rescue Jews from Germany, Poland and France, but is not quite convinced that he has anything to worry about in England. Walton skillfully weaves the seemingly minor differences of her 1949 England, where Hitler is still in power, the Jews are still being persecuted and the wars of conquest in Europe continue, into Lucy's story. For she must try to save her husband from being convicted, before he is even tried, in effect, for the murder of family friend, Sir James, at a weekend estate party run by her mother. And she must give up many illusions about her father (she had none about her mother), and her country in order to solve the mystery in a way that the police do not want from her. And then, ultimately, to fight for the life of her

husband in a cesspool of political intrigue and social manipulation that have become her beloved homeland. It is thus easy to see how the horrors of England under the German bombardment could become another set of horrors were England to have instead “made their peace” with Germany. This novel explores the question of whether one becomes like an immoral enemy by appeasing them. But it also tells a compelling story.

While Walton’s novel follows an historical “what if” storyline, Flynn tells a somewhat more convoluted historical tale. His plot is set work in two eras. The first is current time in which partners and lovers, a male and a female are, respectively, historian and physicist. Is assertion is that only because they lived and worked in proximity, and sometimes talked to each other about their work, were they able to solve an historical mystery. The “modern” pieces are revised from work he published as a short story, one about a historian who is researching the disappearance of a city in what will be present day Germany, the city Oberhochwald suffered a other than depopulation due to the Black Death. It seemed to have disappeared altogether, and his research suggested alien-first contact, and as a side note, the possible explanation for some of the more peculiar Gargoyles on European churches dating from the fourteenth century. In the novel, he adds the back story, largely as it occurs in 1348–1349 in the middle of the plague years, explaining how Oberhochwald become Eifelheim, a place that was razed to the ground, and that ground avoided up into the twenty-first century. Immersed in questions of church doctrine, his hero, Father Deitrich lives in this small village as he is escaping the possible punishment for supporting earlier peasant rebellions in the face of church sanctions. Yet his sympathies for the plight of the downtrodden lead him to the support of an odd band of “strangers” who look like big grasshoppers, operate within a genetically class-based cultural form, and are, in some cases, fascinated by his religion. Yet Deitrich cannot prevent tragedy for their little band of intergalactic castaways any more than he can for the village which houses them, or the bodies and souls of those aliens who choose religious conversion. One cannot say that this is exactly a romp through the fourteenth century, but the flavor of village life, the internal conflicts Oberhochwald’s people, the abuse, the unfaithfulness of wives and husbands, the crises of faith and the sympathies of kind women all enrich the sort of “what if” scenario that could easily become clichéd. Flynn is known for his careful historical and scientific scenarios. In this novel, his present-day protagonist employs state-of-the-art research but also conveys the now-familiar persona of someone who can almost live in the past. His partner, a brilliant, impatient young woman, escapes the everyday into physics theories of alternative universes. But it is perhaps the drama of the aliens, whose bodies cannot achieve nourishment on earth, that is the most compelling element of the narrative. They are at once rendered not very human and human enough to arouse pathos in the fourteenth-century humans around them and the twenty-first century humans who uncover their existence. As usually, Flynn’s content and form render his work both engaging and engrossing.

Both works should be read for the kind of defamiliarizing vision that allows us to rethink contemporary and historical understanding of deep moral questions. Which beings possess souls worth saving and cherishing? Can we sacrifice any beings in order to valorize others? How do we halt the onset of horrors

like plague, and war? What is the value of one person’s efforts? So one can read each of these novels for the mystery and art but one enjoys them for the thoughts they provoke.

Victory Conditions

Rikk Mulligan

Elizabeth Moon. *Victory Conditions*. New York: Del Rey, 2008. Hardcover, 416 pages, \$26.00, ISBN 978-0345491619.

Victory Conditions is the fifth and final novel of Elizabeth Moon’s Vatta’s War series. The main protagonist, Ky Vatta, Spaceforce Academy cast-out and commander of the ironically titled Space Defense Force, becomes admiral when her forces are augmented with the Slotter Key privateers to a fleet of forty. Although she has the support of the Slotter Key Rector of Defense, her aunt Grace Vatta, the ISC board of directors and government of Nexus are set against her leading the joint forces due to an irrational belief in a “Vatta conspiracy.” This leaves Nexus and the ISC isolated when they choose not to ally with the joint fleet and its sponsors against Gammis Turek’s pirates. Turek’s agents kidnap Ky’s young cousin and technical genius, Toby, but he is rescued before they can learn anything about the new Vatta variant shipboard ansibles. On Nexus, Rafe Dunbarger, CEO of the disintegrating InterStellar Communications, contends with bent politicians and clueless board members as he tries to prepare for Turek’s attack. The stressed merchant hulls of the privateers reveal their vulnerabilities when Ky’s ship is destroyed during an engagement with Turek’s fleet near the Moray shipyards. After using her apparent “death” to sow disinformation and draw out pirate agents, she gains further support from the Mackensee Military Assistance Corporation and Moray, including her new warship. The final confrontation at Nexus pits Ky’s forces against a pirate fleet three times her fleet’s size, with the Slotter Key Space Force jumping to the rescue . . . perhaps too late.

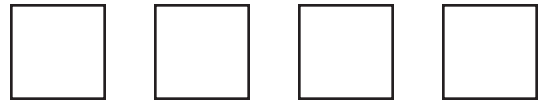
The Vatta’s War novels are space opera, not military sf, and readers who expect finely detailed technology and tactics may be disappointed. Space battles include beam weapons, missiles, mines, and shields but the details given contribute directly to the explanation of Ky’s privateer’s destruction and the vulnerabilities of other privateers. Light-based communications and their time lag receive more attention but mainly to highlight the effectiveness of the new shipboard ansible technology and its revolutionary use in fleet tactics. The most detailed combat is the final Battle of Nexus, but even here the author seems to assume a reader’s basic familiarity with space battle conventions as formations are named but not described. Elements of the series are reminiscent of Piers Anthony’s *Bio of a Space Tyrant* more than David Weber’s Honor Harrington series. All of Moon’s leading characters are incredibly talented, gifted, resilient, and mature—so much so that their moments of inner conflict and self-doubt often feel forced. Regardless, these are neither Lensman nor Dorsai, and Ky does receive emergency psych therapy and medication for the successive traumas she has experienced over such a short time, including the loss of her ship and crew.

The worlds and economics are more isolated than in her Serano Legacy books, but human modification remains a theme through the humods, often in ways reminiscent of Walter Jon William's *Angel Station*. Various modified humans appear in the stories, but it is the religious response to human diaspora that creates the interesting thread. Turek has used a fundamentalist belief that humans should not be modified to gain allies and support; this plays a pivotal role in the battle near Moray as antimods have acted as fifth columnists and hijacked newly built warships.

Ky's story has initially elusive but all-too-apparent similarities to C. J. Cherryh's *Merchanter's Luck*. But the absence of a more layered commercial and political backdrop is surprising, especially since Moon salted in all the proper elements: a family-based merchant empire, commercial trade between stars, planetary forces but no intergalactic navy, and finally, pirates. Trade and commerce remain problems for the Vattas as Stella fights for the position of CEO, worries about auditors, and has intellectual property right issues with the ISC. Unlike Cherryh's close focus of a single ship, or family in her Alliance and Union stories, Moon spreads her focus more thinly by using the family to work her way into the military, planetary government, and reestablishing a legacy business while rolling out a start-up.

Moon's story is more about military power and responsibility, and even more the roots of military power drawn from civil authority rather than might. Moon paints the ISC corporate space force as a protection racket, and one that is neither dependable nor legitimate. The corruption and ignorance within the Nexus government, as well as ISC management, seems to point to contemporary concerns with Blackwater and members of the U.S. administration. Grace Vatta moves from the head of Vatta corporate intelligence to the position of Rector of Defense, a politically motivated appointment. While Grace is a highly capable veteran, the transfer from corporate to legitimate government would seem to echo Moon's established criticism of civilian contractors in military and government functions, something she has called the "pollution of the chain of command" in her online essays. The joint force has the feel of NATO, although Moon does not open the topic of pan-system government or administration. In more immediate focus, the privateer ships are a hybrid of warship and merchanter, and are less successful in performing both roles, which may provide insight towards modern shifts toward multirole military organizations and presumed flexibility. Training, supply, command, and technology are all military concerns she elaborates in more detail than the specifics of ship-to-ship combat, and the role of senior NCOs plays a pithy part in her commentary.

As a space opera, the series has more than enough action to balance its romance. Moon offers intriguing hints of cultural and religious diversity in setting several hundred years after humans have begun space colonization. While the inclusion of teens and twenty-somethings would place this series in a community or university library, scholars have far more to consider in her depictions of power, privilege, and the roles and responsibilities of military command. *Victory Conditions* offers a story of personal growth and success in the initial phases of an interstellar postcolonial civilization.



Media Reviews

Electronic Literature

Helen J. Burgess

Electronic Literature Collection Volume One. 2007. N. Katherine Hayles, Nick Montfort, Scott Rettberg, Stephanie Strickland (eds.). CD-ROM Mac/Win. Also available at <http://collection.eliterature.org>.

Electronic literature is perhaps the most science-fictional of all literatures in that it is composed and read in a fundamentally SF medium. Early, tongue-in-cheek tools such as the Postmodern Paper Generator and Travesty suggested that literature could be thought of, in part, as computational (what Mille Niss in her introduction to "Oulipoems" in this collection calls "combinatorial literature" or "text-machines"). Electronic literatures that came out of the 80s and 90s often self-consciously referenced pop SF genres—most notably, the commercial "pick-a-path novel" and Dungeons and Dragons. Literary hypertext followed the pick-a-path model, asking viewers to choose alternative pathways through the narrative by click on links, while MUDs took the complex world-building of D&D and combined it with simple, object-oriented commands to build seemingly limitless role-playing universes. Hypertext novels were facilitated commercially by a number of composition tools such as StorySpace and Hypercard.

While our usual view of electronic literature may have been shaped by the advent of hypertext and MUDs and MOOs, though, there exist many other literary forerunners to this rich genre—and it is these that are most often referenced in the *Electronic Literature Collection*. One of the closest analogs (both in the sense of analogy and of nondigital technologies) is the work of the 1960s Oulipo movement, for whom poems and other literary artefacts contained a specific set of computational "rules"—for example, the N+9 method, in which each noun is replaced by the noun seven entries after it in a dictionary. In *Electronic Literature Collection Volume One*, the legacy of Oulipo is continued by outsourcing the computation to the machine, in works such as Niss/Deed's "Oulipoems" and Natette Wylde's "Storyland." On a more strictly visual level, works such as Robert Kendall's "Faith" and Brian Kim Stephans's "The Dreamlife of Letters" reference or resemble 50s concrete poetry, making use of typography and shape and adding in digital animation. Martin Rosenberg's work "Diagrams Series 6" combines elements of hypertext and concrete poetry to produce a literature that is revealed and hidden in a series of overlaid boxes. Works such as Jim Andrews's "Stir Fry Texts" and Philippe Bootz and Marcel Frémiot's "The Set of U" make use of AI algorithms or simple scripting to build poetry and visuals dependent on computation and combination. John Cayley's "Translation" mashes up translations of Benjamin's es-

say “On Language and Such” (1979) in three different “language states.”

The most ambitious works in this collection are those that carry computation beyond substitution or combination, such as Dan Shiovitz’s “Bad Machine,” a world-building machine similar to a MUD but written in a pseudo-machine language which gradually becomes clear as one “plays” the game and interacts with machines using coded instructions. Emily Short’s “Galatea” is a modified chatterbot akin to the popular 1960s psychoanalyst-bot *Eliza*. The collection is not without humor either: Shawn Rider’s “myBALL” satirizes the sameness of commercial Web site design, while Brian Kim Stefans’s “*Star Wars*, one letter at a time” retells *Star Wars* at “300-baud speed,” revealing one letter at a time on the screen. This piece simultaneously spoofs George Lucas’s single-minded vision, the frustration of one-way computer interaction, and the old-tech quality of the typewriter.

On first review, it is easy to dismiss electronic literature as a kind of formal experimentation, with an emphasis on appearance and structure. But really e-lit is more fundamentally about the way we interact with our machines. Our relationship with our own scientific tools is brought to the foreground in such works as “Chemical Landscapes Digital Tales,” by Edward Falco, Mary Pinto and Will Stauffer-Norris, in which visual landscapes are created in the photo lab with a flashlight. Biology is reimagined as a living machine: Melinda Rackham and David Everett’s “carrier (becoming symborg)” presents the hepatitis C virus as a conscious agent, drawing attention to our biology as an alien we live with every day, while Maria Mencia’s “Birds Singing Other Birds’ Songs” gives human voice to birdsong. Giselle Beiguelman and Helga Stein’s “Code Movie 1,” and the writings of Alan Sondheim, collected here as “Internet Text,” suggest to us that code can be thought of as a kind of literature, albeit one we are only just beginning to learn to read. In a passage that recalls strongly William Gibson’s first forays into describing cyberspace, Sondheim points to the unease of technological interaction:

I am aware of the depths of the Internet now, even when skitting across the World Wide Web. I understand TCP/IP to an extent, sense the routes of the packets, the nerves of communication. There are three reactions—even at this point, constant amazement; a fear of failure, given the in-ordinate complexity of it all; and a sensing that, at least on the Net, images and sounds are _constructed,_ and illusion, relying on compression techniques, protocols, transformation algorithms and the like, before the appearance of appearance. (Sondheim, “Blood.txt,” “Internet Text, 1994–[Through Feb 2, 2006]”)

In short, we are wandering through a strange new world.

Readers approaching these texts for the first time may feel similarly alienated. But in its complex interweavings of science and story, we encounter many supremely human moments: the adventures of Kate Pullinger and babel’s “Inanimate Alice,” a child searching for her lost father; Shelley Jackson’s “my body—a Wunderhammer,” a meditation on the relationship of body to identity; and Mary Flanagan’s “[theHouse],” a story of intimate relationships come undone. At a more formal level, the computational works are likely to strike a chord with students and scholars fascinated by the simultaneously concrete and fluctuating nature of language as a system: what Donna Haraway (not entirely

positively) called “the translation of the world into a problem of coding.” Thus, *Electronic Literature Collection Volume One* is a valuable collection for teachers wishing to share the breadth of this emerging genre with students of digital art, contemporary literature and the emerging field of humanistic software studies.

Putting the Virtual into Science Fiction

Edward Carmien

Eve Online: <http://www.eve-online.com/>

The SFRA discussion list was abuzz with talk of Eve Online (EO) late in 2007, so I decided to take a look. No less august a publication than the *New York Times* has profiled this unusual specimen of MMO (massively multiplayer online game—time for Wikipedia if that’s a mystery, no time here for an explanation!), noting its “formidable depth, complexity and Kilimanjaro-like learning curve” (Scheisel).

Eve Online is a gaudy, unabashed, illiterate space opera—but that isn’t what is science fictional about it. Not really.

In Eve Online, players adopt the role of a spaceship pilot, appearing in some game graphics as a head and shoulders static portrait, and in others as the ship being piloted (or the “pod” inside the ship, inside of which the pilot resides). One can change the ship one flies, like putting on a new suit of clothes, assuming one has the skills needed to pilot the new ship.

Skill development rules this game, as the skills a player has his or her avatar (see Wikipedia!) acquire rules what one can do. Players have a wide variety of roles to adopt, and these roles can and will overlap. In the end, however, EO is much like other MMOs—new players “grind” out simple missions, often “rattling” (a term that harkens back to that ancient ancestor of today’s MMOs, EverQuest) to earn capital for further development. There are guilds—errr, “corporations,” in this SF-themed virtual environment, Player-vs.-Player (PvP—Wiki!), merchanting, and other activities familiar to players of MMOs such as WoW (Wiki!).

If you feel you’ve stepped through the looking glass, you have. Tens of thousands of people play EO at the same time, and here’s a distinction the Times notes (and rightly so): these players are active in the same virtual environment, not in sundry copies of the environment. Thousands of star systems, ranging from safe zones to wild-west areas where, as I can attest, it can be dangerous to go.

Compared to WoW or DDO (OK, OK, that’s World of Warcraft and Dungeons & Dragons Online), EO has weak interactive structures—there is no virtual social space beyond discussion forums, the sort of thing we use today to gather and talk about work, hobbies, or other interests that bring individuals from geographically dispersed locations together for a conversation that couldn’t otherwise be held. How . . . ordinary. No hanging around in fantastic bars or imaginary plazas for EO players. No, in fact EO mimics the real world in this regard, adding a touch of . . . yes, realism to the otherwise romantic experience of a virtual life in space.

This virtual life can take many forms. Be a warrior, manage navigation, weapons targeting, tactics, and strategy in what feels much like an Iain M. Banks novel (sans the witty AIs and spaceship names). Mine ore and carry out a mercantile life in an environment that has a sound-effects tinge of the film *Bladerunner* combined with a complex space-based economy worthy of C. J. Cherryh's *Company Wars* background. Invent new technology and license its manufacture. Run a scout vessel on lengthy exploration missions as Niven's Louis Wu is said to have done. All in a complex and deep virtual world that is singular—not reproduced for groups of players—and contains tens of thousands of real-world players from around the world.

And hence the real SF element here: EO's version of a virtual game space, thousands of systems, more than thirty thousand players online at any one time (Halting State, anyone?), and a nonscripted interactive environment make the world of SF's tomorrow a reality today. The gorgeous visuals—stars, star fields, nebulae, space stations, tarnished brass-hulled spacecraft from tiny to behemoth, space combat visuals the envy of cinematic special effects crews, warping through space . . . these are just eye candy. EO could be set in the old West, bringing to mind Asimov's dictum about science fiction being so if the science is necessary to the telling of the story.

Like *Star Wars*, EO is less science fiction than space opera, and a not-very-grounded space opera to boot. Ships fly through space stations and planets with impunity. There are no gravity effects. Loading a ship full of weighty items does not alter its flight characteristics. Things go "whoosh!" in the depths of space. Hey, it is a game.

On the other hand, as we learned in *The Space Opera Renaissance*, space opera is science fiction. So even if Eve Online's most compelling science fictional facets involve its real-life aspects, that doesn't detract from the science fiction-ness of it all.

For writers, it is an ongoing debate: what is there to write when today's technology provides much of what yesterday's SF was about? Do we go the route of Kim Stanley Robinson and write near-future books about ecological disaster? Or Charles Stross's exemplary mundane science fiction offering, *Halting State* (thanks to Bill Dynes for bringing that to our attention last issue)? Or perhaps we crack open heady drafts of speculation and do as Kathleen Ann Goonan did in *In War Times*?

Or do we live yesterday's science fiction by playing Eve Online, a dangerously immersive and addictive space opera, where we write (or at least direct and experience) our own story about our own character in a world that can intrude noisily and with expensive finality into a narrative we can't direct with one hundred percent certainty? (How postmodern!)

There's not much here for scholars, though students of popular culture could have a field day exploring the graphical references made by the designers of EO. I suppose an interesting assignment could be made of the two-week free trial, not just in a science fiction literature class but also in the fields of communications, sociology, even economics. "First student to make a million credits, by hook or by crook, gets an A." "First group of students to form a corporation with 100 or more members gets an A." "The best illustrated research paper detailing the graphical influences in EO gets an A."

Because it is a compelling game, only great strength of inner character allowed me to put down the mouse at the end of the

two-week trial period, leaving cruiser pilot Red C. to a life of oblivion. But then, I have stories to write (on a cutting-edge yet primitive by SF standards laptop computer)—fans of science fiction looking for a different SF-esque experience could do worse than living a virtual life in EO. So what if it is virtual SF—it looks great, and it can be 150mm Carbide Railgun armed with iron-core ammo fun.

Works Cited

Eve Online. CCP. 2003–2007. <http://www.ccpgames.com/>.
Schiesel, Seth. "In an Ever-Changing Galaxy, the Action's Starting to Get Intriguing." *New York Times*, November 28, 2007. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/28/arts/television/28eve.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1.

Doctor Who: The Mind's Eye

Justin Felix

Colin Brake. *Doctor Who: The Mind's Eye*. Big Finish 102. Perf. Peter Davison, Nicola Bryant, and Caroline Morris. Big Finish Productions, 2007. Audio CD. £14.99, \$29.39. Order at: <http://www.bigfinish.com/102-doctor-who---the-minds-eye-476-p.asp>.

For nearly a decade, Big Finish Productions, a British company that produces audio dramas, has had a license from the BBC to create new audio content set during the original *Doctor Who* television series that ran from 1963 to 1989. These productions are very professional and involve the actors from the series' original run, newly composed music scores, and convincing sound effects. *The Mind's Eye*, written by Colin Brake, is set during the end of the Fifth Doctor's era of the series and is the 102nd monthly release in Big Finish's *Doctor Who* line. Series stars Peter Davison and Nicola Bryant reprise their roles as the Fifth Doctor and his companion Peri, respectively.

The Mind's Eye is a fairly standard and unremarkable story told in three parts. It incorporates a number of traditional *Doctor Who* hallmarks, including a strange, pulpish premise and an episodic serial storyline replete with cliffhangers. Here, on an alien planet, the Fifth Doctor is discovered disoriented by a major and a scientist while his companions Peri and Erimem are leading alternate lives: the former on Earth where she is engaged to a man with a problem child, and the latter in the future where she is the ruler of an empire. The Doctor is left to puzzle out what is going on while his companions' lives become more twisted and problematic.

There isn't much suspense to this story. For one thing, in general, since these stories take place in established television continuity, the listener knows that the main characters will be just fine since the audios are set in between television stories. More specific to *The Mind's Eye*, however, the title sort of gives away the major premise behind Peri and Erimem's new lives, and the CD set's artwork by Simon Holub gives heavy emphasis to the planet's plant life. Most listeners would put the pieces of the story's mystery together right away because of these circumstances.

Despite this, though, *The Mind's Eye* is entertaining enough, especially for *Doctor Who* fans, to warrant a listen. The cast is uniformly good, and the pacing doesn't allow the story to drag. Since Big Finish mimics the original *Doctor Who* episode arcs, each of which traditionally ran for just under half an hour, there are a couple of story breaks so the listener can pause the story and pick it up later without losing the narrative flow. As with other Big Finish *Doctor Who* releases of late, there are special features included, mostly behind the scenes interviews with the cast and crew, which may be of interest to hard core *Doctor Who* fans, and an audio trailer for the next monthly *Doctor Who* release, cleverly placed at the start of disk 1 to mimic film trailers. A bonus single episode adventure running roughly half an hour called *Mission of the Vybrans* by Nicholas Briggs is also included after the final episode of *The Mind's Eye* on disk 2.

Audio drama, once a staple of broadcast entertainment in America and elsewhere before the popularization of television in the 1950s, has seen a dramatic decline over the years. Sure, there are audio books, though these typically involve a reader reading a text rather than a cast performing a play. Science fiction seems well-suited for the genre, though, because of its obligatory need for the listener to imagine the visuals of what he or she is listening to, and there have been some very fine SF audio drama series over the decades, from NBC's *Dimension X* and *X Minus One* in the 1950s to NPR's *Bradbury 13* series in the 1980s. That's what makes Big Finish's output so interesting; it's one of the very few companies who produce new regularly released audio dramas—and much of it has been licensed science fiction like *Doctor Who*, *The Tomorrow People*, and *Judge Dredd*. Big Finish has been limited to audio CD distribution of its product, which makes the availability of these releases spotty, especially outside of the United Kingdom. Reportedly, however, Big Finish's catalog will soon be available for download from its site. It remains to be seen whether this innovation in their market strategy will engender a broadened audience interest in this genre of storytelling in the science fiction community. Regardless, these stories, and audio dramas in general, remain neglected in the academic science fiction community and warrant further consideration.

Blade Runner: The Final Cut

Joseph Francavilla

Blade Runner: The Final Cut. Dir. Ridley Scott. Perf. Harrison Ford, Rutger Hauer, Sean Young, Daryl Hannah, Edward James Olmos, Joanna Cassidy. 1982. DVD. Warner Brothers, 2007.

When I told a fellow film critic that before Christmas of 2007 the movie *Blade Runner* was coming out in a new DVD "Final Cut" multidisk special edition, she said, "Why bother?" What she meant was that first, why would anyone consider *Blade Runner* important either as a film or as a science fiction film? And second, wasn't this just another Hollywood way of hyping a reread, a remembrance of things past? If the director's cut came out on DVD in 1992, ten years after *Blade Runner*'s theatrical release, what was this new version supposed to be—the definitive, ultimate, absolutely conclusive and never-to-be-surpassed

final cut version? The cynical would surmise that this new product was in the long tradition of remakes, sequels, prequels, and special editions—simply another Hollywood example of what musician Frank Zappa defined as art: making something out of nothing and then selling it.

When director Ridley Scott was interviewed in the Encore Director's Series over a decade ago, he complained about the cultists who had kept *Blade Runner* alive after the theatrical release's disappointing initial box office failure: they were renting the film on half-inch tape with inferior clarity and definition. He has certainly put out the new product with state-of-the-art technology. Remastered and restored from the original film elements with a new 5.1 Dolby Digital audio track, the new "final cut" is available in standard-definition DVD in a two-disk special edition, a four-disk collector's edition, and a five-disk ultimate collector's edition (the latter complete with a Rick Deckard style briefcase containing a table of contents booklet, and toy spinner car and origami unicorn figure, as well as collector's photographs, a letter signed by Sir Ridley Scott, and a lenticular motion film clip from the original feature). The four-disk and five-disk sets are also available as Blu-ray and as HD DVD at a pricey \$28 or \$67.

The special features available on the Collector's and Ultimate edition are truly astonishing in their range, scope, and number. In addition to alternate and deleted scenes, various commentaries, and interviews with the cast, there is a wealth of documentaries. The subject of only *some* of the many documentaries include award-winning cinematographer Jordan Cronenweth, screenwriters Hampton Fancher and David Peoples, wardrobe and fashion design, production design by Syd Mead, the special effects coordinated by Douglas Trumbull, source novel author Philip K. Dick, the Dick novel compared to the film versions, the "Dangerous Days" piece on the overall making of the film (a documentary some three and a half hours long), and the initial reaction to the theatrical release. But here is the pièce-de-résistance: five major versions of the film—the original theatrical release (1982), the international version (1982), the director's cut (1992), the final cut (2007), and the rarely seen initial workprint.

So why bother?

For one thing, *Blade Runner* would have to be on anyone's list of the ten best science fiction films of the last half century. And it is one of the most influential science fiction films in terms of its *style* or *look*—that film noir/tech noir hybrid that launched the plethora of films, changing the mold from both the *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *Star Wars* lookalikes. Think of *Brazil*, *The Matrix*, or *Dark City*. *Blade Runner* was also the film where Hollywood discovered Philip K. Dick's works. So many subsequent films have come from his material: *Total Recall*, *Screamers*, *Paycheck*, *Minority Report*, and *A Scanner Darkly*. Ultimately, the film has established science fiction filmic icons and classic set pieces—the dark, crowded, rainy streets of decaying future LA, the magnificent, sublime opening shots above the city's hellish leaping flames and superscrapers, the police spinners soaring breathtakingly above the skyscrapers with Vangelis's sublime electronic music playing, and the "tears in the rain" roof scene as replicant Roy Batty dies beside ex-cop Rick Deckard. Even reviewers and critics who were negative or initially had mixed feelings about the film have changed their minds (such as Roger Ebert in his review of the final cut version), and have ad-

mitted *Blade Runner* to the pantheon of science fiction classics. It is the last great precomputer graphic imagery film to create a convincing, realistic, all-enveloping future world.

If *Blade Runner* is a science fiction (and pop culture) classic, then it needs to have a definitive version for study and research. Anyone who studies Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* novel needs to know the differences between the 1818 first version and the revised 1831 version. Good scholarship starts with establishing the variant versions and best text available. The same holds with the variant versions of *Blade Runner*. I remember teaching the film after the 1992 director's cut DVD came out and being unable to find the original theatrical version, even on tape, to make comparisons. And it was even more frustrating for teaching a film class at the same time when there were no documentaries, interviews, or special features at all on the film, and only a couple book-length studies of *Blade Runner*. Now, some twenty five years later, we finally have all that secondary material available in one package along with remastered renditions of the five major versions.

While libraries may want to purchase the five-disk set with a documentary on the variant versions and the early workprint version, many people may be satisfied with the four-disk set.

In any case, it was well worth the bother.

The Twilight and the Terror: Living in the Bush Years with *Children of Men*

Matthew Snyder

Children of Men. Dir. Alfonso Cuarón. Perf. Clive Owen, Julianne Moore, and Michael Caine. Universal Pictures. 2006.

Wildly adapted from P. D. James's first and only science fiction book of the aforementioned title, *Children of Men* is set in a future-possible United Kingdom during the year 2027. Mysteriously, for reasons unknown to modern science, women have suddenly become infertile, ripping global society into chaos and unmentioned ruin. Only Britain remains standing, left alone among savaged nations to quietly decay as the world's last outpost of civilized society. Burdened by a dying population, terrorist activities and environmental destruction, Britain is run by an unseen Big Brother and the nation of which trammels over individual rights by way of totalitarian levels of surveillance and persecution. With foreign nations in disarray, illegal immigrants throw themselves across the Atlantic for the shores of Britain, only to be put in public rat cages along the streets of a Dickensian London. Theo Faron—played by the exceptional Clive Owen—is a resigned and acquiescent former student activist now living on in humanity's afterglow as a jaded bureaucrat. Shaded with the doomed face of Humphrey Bogart via *Casablanca*, Theo is enlisted by his former wife (Julianne Moore) to help a pregnant African refugee find safe transit to a clandestine organization called the Human Project. Among the shattered landscapes of a Bushworld gone horribly wrong, Theo the Tin Man must find his heart and reclaim the last vestiges of a burning and lost, confused and imprisoned humanity.

Calling *Children of Men* “one of the best movies in the past six years,” critic Dana Stevens of *Slate Magazine* goes on to remark that it's “the movie of the millennium because it's about our millennium, with its fractured, fearful politics and random bursts of violence and terror.” Referencing the film as a “modern-day nativity story” set in a doomed future-possible, Stevens announces that after coming close to perfected genius with *Y tu mamá también*, Alfonso Cuarón has finally made his masterpiece. Kenneth Turan of the *Los Angeles Times* calls the film “a *Blade Runner* for the 21st century.” Praised by many critics for its visionary subtext, *The New York Times* critic Manohla Dargis addresses the film most aptly by describing *Children of Men* as an extended meditation on America's foreign policy debacle: “It imagines the unthinkable: What if instead of containing Iraq, the world has become Iraq, a universal battleground of military control, security zones, refugee camps and warring tribal identities?” It is, in her words, a film knife-jacked under the sounds of its own silent gifts: “*Children of Men* maybe something of a bummer, but it's the kind of bummer that lifts you to the rafters, transporting you with the greatness of its filmmaking.” Released quietly on Christmas Day with little fanfare or commercial hype, the film is both an ardent call to our collective future and a reminder of our present circumstance and the moral meltdown of the Iraq war, the policies of exclusion, and the cloak of entrapment and fear. *Children of Men* is, in total, a film about the moral incongruities found in America's brutal foreign and domestic policies. By rooting its ideological concerns in the present sociopolitical minefields of the Iraq war, illegal immigration, censorship, torture, ecological devastation and spiritual despair, *Children of Men* has more to do with the fraught political realities of a post-9/11 world than it does about a future-possible London in 2027. Alfonso Cuarón intentionally warps the original novel it was based on to express the political nightmare that currently lives on in the lives of the First and Third Worlds. Cross-referenced with a hypertext pastiche of images from Kosovo, from the Holocaust and from scenes and echoes of the torture found in Abu Ghraib, the director loosely adapts P. D. James's novel, taking it to the front yard, breaking down the picket fence of Science Fiction to show our present-day unrealities spread out before the burning bush. Just as with Ridley Scott did with *Blade Runner*, Alfonso Cuarón shows us in clever and cunning ways how a lesser novel can be adapted and strengthened by an intentional misreading of the text.

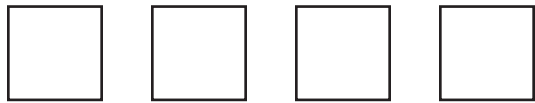
Certainly, the case can be made that this is the most rewarding and complex science fiction film since *Blade Runner*. What makes this film such a triumphant vision of a doomed future-possible is Cuarón's ability to creatively misread the original novel it was based on. Very often a film adaptation is decried as nothing more than discarded newspaper left to line the bottom of a birdcage. And with much evidence at hand, SF readers have seen an innumerable range of books butchered and left for dead on the rack of Hollywood's backdoor. Unlike the standard maxim that a loose adaptation of a novel to celluloid will result in a horribly disfigured and dishonest film, *Children of Men* illustrates how an intentional and creative misreading of a text can result in a superior narrative. Much like Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, P. D. James's *The Children of Men* suffers from bad dialogue, bad pacing, and inarticulate character constructions. While both of the novels are conceptual-

ly brilliant, suggesting metaphors that resound with frightening implications about our current breathing states, the two books falter and recapitulate the tired stereotype that science fiction offers great concepts at the expense of poor writing. Realizing that P. D. James's book was largely governed by needless ramblings and rife amounts of exposition, the director cunningly strips the concepts from the book and devises his own intentions by merging the meta-narrative of infertility—both in its actual and metaphoric forms—to the present-day concerns of a post-9/11 world. The original novel penned by P. D. James sets out a biblical fable, which requires a future-possible in order to express its metaphors more fully, whereas Cuarón's version of the book relies on the particular and substantive realities governing human consciousness in the age of terror.

Much like that of the American Western, Science Fiction as a genre—its adaptations, novels, video game visualizations and poetry—is often a response to present day concerns and anxieties at the time of its construction. *Children of Men*, most immediately for students and teachers, works best in a focused curriculum that deals with filmic or literary representations of the future apocalypse (i.e. in conjunction with films as various as *1984*, *Idiocracy*, *Akira*, *One Point O*, *Punishment Park* and *THX-1138*); just as well, the film and its adaptation could be used to discuss the process of adaptation from books to film. Issues and themes concerning the dystopian nightmares of surveillance, terror, ecocollapse, and cannibalism (*Delicatessen*) and the impossibility of visualizing utopian worlds would work well as a potential pedagogical process.

Works Cited

- Dargis, Manohla. "Apocalypse Now, but in the Wasteland a Child Is Given." *New York Times*. 25 Dec. 2006. 15 Jan. 2008. Available at: <http://movies.nytimes.com/2006/12/25/movies/25chil.html>.
- Stevens, Dana. "The Movie of the Millenium: Alfonso Cuarón's Fantastic *Children of Men*." *Slate Magazine*. 21 Dec. 2006. 15 Jan. 2008. Available at: <http://www.slate.com/id/2155950/>.
- Turan, Kenneth. "*Children of Men*." *Los Angeles Times*. 22 Dec. 2006. 15 Jan. 2008 Available at: <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/news/movies/cl-et-children-22dec22,1,629243.story>.



Calls for Papers

Call for papers—new journal

Title: *Science Fiction Film and Television*

Topics: We invite submissions on all areas of SF film and television, from Hollywood productions to Korean or Turkish SF film, from Sci-Fi Channel productions to the origins of SF TV in *Rod Brown of the Rocket Rangers* or *The Quatermass Experiment*. We encourage papers which consider neglected texts, propose innovative ways of looking at

canonical texts, or explore the tensions and synergies that emerge from the interaction of genre and medium. We publish articles (6,000–8,000 words, 100-word abstract, MLA format), book and DVD reviews (1,000–2,000 words), and review essays (up to 5,000 words), as well as archive entries (up to 5,000 words) on theorists (which introduce the work of key and emergent figures in SF studies, television studies, or film studies) and texts (which describe and analyze little-known or unduly neglected films or television series).

Contact: Mark Bould (mark.bould@uwe.ac.uk) and Sherryl Vint (sherryl.vint@gmail.com)

Call for papers—new journal

Title: *Transformative Works and Cultures*

Topics: TWC publishes articles about popular media, fan communities, and transformative works, broadly conceived. We invite papers on all related topics, including but not limited to fan fiction, fan vids, mashups, machinima, film, TV, anime, comic books, video games, and any and all aspects of the communities of practice that surround them. TWC's aim is twofold: to provide a publishing outlet that welcomes fan-related topics, and to promote dialogue between the academic community and the fan community.

Contact: Kristina Busse and Karen Hellekson (editor@transformativeworks.org)

URL: <http://journal.transformativeworks.org/>

Call for papers—edited volume

Title: *Creating, Reading, and Writing Science Fiction: Proceedings of SFRA 2008*

Topics: Anything on the conference theme, and beyond. Attendees of SFRA 2008 are invited to drop off their papers after presenting them, but we welcome submissions from people who cannot attend the conference.

Due date: August 15, 2008, with conference-length paper drafts or with abstracts

Contact: Karen Hellekson (khellekson@karenhellekson.com) for the editorial team: Karen Hellekson, Craig Jacobsen, Patrick Sharp, and Lisa Yasek

Call for papers—edited volume

Title: *Spectral Identities: Ghosting in Literature and Film*

Topics: We are seeking abstracts for a proposed essay collection that will analyze these liminal, elided, and/or repressed individuals, and, through this conduit of analysis, explore the ever-changing role of the ghost. To this end, we would like to expand the discussion to include instances in literature, film, and/or folklore. For this purpose, proposals should go beyond ghostly or spectral appearances in a "fireside-ghost-story" sense, and move toward analysis of spectral tropes and/or "ghosted" characters in literature and film that may or may not initially seem to be overtly supernatural. Using the metaphor of the ghost, where are characters silenced, marginalized, and how do they struggle through the liminal space or renegotiate the space into one of power?

Due date: April 1, 2008, with 300- to 500-word proposal and CV

Contact: Melanie Anderson (mranders@olemiss.edu)
Penn URL: <http://cfp.english.upenn.edu/archive/Film/1271.html>

Call for papers—journal

Title: *Journal of Evolution and Technology*

Topics: Submissions from SF scholars who are looking to publish work on the way such themes of the “transhuman” or “posthuman” are/have been handled in SF. Reviews of individual works of science fiction or science fiction (and related) scholarship are also welcome.

URL: <http://www.jetpress.org/>

Call for papers—special journal issue

Title: *Science Fiction Studies* special issue on Gender and Sexuality

Topics: Femininity/masculinity in SF, SF and sex/gender change, SF pornography, technofetishism, alien sex, multiple genders/sexualities, sexual subcultures in SF, SF and censorship, sex work(ers) in SF, slash/flash writing, and more. We welcome submissions from a range of disciplinary perspectives.

Due date: May 1, 2008, with 500-word abstract

Contact: Rob Latham (rob-latham@uiowa.edu) or Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr. (icronay@depauw.edu)

URL: <http://www.depauw.edu/sfs/>

Call for papers—special journal issue

Title: *Discourse* special issue on Transvaluating the Concept “Life” and Biopolitics

Topics: Essays included will explore how the concept of “life” has been constructed and challenged as an object of/for discourse throughout the humanities. This special issue of *Discourse* will bring together recent research on the concept “life” and its function in value production. Recent work by Giorgio Agamben has helped us to understand modern philosophies as ones deeply invested in the question of “life” by situating Michel Foucault’s work on biopolitique within a network of post-Heideggerian thought. Agamben calls for future philosophy to produce a genealogy of the concept “life” and to rethink it in ways other than those which enable contemporary forms of domination. Foucault describes the development of concrete problems that call for a philosophy of life in his biopolitical studies. Starting with the observation that the modern state has the power to control life, Foucault shows how contemporary governance justifies itself and regulates society by invoking “life” in ways which are, at least in part, philosophical. The contemporary concept of “life” implicit in governing institutions responds to concrete problems faced by the state. To be able to decide legal cases concerning the termination of life-support or abortion, for example, the state refers to notions of life developed by biology, theology and philosophy. In biopolitical regimes, a vague, largely unthought concept of life, priceless outside of any economy, confers worth on all other values. Thus the task of philosophy in such societies is to make explicit the appropriation of the concept of life for social control while producing another one that would resist such appropriation.

Due date: March 1, 2008, with full papers under 7,000 words (although abstracts and inquiries are welcome) and bio

Contact: David Harvey (david-harvey_at_uiowa.edu) on behalf of guest editor Louis-Georges Schwartz

Penn URL: <http://cfp.english.upenn.edu/archive/Film/1263.html>

Call for papers—special journal issue

Title: *Topic: The Washington & Jefferson College Review*

Topics: J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series and Philip Pullman’s trilogy *His Dark Materials* have been among the most widely read works of the last fifteen years. *Topic: The Washington & Jefferson College Review* seeks original, well researched, and gracefully written scholarly essays that analyze the novels, the film adaptations, or the reception of the works. Essays may focus on one author or both, either a single text or several.

Due date: April 4, 2008, with completed papers 5,000 to 6,000 words in Chicago 15 style

Contact: W&J Review (topic@washjeff.edu)

URL: <http://www.washjeff.edu/topic/>

Call for papers—special journal issue

Title: *Symbiosis: A Journal of Anglo-American Literary Relations*, special issue on the Black Atlantic: (Un-)Gendering the Transatlantic

Topics: Since Paul Gilroy’s landmark publication, we have understood “The Black Atlantic” (1993) as a racially complex site, where modern subjectivity emerges. In Gilroy’s analysis, that subjectivity was implicitly masculine: his case studies all focused on men, to the neglect not only of women but of gender and sexuality as categories of analysis. What do those categories of analysis have to offer us—do they reshape how we think about the transatlantic, and in turn, what happens to our understanding of gender and sexuality in transatlantic contexts? Thinking about the role that gender and sexuality play for the transatlantic is complicated by Hortense Spiller’s argument that the middle passage destroyed the black family. “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book” raises important questions not only about the role of masculinity and femininity, but also about the ungendering that can occur in the transatlantic. Whereas Spiller’s account speaks to the devastation wrought by such ungendering, queer writers and theorists might find the suspension of what Judith Butler calls the “heterosexual matrix” of gender and power a productive site for analysis. We seek articles that address the role that gender and that ungendering play in the transatlantic literary imaginary.

Due date: October 1, 2008, with two copies of full articles, 5,000 to 7,000 words, any humanities style

Contact: Colleen Glenney Boggs, special issue editor (Colleen.G.Boggs@dartmouth.edu)

URL: <http://www.symbiosisonline.org.uk/>

Call for papers—special journal issue

Title: *Atenea*, special issue on Time and Temporality (June 2009)

Topics: Essays may address the intersection of time with a

wide variety of topics including (but not limited to) history, narrative, memory, consciousness, and culture. *Atenea* is a multidisciplinary bilingual journal on the humanities and social sciences and publishes essays, books reviews, and some fiction and poetry.

Due date: November 15, 2008, with full-length essay (4,000 to 5,000 words plus a 250-word abstract) in English or Spanish; see Penn URL for complete requirements; no e-mail submissions

Contact: Nandita Batra, Editor, *Revista Atenea*, Department of English, Box 9265, University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez, Mayaguez, Puerto Rico 00681

URL: <http://ece.uprm.edu/artsscience/atenea/atenea.htm>

Penn URL: <http://cfp.english.upenn.edu/archive/Collections/3067.html>

culture; gender in genres of popular culture (e.g., the graphic novel; sitcoms, soap operas, etc.); gender in particular literary genres; gender in particular literary periods (e.g., Romanticism, Realism; Naturalism, Modernism, Postmodernism); gender and authorship; gender in cinematic genres (e.g., SF, the Western; horror, film noir, melodrama, action films, war films); gender and performativity; gender as masquerade; gender and sexual orientation; cross-dressing; female masculinities and male femininities; subversions of gender in all areas of the arts; gender and psychoanalysis; gender and desire; gender and ethnicity; gender as a philosophical concept; gender and religion; gender and music.

Due date: May 1, 2008, with 1-page abstract

Contact: Gary Schmidt (gschmidt@westga.edu)

Penn URL: <http://cfp.english.upenn.edu/archive/Gender-Studies/0963.html>

Call for papers—conference

Title: Anarchist Studies Network Conference

Conference date: September 4–6, 2008

Site: Department of Politics, IR, and European Studies, Loughborough University, UK

Topics: Proposals informed by feminist, antiracist, ecological, pacifist, utopian, romantic, and nonwestern anarchist perspectives are particularly welcome. So, too, are papers that promise to illuminate the relationship between the “personal” and the “political” aspects of revolutionary change; its joyous, witty, sensuous, playful, and aesthetic dimensions; the possibilities for combining revolutionary spontaneity and organization; the conception of revolution as a process unfolding over time rather than a singular cataclysmic event; and the roles of direct action, prefigurative politics, nonviolent struggle and organized noncooperation, counter-cultural communal experiments and alternative lifestyles, affinity groups and networks, social centres and cooperatives, skill sharing and the practice of mutual aid, utopian imagination, Luddism, and the qualitative transformation of work in generating radically open-ended, popular, organic, constructive, and creative forms of revolutionary change. Selected papers from the conference will be revised for publication either in the form of a special journal issue or as an edited volume.

Due date: March 26, 2008, with 200- to 300-word proposal

Contact: Laurence Davis (ldavis@oceanfree.net)

URL: http://www.anarchist-studies-network.org.uk/Re-Imagining_Revolution

Call for papers—conference and proceedings volume

Title: Masculinities, Femininities, and More—An Interdisciplinary Conference on Gender in the Humanities

Conference date: November 6–8, 2008

Site: Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures of the University of West Georgia, Carrollton, Georgia

Topics: We welcome submissions from scholars in all areas of the humanities. Conference participants will be encouraged to expand and revise their papers for submission to a special issue of *JAISA: The Journal of the Association for the Interdisciplinary Study of the Arts*. Suggested topics include but are not limited to the following: gender in visual

Call for papers—conference

Title: Society for Utopian Studies

Conference date: October 29–November 2, 2008

Site: Holiday Inn by the Bay, Portland, Maine

Topics: Any aspect of the utopian tradition—from the earliest utopian visions to the utopian speculations and yearnings of the twenty-first century, including art, architecture, urban and rural planning, literary utopias, dystopian writings, utopian political activism, theories of utopian spaces and ontologies, music, new media, or intentional communities. We also welcome papers that engage with topics related to the conference location, such as island or maritime utopias, tourism and utopia, the Shakers, environmentalism and utopia/dystopia, or the Back to the Land Movement.

Due date: June 1, 2008, with 100- to 250-word proposal

Contact: June Deery (deeryj@rpi.edu)

URL: <http://www.utoronto.ca/utopia/meetings.html>

Call for papers—conference

Title: Bridges to Utopia, 9th International Conference of the Utopian Studies Society

Conference date: July 3–5, 2008

Site: University of Limerick, Ireland

Topics: Proposals are invited for papers and panels on any aspect of the utopian tradition, from the earliest utopian visions to the utopian speculations of the twenty-first century, including art, architecture, urban and rural planning, literary utopias, dystopian writing, political activism, theories of utopia, theories of utopian spaces and ontologies, music, new media, and intentional communities, historical and contemporary. Papers are especially welcomed on the conference theme of “Bridges to Utopia” or on the plenary themes: Irish Utopias, Utopia and Music, and Utopia and the Built Environment.

Due date: February 27, 2008, with 100- to 250-word proposal

Contact: Ralahine Centre for Utopian Studies (ralahine@ul.ie)

URL: <http://www.utopianstudieseurope.org/>

Call for papers—conference

Title: The Succession of Simulacra: The Legacy of Jean Baudrillard (1929–2007)

Conference date: April 18–19, 2008

Site: University of California, Santa Barbara

Topics: Many of Baudrillard's terms and concepts, "hyper-ality," "simulacra," "alibi" and "the code" continue to proliferate in not only theoretical, but popular texts as well. Whether or not we accept their validity, how can we apply, transform, refigure, critique and salvage these ideas? What has his work fostered in the different modes of critical theory: social scientific, cultural, literary, technological, popular, communication and new media theory? We invite papers engaging the future of this discussion. How do we succeed Baudrillard? How should his work and thought be disseminated, disintegrated, dispersed, and employed?

Due date: February 4, 2008

Contact: David Roh (roh@umail.ucsb.edu)

URL: <http://transcriptions.english.ucsb.edu/ baudrillard/>

Call for papers—conference

Title: Film & Science: Fictions, Documentaries, and Beyond (2008 Film & History Conference, Shakespeare and Technology area)

Conference date: October 30–November 2, 2008

Site: Chicago, Illinois

Topics: Various. See Web site for full details, but includes much in SF film and film and technology. Sample 2008 areas include: Apollo Program, Cinematic Extraterrestrials, Code-breaking, David Cronenberg, Different Bodies, German SF Films, and Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings.

Due date: May 1, 2008

URL: <http://www.uwosh.edu/filmandhistory/>

Call for papers—graduate student conference

Title: Free Exchange Graduate English Conference

Conference date: March 28–30, 2008

Site: University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada

Topics: When one considers the linkages between film and literature, it is often difficult to think beyond recent highly successful adaptations, namely *The Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter* movies. While adaptation is an important aspect of the literariness of film, it is by no means the only point of connection between the page and the screen. In this panel I am looking for unique considerations of film as literature, film in literature, or the literariness of film. The scope of this panel might include everything from script and adaptation studies, to Shakespeare and comic books adapted for the screen.

Due date: February 18, 2008, with 250-word proposals

Contact: James Lange (jlange@ucalgary.ca)

URL: <http://www.english.ucalgary.ca/FreeExchange>

Penn URL: <http://cfp.english.upenn.edu/archive/Film/1272.html>

Call for papers—graduate student conference

Title: 19th Annual UCLA Southland Graduate Student Conference

Conference date: May 16, 2008

Site: UCLA Southland

Topics: Can genre be considered material, and does the category of materiality itself presuppose generic delimitations? What does genre's materiality or immateriality matter for the project of literary study? In sum, when is and does genre matter? These questions seem particularly salient given the recent reclamation of materiality in critical theory and cultural studies, as signaled in work by scholars ranging from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick to Judith Butler to Elizabeth Grosz. What is the relation between literature's subgenres and new media like electronic literature and non-textual art? What are the relationships between genre and the constitution of the subject? How does genre reimagine or reshape personal or political identity, and what are the politics of genre's exclusions and inclusions vis-à-vis materiality?

Due date: March 16, 2008, with 250- to 300-word abstracts

Contact: Laura Haupt and Sam See (genrematters@gmail.com)

Penn URL: <http://cfp.english.upenn.edu/archive/Film/1269.html>

Call for papers—graduate student conference

Title: Queer Utopias and Dystopias

Conference date: May 17, 2008

Site: University of California, Davis

Topics: Neoliberal practices of risk management and nationalist projects of security and safety depend upon the construction of a dystopic future that must be prevented and the promise of a utopic future that might be created. Images of utopia and dystopia proliferate explicitly and implicitly within mainstream discourses around immigration and citizenship, marriage and family values, and environmental degradation. Within this context, queer projects must work to diagnose the utopian longings and dystopic concerns connected to hetero- and homonormative neoliberalisms and nationalisms. At the same time, however, queer scholarship has begun to ask what it might mean to risk engaging with the utopic as a theoretical, political, and aesthetic tool for social change. Recent debates around temporality in queer studies have grappled with the value of the future and the utopian: while some maintain that discourses of futurity remain inextricably linked to heteronormative generationality and that notions of utopia remain irredeemably tainted by colonialist and imperialist histories, others insist upon the potential for queer reworkings of futurity and utopia to disrupt dominant narratives. This symposium wishes to inspire further discussion concerning queer utopias in particular and queer temporalities in general as well as to invite conversations around the interconnections between the utopic and the dystopic within conservative and radical projects.

Due date: March 14, 2008, with 250- to 500-word abstract and CV

Contact: Toby Beauchamp, Liz Montegary, and Cathy Hannabach (queersymposium2008@gmail.com)

URL: <http://www.queersymposium.org/>

Science Fiction Research Association

www.sfra.org

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

Visit the SFRA Web site at <http://www.sfra.org>. For a membership application, contact the SFRA Treasurer or see the Web site.

SFRA Executive Committee

President

Adam Frisch
343 Lakeshore Dr.
McCook Lake, SD 57049-4002
adam.frisch@briarcliff.edu

Vice President

Lisa Yaszek
Literature, Communication, and Culture
Georgie Institute of Technology
Atlanta, GA 30332-0165
lisa.yaszek@lcc.gatech.edu

Secretary

Rochelle Rodrigo
English Department
Mesa Community College
1833 West Southern Ave.
Mesa, AZ 85202
rrodrigo@mail.mc.maricopa.edu

Treasurer

Donald M. Hassler
1226 Woodhill Dr.
Kent, OH 44240
extrap@kent.edu

Immediate Past President

David G. Mead
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
Corpus Christi, TX 78412
Dave.Mead@tamucc.edu

SFRA Standard Membership Benefits

SFRA Review

Four issues per year. This newsletter/journal surveys the field of science fiction scholarship, including extensive reviews of fiction and nonfiction books and media, review articles, and listings of new and forthcoming books. The *Review* also prints news about SFRA internal affairs, calls for papers, and updates on works in progress.

SFRA Annual Directory

One issue per year. Members' names, contact information, and areas of interest.

SFRA Listserv

Ongoing. The SFRA listserv allows members to discuss topics and news of interest to the SF community, and to query the collective knowledge of the membership. To join the listserv or obtain further information, contact the list manager, Len Hatfield (len.hatfield@vt.edu). An e-mail automatically sent to new subscribers gives more information about the list.

Extrapolation

Three issues per year. The oldest scholarly journal in the field, with critical, historical, and bibliographical articles, book reviews, letters, occasional special topic issues, and an annual index.

Science Fiction Studies

Three issues per year. This scholarly journal includes critical, historical, and bibliographical articles, review articles, reviews, notes, letters, international coverage, and an annual index.

SFRA Optional Membership Benefits

(Discounted subscription rates for members)

Foundation

Three issues per year. British scholarly journal, with critical, historical, and bibliographical articles, reviews, and letters. Add to dues: \$33 seairmail; \$40 airmail.

The New York Review of Science Fiction

Twelve issues per year. Reviews and features. Add to dues: \$28 domestic; \$30 domestic institutional; \$34 Canada; \$40 UK and Europe; \$42 Pacific and Australia.

Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts

Four issues per year. Scholarly journal, with critical and bibliographical articles and reviews. Add to dues: \$40/1 year; \$100/3 years.

Femspec

Critical and creative works. Add to dues: \$40 domestic individual; \$96 domestic institutional; \$50 international individual; \$105 international institutional.

