

285  
Summer 2008

# 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@andersonuniversity.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

Big Issue, Big Plans 2

### SFRA Business

Looking Forward 2  
SFRA News 2  
Mary Kay Bray Award Introduction 6  
Mary Kay Bray Award Acceptance 6  
Graduate Student Paper Award Introduction 6  
Graduate Student Paper Award Acceptance 7  
Pioneer Award Introduction 7  
Pioneer Award Acceptance 7  
Thomas D. Clareson Award Introduction 8  
Thomas D. Clareson Award Acceptance 9  
Pilgrim Award Introduction 10  
Imagination Space: A Thank-You Letter to the SFRA 10

### Nonfiction Book Reviews

*Heinlein's Children* 12  
*A Critical History of "Doctor Who" on Television* 14  
*One Earth, One People* 16  
*SciFi in the Mind's Eye* 16  
*Dreams and Nightmares* 17  
*"Lilith" in a New Light* 18  
*Cylons in America* 19  
*Serenity Found* 19  
*Pretend We're Dead* 21  
*The Influence of Imagination* 22  
*Superheroes and Gods* 22

### Fiction Book Reviews

*SFWA European Hall of Fame* 23  
*Queen of Candesce and Pirate Sun* 25  
*The Girl Who Loved Animals and Other Stories* 26  
*Nano Comes to Clifford Falls: And Other Stories* 27  
*Future Americas* 28  
*Stretto* 29  
*Saturn's Children* 30  
*The Golden Volcano* 31  
*The Stone Gods* 32  
*Null-A Continuum and Firstborn* 33  
*Saga* 34  
*WALL-E* 35  
*Iron Man* 36

### Calls for Papers

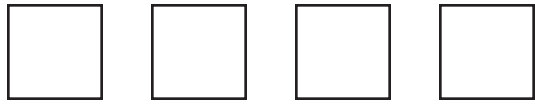
37

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 *SFRA Review*.

## 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 the Editors for other submissions or for correspondence.



## SFRA Review Business

EDITORS' MESSAGE

### Big Issue, Big Plans

Karen Hellekson and Craig Jacobsen

As you've no doubt noticed, this issue of the *SFRA Review* is girthy, with fully 40% more scholarly goodness for the same price. Such bounty doesn't come entirely without cost, however. This issue lacks our 101 and One Course features, making room for SFRA business and our regular reviews. In the next issue we'll publish a 101 feature on Fan Studies and a One Course article on teaching the *Zombie Renaissance*.

In Lawrence we secured binding verbal agreements from brilliant member scholars and teachers, ensuring the *Review* a supply of articles into the foreseeable future. We are always looking for more submissions, though, so if you have an idea for an article, please send a query to our editorial e-mail address.



## SFRA Business

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### Looking Forward

Adam Frisch

SFRA 2008 in Lawrence turned out to be an excellent meeting, filled with interesting panels, intriguing paper presentations, and wonderful reunions with fellow scholars and authors across plates of KC barbecue and glasses of various Free State Brewery libations. Thanks again to Jim Gunn, Chris McKitterick, and all the Campbell group for their wonderful generosity in SFRA's time of need. Special thanks go to our guests Karen Joy Fowler, Joan Slonczewski, James Van Pelt, Paul Kincaid, and Maureen Kincaid Speller for sharing their knowledge, insights, and creativity with the SFRA membership. And my own extra special thanks go to Ritch Calvin, 2008 conference director extraordinaire, who voluntarily tracked every detail and solved every problem that arose, leaving me free to relax and engage and learn.

And learn I did. During a meeting with the liberal arts dean of another Sioux City college the week after our convention, he mentioned—rather smugly, it seemed to me—how his history department had just begun using *Second Life* for their majors. He appeared impressed when I responded concerning that program's quick learning curve, its island structure, and its variety of pedagogical possibilities, unaware that I had been exposed to

these items for the first time only the previous Saturday afternoon during Joan Slonczewski's captivating presentation about *Second Life* at an SFRA session. I also learned at an earlier SFRA panel that the short lists for major SF awards are far more relevant than the winners' lists for uncovering the best SF works out there. And on and on—oh, how ignorant I was! But perhaps my most interesting discovery was that a whole new generation of highly knowledgeable and remarkably talented young scholars has begun to populate SFRA's ranks, assuring the vitality of our organization for years to come.

And SFRA needs those talents and skills, as increasing numbers of readers and students (two groups rapidly coalescing into separate categories) are turning to a variety of new media (see comments about *Second Life* above) in a search for the ever-quicker entertainment hit. If some knowledge and insight come along later, fine, but first for the Google generation must come the novelty and the fun. Perhaps addressing this craving, at least initially, new technologies now replace their predecessors within only a one- or two-year span, making it difficult for anyone with actual experience to share to keep up or even speak up (for example, I'm told that most college students now find e-mail too passé to even bother to open). And perhaps spurred on by this growing information/communication gap, I've heard many of my peers discuss how they have researched the exact number of months before their own full social security benefits kick in. But after looking at and listening to our younger scholars during the Lawrence conference, so up with the newest media and so full of energy and enthusiasm for science fiction, I feel ever so much the better about the future of both science fiction and SFRA. Over to y'all, young-uns.

MINUTES

### SFRA Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Friday, July 11, 2008  
Lawrence, Kansas

Called to order at 2:38

Attending:

Adam Frisch, President

Lisa Yaszek, Vice President

Donald Hassler, Treasurer

Dave Mead, Immediate Past President

Karen Hellekson, *Review* Co-Editor and SFRA 2010 Co-Coordinator

Craig Jacobsen, Secretary (acting), *Review* Co-Editor, and SFRA 2010 Co-Coordinator

Ritch Calvin, SFRA 2008 Coordinator and *Review* Media Reviews Editor

I. Secretarial Business

A. Appointment of Craig Jacobsen as Acting Secretary

B. Noted 4/18/08 e-mail Approval of Shelley's Minutes of Board's Winter 2008 "E-Mail Meeting"

II. Officer Reports

A. President: Positives: The organization managed the

transition to the new editors of the *Review*, which looks better than ever. The transition from Dublin to Lawrence went well. The attempt to get renewals earlier in the year has increased our membership. Negatives: Didn't like the way that the Jan.08 e-mail meeting went in lieu of a conference call or face-to-face meeting. Didn't get the complex input the President needs to make important decisions.

- B. Vice-President: Recruitment: Sent letters to all Pioneer nominees who were not already SFRA members (about 150). First batch went out in March and April, and another batch will go out in July. Letters went to scholars identified by members, and to those who attended SFRA 2007 but who are not members. More such letters will go out to this year's attendees who are not members. Publicity: opened up the SFRA listserv to other communities: SLSA and Utopian Studies listserv. Suggestions for more organizations should be sent to the VP. Three questions: Can we find out how new members came to SFRA? Should we do more to recruit people who contact us (mostly students)? Are there plans to update the SFRA reader?
- C. Secretary: None submitted.
- D. Treasurer: Membership for 2008 as of 3 July stands at 344 (see report).
- E. Immediate Past President: Working on slate of officer candidates for the next election (see preliminary ballot).

### III. Convention Updates

- A. 2008 Lawrence (Ritch Calvin)  
Conference appears to be within the budget. Final numbers pending.
- B. 2009 Atlanta (Lisa Yaszek)  
Conference planning is on schedule, with guests of honor, venue, and theme settled.
- C. 2010 Phoenix (Craig Jacobsen)  
Conference planning is on schedule, with venue to be settled soon.
- D. 2011 Poland (Pawel Frelik)  
Conference planning is ahead of schedule, with institutional support committed.

### IV. Old Business

- A. *SFRA Review*: Submission guidelines are being reviewed and coordinated.
- B. SFRA Website
  - i. Domain shift for SFRA Website  
David Mead moved to relocate web hosting to a reputable (non-spamming servers) commercial service. Lisa Yaszek seconded. Four in favor, passed unanimously.
  - ii. Recruitment of Web Director  
Karen Hellekson will provide a draft job description. Donald Hassler moved to name Karen Hellekson interim Web Director, and to officially thank Sam MacDonald for his hard work and commitment to the organization's web presence. Lisa Yaszek seconded. Passed unanimously.
- C. SFRA "Support a Scholar" fund
  - i. Funds available for 2008-2009 were discussed.
  - ii. Categories to be funded:

- travel grants
- membership grants
- research grants
- organizational grants

Dave Mead moved that the categories be established and funded for two years at \$3000 per year from Support a Scholar donations from membership and CD interest earned. Lisa Yaszek seconded. Unanimous approval.

iii. Guidelines for fund applications will be drafted.

- D. SFRA Listserv: Impact of Membership Change  
Listserv membership increased after opening to non-members.
  - E. SFRA Europe?  
The Board strongly reaffirmed the organization's commitment to meeting in Poland in 2011.
  - F. SFRA-SFWA Liaison Arrangement  
SFWA contact to be named (will be James Van Pelt). Karen Hellekson is the SFRA liaison.
  - G. Discussed Question of "Market Recognition": e.g., SFRA vs. IAFA
  - H. Discussed a revised edition of Warrick anthology. Calls for proposals. Retain Warrick's name.
  - G. Does the SFRA need a publicity coordinator?  
Donald Hassler moved to create position: Director of Public Relations. Seconded by Lisa Yaszek. Approved on a 3 to 1 vote.
- ### V. New Business
- A. Board Recommendation on 2009 dues structure  
Both scholarly journals (*SFS* and *Extrapolation*) requested a \$1 per unit increase in subsidy due to increased mailing costs. Treasurer noted that membership dues would not need to be raised in order to absorb the increase since funds on hand are sufficient. Motion by Hassler to absorb the increased cost and not raise membership dues. Seconded by Lisa Yaszek. Approved unanimously.
  - B. Requests for Volunteers for 2008 SFRA officer elections
  - C. Requests for Volunteers for 2009 Award Committees
  - D. Streamlined Process for SFRA Award Certificates, Plaques, Pioneer Statue: All awards and certificates will be coordinated by SFRA Immediate Past President.
  - E. On-Line Transition Documentation (e.g., conference "book," outline of presidential due dates, etc.): The current organization officers are documenting the responsibilities and activities of their positions to provide continuity and information for future holders of those offices. Information to help conference planners will also be updated. This information will become part of the expanded SFRA website.
  - F. Proposal for SFRA Review back issues hosting at University of South Florida  
Motion to approve from Donald Hassler. Seconded by Lisa Yaszek. Passed unanimously. Karen Hellekson will coordinate the project.
  - G. Other new business

Adjourned at 4:59 pm

## MINUTES

# SFRA General Membership Business Meeting Minutes

Sunday, July 13, 2008

Lawrence, Kansas

Called to Order: 9:01AM

Members Attending: 27

I. Pass out Executive Committee Meeting minutes from 07/11/08

### II. Officer Reports

- A. President (Adam Frisch): Membership is at a recent high, and the organization is financially healthy.
- B. Vice-President (Lisa Yaszek): Reported on ongoing recruitment efforts (see Executive Committee Meeting minutes), including mailings and developing relationships with other professional organizations.
- C. Secretary (excused absence)
- D. Treasurer (Donald M. Hassler): The organization is financially healthy and membership is at 344, a recent high.
- E. Past President (David Mead): Called for nominations for upcoming organizational elections.

### III. Future Conference Updates

- A. 2009: Atlanta (Lisa Yaszek): Conference on track. Dates selected (6/11-6/14), venue selected (Wyndham Midtown Hotel), Guest of Honor selected (Michael Bishop), and themes advertised (Engineering the Future & Southern-Fried Science Fiction). Discussion about desirability of a banquet, and a show of hands demonstrated the desire for a return to the awards banquet if possible.
- B. 2010: Phoenix (Craig Jacobsen): Conference on track. Potential venues identified, upon which dates will depend (June preferable to July). Theme identified: Contact (2010 tie-in), emphasizing points of contact amongst media, genres, and other notions of contact.
- C. 2011: Poland (Pawel Frelik): Conference planning ahead of schedule. Organization committed to the conference, especially in the light of having to cancel Dublin.

### IV. Old Business

- A. *SFRA Review*: Comprehensive Writer's Guidelines forthcoming.
- B. *SFRA* Website:
  - i. Hosting shift for SFRA website: Will allow for website expansion and improvement.
  - ii. Recruitment of Web "Director": The Executive Committee voted to create a standing SFRA website coordinator to oversee the organization's increasingly important web presence. This position will be advertised, but Karen Hellekson will serve in an interim capacity.
- C. SFRA "Support a Scholar" fund

i. Funds available for 2008-09: The Executive Committee approved \$3000 per year to be allotted to grants under the "Support a Scholar" program. Funds will come from Support a Scholar donations and interest earned from a Certificate of Deposit.

ii. Categories to be funded: Grants will be offered in four categories: travel, membership, research, and organizational grants.

iii. Guidelines for fund applications: Application guidelines for the grant process are being drafted and considered by the Executive Committee.

D. SFRA Listserv: Impact of Membership Change: Opening the SFRA listserv increased membership in that listserv. Impact on organizational membership is yet to be determined.

E. SFRA Europe: Discussion by the Executive Committee of an SFRA Europe affiliated entity concluded that creating such an entity was probably neither viable nor desirable.

F. SFRA-SFWA Liaison Arrangement: To facilitate the relationship between SF scholars and writers, the two organizations have created a liaison program.

G. Does the SFRA need a publicity coordinator? : The Executive Committee decided to create a position for an SFRA publicity coordinator, who would report to the Vice President. The holder of this position would seek opportunities to publicize the organization and its work.

### V. New Business

- A. Board Recommendation on 2009 dues structure (cf., *Extrapolation* increase): Both scholarly journals (*SFS* and *Extrapolation*) requested a \$1 per unit increase in subsidy due to increased mailing costs. The Executive Committee approved the request and noted that membership dues would not need to be raised in order to absorb the increase since funds on hand are sufficient.
- B. Requests for Volunteers for 2008 SFRA officer elections
- C. Requests for Volunteers for 2009 Award Committees: The President is seeking members interested in serving on any of the award committees.
- D. Streamlined Process for SFRA Award Certificates, Plaques, Pioneer Statue: The awards, plaques, and certificates for the various organizational honors will now be the responsibility of the Immediate Past President.
- E. On-line Transition Documentation: The current organization officers are documenting the responsibilities and activities of their positions to provide continuity and information for future holders of those offices. Information to help conference planners will also be updated. This information will become part of the expanded SFRA website.
- F. Proposal for *SFRA Review* back issues hosting at the University of South Florida: The Executive Committee chose to accept USF's offer to host an online archive of the complete run of the *SFRA Newsletter* and *SFRA Review*. This action will preserve an important part of the association's history.
- G. Call for a historian: The organization is looking for

someone willing to research and write a history of the association. Such a history is important to the association, and as documentation of the professionalization of science fiction studies.

H. SFRA SF Anthology: The Executive Committee has decided to move forward on a new or revised edition of the SFRA SF anthology. A call for proposals for those interested in editing such a collection will be made.

VI. Open for Questions & General Announcements

VII. Adjournment: 10:07AM

SFRA NEWS

## SFRA Candidate Slate Announced

David Mead

The SFRA officer candidate slate has been filled. Candidate statements will appear with the ballot and online at SFRA's Web site (<http://sfra.org/>). Thanks to all who agreed to stand for office!

President: Jan Bogstad, Lisa Yaszek

Vice President: Oscar De Los Santos, Ritch Calvin

Treasurer: Donald "Mack" Hassler (incumbent), Patrick Sharp

Secretary: Rochelle "Shelley" Rodrigo (incumbent), Ed Carmien

SFRA NEWS

## SFRA Review/Newsletter Historical Preservation Initiated

Leslie Kay Swigart

The SFRA, partnering with the University of South Florida Tampa Library and Dr. Mark I. Greenberg, Director, Special Collections and Florida Studies Center, will be creating an open access archive of the *SFRA Newsletter/Review* back to its first issue, no. 1, published January 15, 1971.

Because earlier issues were not even word processed, but typed and then reproduced onto a few sheets of paper (usually white or blue), rather than the splendidly published issues of today, we do not have electronic files to use in the creation of digitized versions. The e-versions thus need to be created from, preferably, original copies of the *Review* or *Newsletter*.

We appeal to you, SFRA members: we would like your no longer needed copies. Any and all issues from No. 1 on up to the latest will be accepted.

In addition, should more than one copy of any issue be donated, we shall be putting together a run, in paper, of the publication for donation to the Spencer Library SF&F Special Collection at the University of Kansas, which already holds quite a bit of SFRA material. Should more than two copies of any issue be donated, they will be offered to those libraries whose collections are not yet complete and who may want to fill in those unfortunate gaps.

Also, although not for the digitization project, should any one have older copies of the *SFRA Directory* to donate to the Library Gaps Filling-in Project, those too would be gratefully accepted. But do note that the *Directory* is not part of the digitization project and will not appear online.

Donations may be sent to me, the coordinator of this project with USF on behalf of SFRA. My preferred mailing address is: PO Box 15294, Long Beach, CA 90815-0294, USA. E-mail me with inquiries at lswigart AT csulb.edu.

SFRA NEWS

## SFRA-SFWA Liaison Post Created

Ed Carmien

At the direction of the SFRA's leadership, the post of SFRA-SFWA liaison has been created to facilitate communication between the two organizations. I'm happy to serve in this role. What can I do for you? While most SFWA members are easily contacted by e-mail via a quick Google search, some are not, and as a member of the SFWA, I can forward your contact information to writers with private e-mail addresses. Whether anyone writes you back is, alas, beyond my purview. I can also communicate with the SFWA's membership in general in useful ways, perhaps to pass on a research request or some other message that needs a wide audience. So long as a request would not cause me to violate the terms of my membership, I'm happy to be your contact in the SFWA.

SFRA JOB LISTING

## SFRA Web Director (ongoing)

The Science Fiction Research Association (<http://sfra.org/>), a nonprofit organization dedicated to research and scholarship in the field of science fiction and fantasy in literature and media, is upgrading its Web site. SFRA seeks a Web Director, who will report to the SFRA Vice President. The Web Director will be in charge of the following tasks:

- Ensuring content is up to date and relevant.
- Soliciting content.
- Updating the software to keep it current.
- Ensuring that all parts of the Web site are standards compliant.
- Backing up the site once a month.
- Dealing with site-related correspondence.
- Maintaining e-mail addresses and forwards for SFRA officers and related personnel.
- Periodically assessing the Web site to see if further functionality needs to be added.
- Putting up content as needed, with a 2-day turnaround time from receipt of request from Board member.
- Writing monthly status reports, including reports of usage and hits, to the Vice President.

The following skills are required:

- Ability to direct the work of others and follow through.
- Knowledge of CSS and HTML.

- Ability to use FTP software to upload files.
- Ability to update template-driven Web pages by altering the PHP template's code.
- Ability to install and skin out-of-the-box software.

The following skills are recommended:

- Knowledge of PHP and MySQL.
- Knowledge of shell systems.

This job is unpaid, and priority will be given to current SFRA members. The SFRA Web Director must be a member of SFRA. Please submit an e-mail outlining your qualifications to Lisa Yaszek, SFRA Vice President (lisa.yaszek AT lcc.gatech.edu), along with URLs of sites you maintain. The deadline is August 15, 2008, or until filled.

#### SFRA JOB LISTING

### SFRA Drupal Tech (one-time job)

The Science Fiction Research Association (<http://www.sfra.org/>), a nonprofit organization dedicated to research and scholarship in the field of science fiction and fantasy in literature and media, is upgrading its Web site. We require an expert in Drupal who can install and configure the program; install the zen\_classic theme and modify it to add our logo; and add in existing modules to provide the desired functionality. An example of a Drupal-based site that does what we want is here: <http://wpa-council.org/>.

We require the following: membership management; mass e-mail capability to all paid members; online polls, including secure elections; e-commerce/ubercart membership fee payment linked to PayPal, with the ability to subscribe to optional publications; ability to parse and output membership information in a variety of ways, such as by geographical location, interest, and publications to receive; main blog for news and calls for papers; public informational SF wiki; private organizational wiki locked to a specific subset of users; and pages for organization-specific informational content. In addition, we would like Open Conference Systems (<http://pkp.sfu.ca/?q=ocs>), a freeware conference-management utility, installed in a subdomain and skinned to match the Drupal site.

Interested developers should submit a bid to Lisa Yaszek, SFRA Vice President (lisa.yaszek AT lcc.gatech.edu), along with URLs of previously developed sites and contact information for several references. The deadline is August 15, 2008, or until filled.

#### SFRA AWARD

### Mary Kay Bray Award Introduction

Ritch Calvin

The Mary Kay Bray Award was first awarded in 2002 in order to recognize and honor the best interview or review published in the *SFRA Review* during the year preceding the SFRA conference. On behalf of this year's Mary Kay Bray Award committee, I am pleased to announce that the 2008 award goes to Jason Ellis for his reviews of Robert Heinlein's *Starship Troop-*

*ers* (*SFRA Review* #280) and of Ian McDonald's *Brasyl* (*SFRA Review* #281).

As far as the committee members could recall, this is the first year in which the award is given to two reviews, albeit to one reviewer. As we began our deliberations, it was immediately clear that these two reviews were at the very top of the list, and as we wrestled with the question of whether the Heinlein review was better than the McDonald review, or whether the McDonald review was better than the Heinlein review, we concluded that the differences were negligible and, well, academic. Either of these two reviews is worthy of the award.

As one member commented, Jason wove informative discussions of the text in with useful (but not obtrusive) theoretical discussions and theoretical context. Both of these reviews negotiate the task of conveying sufficient information about the books without falling into plot summary, providing sufficient context for understanding them, and delivering them in an entertaining and lively style that produces a desire to read the books in question. To be able to do this in 1,000 words or fewer is no mean feat. With Jason's analytical ability and writing style, he makes it look easy.

The Mary Kay Bray Award committee is pleased to present the 2008 award to Jason Ellis.

#### SFRA AWARD

### Mary Kay Bray Award Acceptance

Jason W. Ellis

I would like to thank the Mary Kay Bray Award committee, as well as the SFRA executive board and all members. Since I first joined SFRA three years ago, I've learned we have a great organization that I'm proud to be a member of and contribute to in order to play a part in its success. In my reviews, I hope that I help some of you out with your work just as many of you have helped with mine. Also, *SFRA Review* is a terrific resource that is as good as we collectively make it, so I'd like to encourage everyone to contribute more top-rate fiction, nonfiction, and media reviews.

I don't often get an opportunity to stand in front of so many friends, so I'd like to take this occasion to thank a few of you who helped me reach this point in my career. I'd like to thank Patrick Sharp for taking a chance, Lisa Yaszek for opening the wider world of SF to me, Andy Sawyer for that Boxing Day excursion and much more, Mack Hassler for pulling for me, and Eugene Thacker for my first copy of *SFRA Review*.

#### SFRA AWARD

### Graduate Student Paper Award Introduction

Pawel Frelik

Since I thought this particular award was going to be the last, I wanted to begin with "Last but not least," but I can't. So this is not the last award. In some ways it may be the least among those

given tonight, but in the same way as every soldier has the potential of becoming a general, every graduate student paper award winner has the potential of becoming a Pioneer or a Pilgrim.

Before I name this year's winner, a few words of technicalities. Last year, the Graduate Student Paper Award committee received only five papers. Thus, the committee asked me to strongly encourage all eligible conference participants to send their papers. Given a significant number of graduate students in attendance this year, we do hope we will receive more entries.

And now, without much further ado: the winner of this year's Graduate Student Paper Award is Joseph Brown, the author of "Heinlein and the Cold War: Epistemology and Politics in *The Puppet Masters* and *Double Star*." The title of the paper says it all, but those who'd like to read the whole piece can find it in the most recent issue of *Extrapolation*.

SFRA AWARD

## Graduate Student Paper Award Acceptance

Joseph Brown

I'd like to express my great appreciation for being named the recipient of the 2007 SFRA Graduate Student Paper Award. Last year's conference was a great deal of fun, and I am pleased that my essay helped contribute, in its small way, to our continuing investigation of the pillars of modern science fiction such as Robert A. Heinlein.

I'd like to thank the committee, whose task, given the many fine presentations I saw given by graduate students at last year's conference, I'm sure was difficult. I would also like to express my gratitude to the SFRA for its consistent support (both financial and moral) of graduate student research. As a graduate student who attended his first SFRA conference last year, I noticed right away that this organization has done a great deal to foster a collegial and inclusive atmosphere among participants of all ranks and interests. I'm very grateful for your recognition. Thank you!

SFRA AWARD

## Pioneer Award Introduction

Lisa Yaszek

The members of this year's award committee had quite a task on our hands. We considered well over three hundred fifty printed and online essays published in humanities journals, science journals, critical anthologies, and semipro magazines in our quest to name the 2007 Pioneer Award winner. It was exciting to find so many truly original science fiction studies articles published in so many venues that at first it seemed impossible to pick just one. The range of topics these authors examined—including everything from nineteenth-century Brazilian science fiction to science fiction storytelling in science writing to the battle for gay pride in the online science fiction gaming community—made our task even more difficult. We enjoyed reading about all these new directions in science fiction studies, and we

wanted to recognize all these authors for their groundbreaking work.

And yet, while we considered many of the scholars to be pioneers with a lowercase "p," we quickly concluded that there was just one who should be named our award-winner Pioneer with a capital "P": Sherryl Vint, for her essay, "Speciesism and Species Being in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*," published in *Mosaic: a Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 40, no. 1 (March 2007): 111–26. As I'm sure you all know, Sherryl has published a number of fine articles in the past year, but we were particularly excited about "Speciesism and Species" for three reasons. First, we were impressed with Sherryl's ability to shed new light on one of the most classic/discussed texts in SF studies. As one committee member put it: "*Do Androids Dream* is an important text in SF, both fiction and film, much studied and taught, and I think [Sherryl] brings to the table a truly new insight. I've read plenty of scholarship on this work that look at the possible 'humanity' of the androids and how they serve as mirrors of what humans have become, but I've seen very little on the importance of animals except, as [Sherryl] notes, as representative of a more general 'nature.' She makes a convincing case that both animals and androids serve as the 'beastly Other'" in Dick's work.

Second, we unanimously agreed that Sherryl's essay is an exemplary model of the exciting new directions that science fiction studies might take in forthcoming years. As another committee member put it, Sherryl does more than simply show us how attending to animals in science fiction might complicate our ideas about PKD's work. More significantly, by examining Dick's work in relation to the "Cartesian self, Descartes' *cogito*, Marx's 'species being,' and the idea of speciesism and posthumanism," she imbues her argument with "strong philosophical and ethical overtones. [This] article shows the exemplary research she has done on this text by using an innovative approach to reading."

Finally, we want to recognize Sherryl as a Pioneer in the sense that her essay bravely leads us all into uncharted territory. "Speciesism and Species" appeared in *Mosaic*, an interdisciplinary journal that features publications on everything from French theory to Japanese literature to King Kong films. We were happy to see science fiction studies represented in such provocative company, and represented so well. And that is perhaps, in the end, what we liked best about Sherryl's essay: not just that it brings the good word about new modes of critical analysis to bear on science fiction studies, but that it also shows mainstream literary and cultural studies scholars how the critical tools of our discipline can teach them about the world as well. And with that, we give you Sherryl Vint.

SFRA AWARD

## Pioneer Award Acceptance

Sherryl Vint

I find myself surprised and flattered to be receiving this award. It is a very great honor to have my work recognized in this way, but it feels a bit out of place to be up here on my own when research is such a collaborative process. Thus, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank a number of people who have played a role in my being able to achieve success in my

research career. First, I'd like to thank, of course, the Pioneer Award committee members who took the time to read so many articles in order to make their selection. I also want to thank the SFRA more generally, especially its executive members, for all the work they do to enable the organization to continue and to foster scholarship, especially the support of graduate students. Organizations like the SFRA who enable us to meet together and discuss ideas at events such as this conference are an essential component to the health of our field.

I'd like to thank the editors of *Science Fiction Studies*, who published my first academic article and who have taught me a lot about thinking and writing through their editorial advice: Art Evans, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr., Joan Gordon, Rob Latham, Carl Freedman, Carol McQuirk, and Veronica Hollinger. I want especially to single out Veronica Hollinger, whom I met when she served as external examiner for my thesis. She has been an incredibly supportive mentor and role model ever since, and I owe her more than I can say.

I feel a debt of gratitude, as well, to many people who have been good friends and colleagues to me over the years, from whom I've learned in conference sessions and, equally, in conversations at conferences outside of the formal program. This list is going to be far too short, because to make it sufficiently long would mean that I'd be up here speaking much longer than anyone has patience for. Thus, I'm going to mention only a few people who have been most significant in the learning and thinking that I've done in conference settings: Craig Jacobsen, Karen Hellekson, Joe Sutliff Sanders, and Neil Easterbrook. They have all helped me to become a better scholar.

I'd like to thank my coeditors at *Extrapolation*, Javier Martinez, Michael Levy, and Andrew M. Butler, who have helped me to improve my writing by improving my editing skills, and to hone my ability to argue effectively. I owe most thanks to my coeditor at *Science Fiction Film and Television*, and also my collaborator on many projects and papers, Mark Bould. I have learned more from him than from anyone else.

This field has always been very generous to me and it has enabled me to make a career that I find rewarding. The honor I feel in receiving this award speaks to the wonderfully collegial attitude that I believe characterizes our field. This is an exciting time to be a SF scholar. Many of the questions in which we have expertise—questions of ontology, subjectivity, alterity—have become central issues in humanities scholarship in general. The extensive history of thinking about such questions that SF scholars can offer is something that I fear is too often overlooked by those more recently entering into such debates. One of my goals in my current research on animal studies and science fiction is to speak equally to both communities, enabling other scholars in animal studies to recognize the merit of SF scholarship. *Science Fiction Studies* has recently given me the opportunity to guest edit a special issue on animal studies, and I think the breadth of the essays contained therein shows the many ways in which SF can speak to other disciplines. Recent work done by other SF scholars in areas such as science and technology studies, women's history, postcolonial studies, and more suggests the range of academic inquiries to which SF can contribute. I'm proud to be a part of such a vibrant and welcoming community, and I thank you very much for the recognition you have given my research today.

SFRA AWARD

## Thomas D. Clareson Award Introduction

Bruce L. Rockwood and Doug Davis

Presented by Doug Davis

Since 1996, the SFRA has presented the Thomas D. Clareson Award for Distinguished Service for outstanding service and activities in the promotion of SF teaching and study, including editing, reviewing, editorial writing, publishing, organizing meetings, mentoring, and leadership in SF/fantasy organizations.

The Clareson Award Committee for 2007–2008 has chosen Andy Sawyer, since 1993 the Science Fiction Librarian, Special Collections and Archives, University of Liverpool Library, as the 2008 recipient of the SFRA's Clareson Award. The award is presented in honor of his extensive work on behalf of the academic study and enjoyment of science fiction over many years, including his development of the library archive and the SF Hub Web site; his service as course director for the MA in Science Fiction Studies at the University of Liverpool; his service to the Science Fiction Foundation and as reviews editor of *Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction* (since 1996); and his many other academic contributions to the field, including his longtime support of the SFRA and participation in many of our meetings over the years.

In addition to his scholarship and professional service noted above, Andy manifestly deserves this award for the high quality of his teaching while serving as director of the MA in Science Fiction Studies at Liverpool. Andy also currently teaches a thirty-credit third-year undergraduate module, "Speculative Fictions," and has taught a fifteen-credit module, "Science Fiction: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow." The quality of his teaching may perhaps be best demonstrated through a literary analogy. Ray Bradbury's short story, "The Homecoming," is about a family of vampires, mummies, ghosts, and all sorts of ghoulish fare having a family reunion. Andy's students have commented to a member of the awards committee that the MA program made them feel that way—that they are part of a science fiction homecoming.

We hope that his many friends and longtime associates in the SFRA will feel the same way this evening: all of us in the SFRA feel we are part of an extended family of terrestrials and others who gather each year at about this time for a family reunion, to reflect on our shared commitment to science fiction, and this year to honor Andy for his extraordinary efforts that benefit so many. The MA in SF Studies program is a well-oiled machine, and that's in large part because of Andy. The teaching modules he runs are top-notch, replete with well-chosen works and enhanced by his attention to detail. The students in the program tell us that they literally huddle around Andy in his office; he has a natural way of getting students engaged and fired up. When Andy talks to students about his own research, he gets excited in what can best be described as a very Andy Sawyer kind of way, and that enthusiasm is contagious. He is, in sum, an inspiring presence for students.

The Science Fiction Foundation Collection that Andy runs at the Sydney Jones Library is a fantastic and inspiring resource



for students as well. Andy brings his students there for their first official meeting, and they tell us that being in the collection is like being a kid in a fireworks warehouse—there are the spines of so many SF novels and collections, John Brunner’s Hugo Award, so many magazines and journals—everything is alluring and dangerous at the same time. It’s a well-maintained shop, with everything cataloged and easily accessible through special collections.

One of Andy’s students shared a memory that best sums up his intimate attention to pedagogy. He was stuck in Liverpool during the Christmas holiday, so Andy and his wife, Mary, invited the student to go hiking with them in Wales on Boxing Day. It was a much-welcomed invitation! The student met them on the other side of the Mersey River, where they picked him up, and then they drove to Llandudno. After a hike over the countryside and surrounding hills, they got some lunch and a pint at a local pub. Then, before taking him home that evening, they all had a marvelous Boxing Day dinner at the Sawyer home with their daughter, Harriet. Now that’s a real science fiction homecoming.

Andy’s service to science fiction has been extensive, including his organization of a conference, “Speaking Science Fiction,” at the University of Liverpool, in July 1996, and his serving as co-organizer of “A Celebration of British Science Fiction” at the University of Liverpool, June 28–July 1, 2001. Andy was keynote speaker at the annual SFRA conference held in New Lanark, Scotland, in 2002. He also served on the judging panel for the SFRA Pilgrim Award for lifetime contributions to SF and fantasy scholarship, 2004–2006.

Andy’s publications include commentary on children’s and young adult SF, John Wyndham, telepathy, *Babylon 5*, reverse-time narratives, and Terry Pratchett. He coedited the collection *Speaking Science Fiction* (Liverpool University Press, 2000), was an advisory editor for and contributor to the *Greenwood Encyclopedia of Science Fiction and Fantasy: Themes, Works, and Wonders*, edited by Gary Westfahl (Greenwood Press, 2005), and has been a contributor to numerous other reference works in the field. Among his forthcoming publications are essays on space opera and future histories for the forthcoming *Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by Mark Bould and Sheryl Vint (Routledge); contributions to *A Fan’s Companion to Terry Pratchett*, edited by Andrew M. Butler (Greenwood Press, 2007); and a chapter on the science fiction short story for the forthcoming *Teaching the New English: The Short Story*, edited by Ailsa Cox (Palgrave Macmillan). He is currently researching British science fiction fandom in the 1950s, particularly the Liverpool group.

For all of these reasons, and many more, we are delighted to award the 2008 Clareson Award for Distinguished Service to our great friend, Andy Sawyer.

SFRA AWARD

## Thomas D. Clareson Award Acceptance

Andy Sawyer

I have been trying to come up with the right words to describe my reaction to receiving this award: surprised, delighted,

gob-smacked—no, that comes from the last time I did this: Paul Kincaid’s acceptance speech, which I delivered on his behalf a couple of years ago. No wonder I’m feeling déjà vu. Little did I know then that I would have to stand here on my own account. I almost didn’t come so that Paul would have to deliver *my* acceptance speech in return, but that seemed a bit extreme for an amusing idea. I’d *much* rather be here in person.

Another word actually comes to mind to describe my reaction: disbelief. I actually had to read the initial e-mail several times before I realised it was me they were talking about. I’ve never thought of myself as someone who wins awards. The last time I won an award was something called the Old Boys’ McCarthy Memorial Essay prize at school, when I know I was the only entrant. And to this day I don’t know who McCarthy was. Oh, and equal third in a Ghost Story Society competition is about the height of my fiction achievements.

So to be told that I’ve actually achieved something in this field which means so much to me is a great honour and something which pleases me immensely even though, as I revel in the pleasure, I rather uneasily remember that I’m *paid* to do what I do as custodian of the Science Fiction Foundation Collection and running the MA in Science Fiction Studies for the School of English at Liverpool University. They can of course fire me if I don’t do it well enough. I think this is a great vote of confidence for what I’ve been doing with the library and teaching SF for the past few years, and I need to thank my colleagues at the university and in the Science Fiction Foundation, and way back in the days of the British Science Fiction Association, for their support in helping me do it.

It’s a particular honour to receive the award here in Lawrence, where Jim Gunn’s Center for Science Fiction Studies has always been one of my inspirations, and I’m grateful to have had the chance to look at the Spencer Research Library’s Cordwainer Smith archive—something I never thought I’d see. I wish I had six months rather than a few hours to explore it.

This has been a rather difficult couple of years in Liverpool University Library as we’re undergoing some major reconstruction. The Special Collections and Archive department is currently sequestered in cramped temporary accommodation while a new reading room, office space, and teaching rooms are being constructed, and I hope that when the new area is ready in the autumn, we’ll be able to exploit our wonderful collection of SF to the full, and go ahead to improve it. I’m well aware of what needs to be done to do this, but you’ve certainly given me the boost I need to steam ahead with the task.

Although this is all a bit Oscarish, I do need to express my gratitude to the University of Liverpool and the British Academy’s Overseas Conference Grants Scheme for assisting with getting me across here, and especially to Phil Sykes, the University Librarian, and fundamentally and absolutely my wife Mary (who has supported—or endured—my enthusiasm for SF for so long) for enthusiastically insisting that I spend a week away from home. And of course those wonderful people who think that I’m worthy of the Clareson Award. The award is one, essentially, for service, and if it’s not too pious a hope, I hope I can continue being of service to the SF community. If that *does* sound self-righteous...

GOOD GRIEF, I’VE GOT AN AWARD!

I’m going to treasure this moment.

## Pilgrim Award Introduction

F. Bruce Cox

Presented by David Mead

One of the most striking aspects of the history of science fiction is the fact that many of its leading authors of fiction have also been among its most prominent authors of criticism. From Damon Knight to James Blish to Brian W. Aldiss to Ursula K. Le Guin to Samuel R. Delany to Joanna Russ—and of course last year’s Pilgrim Award winner, the late Algis Budrys—many of the most groundbreaking and influential works of SF criticism have come from writers who have also given us some of the field’s groundbreaking and most influential works of fiction.

Happily, the phenomenon continues. This year’s winner of the Pilgrim Award is a novelist whose work, in its examination of the intersection of the human and alien, its strong feminist perspective, and its literary sophistication, continues the tradition of Russ, Suzy McKee Charnas, and Ursula K. Le Guin, and has received numerous honors, including the World Fantasy, Arthur C. Clarke, British Science Fiction, Philip K. Dick, and James Tiptree Jr. awards.

Even as she has given us such memorable novels as *White Queen* and *Bold as Love*, not to mention a number of highly regarded novels for children, she has produced a steady stream of essays and reviews, appearing in *Foundation*, *SF Eye*, the *New York Review of Science Fiction*, and elsewhere—essays and reviews whose deep knowledge of and respect for the history and conventions of SF, ongoing feminist concerns, insistence that good SF should also be good art, and conveyance of theoretical sophistication in lucid and elegant prose, are strong support for *Science Fiction Studies*’ declaration that she is “one of the most reflective and readable SF critics.”

With the publication by Liverpool University Press in 1999 of her essay collection *Deconstructing the Starships: Science Fiction and Reality*, we were given a generous selection of her critical work that displays not only all of its previously mentioned virtues but also demonstrates the author’s remarkable ability to write about her own fiction in a way that opens up and illuminates not only that work, but SF as a whole. In both quantity and quality, she has already offered up a substantial career’s worth of critical writing, and such recent essays as “Wild Hearts in Uniform: The Romance of Militarism in Popular SF” and “String of Pearls: Women in Fantasy/Horror” promise that there is much more to come.

Knight, Blish, Aldiss, Le Guin, Delany, Russ. To this list of novelist/critics, the Science Fiction Research Association is pleased to add the winner of the 2008 Pilgrim Award for lifetime achievement in SF criticism, Gwyneth Jones.

## Pilgrim Award Acceptance Imagination Space: A Thank-You Letter to the SFRA

Gwyneth Jones

First, let me say how sorry I am that I can’t be with you in the home of the Apocalypse (as Mark Bould reminded me, temptingly); and that I’m missing my only chance—on the return trip—to use one of my favourite iconic sayings in its original context. I’m not in Kansas, and it’s a real shame, but I’ve given up flying, until further notice—and it’d be a sad thing, after my rash, intransigent pilgrimage through SF criticism, if I dumped a rash, quixotic vow to come and collect the Pilgrim award.

I’m honoured, I’m astonished, I’m very proud to be a recipient of the Pilgrim Award. Despite Adam’s kind protestations (I think I initially responded to his phone call by saying, *are you sure this isn’t a joke?*) I still feel bemused. What did I do to deserve this? Caused a little trouble, maybe, occasionally, once upon a time (which seems, according to previous Pilgrims’ accounts of themselves, to be something of a trend...) But I’m both glad, and sorry, to feel that this is an honour for a particular, *awkward* kind of SF feminism. Not the “girls get to be guys” type of feminism. Nor the equally anodyne “women are morally superior” variety—but the deeply offensive contention that our whole global culture (and specifically, the *future* of our culture) could stand to be a little less masculine. Could stand a strong infusion of the values designated as “weak,” and “feminine”—negotiation above conflict, empathy above self-interest, and all the rest of that repertoire. So, I’m glad I’m getting this award as a feminist, and I’m sorry—because I’d much rather that my ideas and opinions were *individual* but mainstream, and didn’t merit a special label.

Reviewing books—unless you were an academic, or a well-paid columnist—was an esoteric occupation for adults, before the internet created Amazon, but it’s been an everyday activity for untold generations of school children. Even the most reluctant kid-critic has to produce a few book reports. I took a liking to the game, as I remember, in what you’d call Senior High School here—praising at length the “cinematic quality and wide-screen feel” of passages of Virgil’s Aeneid. (My Latin teacher was impressed: a hip buzzword or so from another field does wonders for your credibility). From there, I passed seamlessly to reviewing the random assortment of novels that arrived (who knows how?) in the offices of a Singapore glossy magazine called “Her World.” I was doing all kinds of freelance journalism, earning a pittance: but the reviewing was the most fun. I couldn’t resist the *free gift included* aspect. It was in Singapore, in the seventies, that I reviewed Joanna Russ’s *The Female Man*, my maiden foray into science fiction’s sexual politics. Sadly, I have no idea what “Her World” readers made of the book; or of my review...

I’m not sure exactly when I got started in SF critical venues. I wrote a book called *Divine Endurance*. As soon as it was published I was *hailed*, by a community which I hadn’t known existed (I’d read a lot of SF, but never been to a convention, never been a “fan” in the technical sense of the term). Someone must have sent me one of those alluring free gifts, and off I

went, reviewing for *Vector*, for *Foundation*, having a troubled, on-and-off relationship with *Interzone*—and later, maybe most significantly, writing regularly for David Hartwell's *New York Review of Science Fiction*. Things became a little heated, from time to time. There was a correspondence with Brian Stableford, in "Foundation," on the subject of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*... I remember contacting the then editor, Edward James, and asking him, is this Stableford chap okay in a scrap? He understands about play-fighting? I won't make him cry or anything? Edward duly assured me that I need have no fear. Mr Stableford was bulletproof.

What I chiefly recall about those gunslinging years is that I never, or very rarely, chose the books that I reviewed. (The exceptions that spring to mind are Colin Greenland's *Take Back Plenty* and Rachel Pollack's *Unquenchable Fire*.) I would tell the reviews editor, don't worry, just send me whatever you like. I'm not primarily interested in giving people tips on what to buy, and I don't *want* to have advance guidance on what I'm supposed to think. It doesn't matter to me if the novel is obscure. I want to see what's happening in science fiction, I want to take books apart, find out how they work. How they relate to popular culture, sexual politics, global politics. How SF writers are using the constructive or destructive interferences between technology, science, human life... I didn't realise, way back then, that I had crossed the line: I was no longer *reviewing* books, I'd become a *critic*. I didn't even realise how different, in practice and in purpose, those two activities are—and this blissful ignorance could get me into trouble. I remember the look of hurt astonishment in the eyes of a certain illustrious cyberpunk, when he'd read my review of Neal Stephenson's *Snow Crash* in the *New York Review*. But Bruce (no, I didn't say this, but I thought it)—surely you noticed that this book positively licks the boots of mindless violence? You're a decent human being, surely you were repelled by Hiro Protagonist's smug, shallow machismo... ?

Those were the days. I wouldn't dream of behaving in the same way now. For one thing, thanks to the internet explosion, it's become almost impossible *not to know* what the community thinks you should think, about any given SF novel... For another, I'm older and a little wiser. I no longer think it's such a great idea to stand alone, and shoot the bad guy full of holes in the middle of Main Street. When I was young, I was convinced that writers who took a "bad" review personally were deluded, possibly a little deranged. You can't please everyone. You have to take the rough with the smooth if you put your stuff out there. The reviewers aren't attacking you, or your livelihood! They're engaging in the discourse, you just happen to provide the raw material. Today I understand that reviewing books is a *business*: a tightly woven network of what the Chinese call *guanxi*, sometimes known as "social capital." Friendships, alliances, cliques, "movements," call them what you will, these slightly shifty arrangements have been around forever, and it's up to the individual to decide where to draw the line. Would I silently expect a helpful review from a known friend of my cause? Probably. (And I'd be hurt and astonished, if I found that my friend had written, instead, *don't bother with this one, it's only for bleeding-heart girlies*...) Would I accept, or solicit, a novel for review, having decided before reading it whether to praise or blame? I hope not; but that's always going to be a slippery slope. The publishers, and the hungry writers, are after one thing: sell-

ing the product—and if that means schmoozing reviewers, and trashing the opposition a little, *c'est la guerre*. Who can blame them? The gateway that leads to success is very narrow. Reviews are part of the machinery of publishing, and "getting noticed." Literary *criticism*, as an independent, disinterested, intellectual endeavour, lives in the chinks. It's up to us keep the game as honest as humanly possible; while accepting we'll never be pure as driven snow.

Science fiction scholarship is something else again, and I didn't know I'd crossed *that* line until the morning I picked up the phone, and found I was getting a call from the president of the SFRA. So, well, if I *am* a scholar, an amateur scholar, how did that come about? I promise you I never did it on purpose. I have to thank the late George Hay, that kindly, wonderful eccentric, who pushed me into writing my first major SF article (called "Getting Rid of the Brand Names," it was published in a U.S. journal called *The World and I*, the year my son was born). Mark Bould, Andy Butler, and James Kneale, for running the gaudy explosion of ideas that was the Academic Fantastic Fiction Network, and letting me hitch a ride. My bulletproof sparring partner Brian Stableford, for including me in that zany affair in 1989, when he convinced British Telecom to allow a bunch of sci-fi writers into their corridors of power. They even paid us for the privilege—which was rather like the last fascinating secret tribe in the Amazonian rain forest *paying* the anthropologists, but the anthropologists weren't complaining. Bruce Sterling, who—despite my dreadful betrayal of the Movement over *Snow Crash*—sent me along in his place to a UK conference on the "Governance of Cyberspace," in 1995. Darko Suvin, the renowned SF scholar who wrote to me praising my criticism, when (how can I put this?) I didn't know I existed. Nina Tyolahti, of the University of Oulu, Finland, who invited me, out of the blue, to speak at a marvellous multimedia conference about the Apocalypse (it seems Kansas doesn't have exclusive rights). Charles Brown, David Hartwell, Sherryl Vint, Sarah LeFanu, Andy Sawyer...

Enough names, I'm going to stop there: but you see how it was. I just wandered about at random, a fictioneer getting interested in things; writing "papers" so I could be a fly on the wall at futuristic conferences; finding in myself a long-buried love for academic research, for analysis, for concentrated *thought* about this sorely undervalued art form: the interface between *science* (the stories we tell ourselves about the world out there) and *fiction* (the stories we tell ourselves about the human heart).

For the last several years, I've been very interested in the concept of information space. It's related to information theory, and the Claude Shannon, Warren Weaver paper called "The Mathematical Theory of Communication" (1948/63), which first conceived of information as a measurable physical quantity, like density or mass, expressed in on/off yes/no "bits." Shannon and Weaver's immensely powerful insight was the foundation of our digital age. It offers those bits, the 0s and the 1s, as the final, logical building blocks of everything, giving us a model of the state of all states that unites the material and the immaterial, mind and matter—neutrinos, zebras, dreams, artificial chromosomes—all made of the same *stuff*. There's a lot of fun in this for SF novelists—especially those who love to see wild fantasies creeping ever closer to the marketplace. But I also like to think of science fiction itself as a volume, a set (overlapping with many

others), in the vast, contained yet unlimited ocean of information—furnished, with the icons of the genre, Spaceships, Aliens, The End of History, The Battle of the Sexes. Within *this* volume, every significant writer opens up a new Imagination Space, as if adding to a mansion in Second Life: William Gibson’s polished future surfaces, Sheri Tepper’s Apocalyptic visions, Gwyneth Jones’s depiction of Otherness...

It used to worry me that science fiction tells the same story over and over. It used to worry me that *I* tell the same story over and over (until I hit on the idea that I was furnishing my own Imagination Space, with variations on the décor, the style, that belongs to me alone). But science fiction, the art form that takes as its subject, quintessentially, the preoccupations of the present day, can only reflect the state of the world out there. How can we help going round and round in circles? The Great Escape is taking a lot longer than we thought it might, when we first dreamed of spaceships. My plan for reducing global levels of machismo is not in a good place either, right now. But we keep on circling, and maybe the horizon keeps moving, by imperceptible degrees. Probably we’ll feel the same when there are colonies on Mars; and engineered postgendered posthumans frolicking in the ice-capped methane seas of Triton. The project’s stalled! We’re doomed! When are we *ever* going to get out of this damn’ solar system?

Maybe the work of science fiction scholarship is not sterile taxonomy, nor yet to goad the genre into passing beyond its limits (how can we *progress*? The plan is always the same); but to forge links, build complexity, refine the details: and rescue the genuine novelty from each writer’s *generic* contribution. Did Gibson’s *Sprawl* books say anything new about AI? Was the king of cyberspace really interested in digital technology? I don’t think so. What Gibson gave to SF, his proliferating legacy, was a vision of the future, any future, as *always already* a place of decay: a cabinet of curiosities, a lovingly preserved, make-do, improvised jumble of antiques.

Closer to my own turf, Sheri Tepper, by far the most popular feminist writer after Le Guin, has *appalling* visions of the Battle of the Sexes, *horrific* ideas about where male-ordered civilisation is headed—enforced and made palatable by the sheer beauty of her world building. But I notice the details: like those conjoined twins in *Sideshow*—signifying the doomed partnership of male and female human beings, joined at the hip but incapable of working as a team. In her latest book, *The Margarets*, they turn up again, as a metaphor for the inseparable mix of good and evil in all humanity... I think that’s progress, somehow. Changing hats for a moment (if I were up here in person I would have brought two hats, one for the fictioneer, one for the critic), Istvan Csicsery-Ronay once said that the term “Aleutians” in my Aleutian Trilogy must be a conscious or unconscious elision of “Alien.” No, not quite. The Aleutians are an *illusion*. If you look closely, you’ll see that Gwyneth Jones isn’t really interested in “depicting Otherness.” On the contrary, she’s saying that the great bogey, the “Other,” *is an illusion*. Women and men are not so different. You think that’s a weird stranger coming towards you. Look again, you’re facing a mirror—

Gibson, Tepper, Jones... What about all the rest? How do we choose our material? In *Count Zero*, which I’m not claiming is a great Gibson novel, there’s one immensely arresting image. The story is about the mysterious appearance on the market of

six *boxes*, very like the evocative collections of random objects created by real-world artist Joseph Cornell. The young woman charged with finding the source finally locates the artist. In a semiabandoned space station an emergent AI, hanging in the midst of the spinning fragments of a lost civilisation, is picking out, apparently at random, “a yellowing kid glove, an armless doll, a fat, gold-fitted black fountain pen...” That’s what we do. We snatch scraps from oblivion, and canonise them. Maybe our choices are arbitrary. My choices, as I’ve recounted, have always seemed arbitrary to me. It doesn’t matter. It’s all connected. Any part can be used to invoke the whole.

Enough of this rambling. Off with my hats, to the gathered SFRA. Thank you again. The Pilgrim Award is a very great honour. Thank you for all the work you do, and again, I’m sorry I can’t be with you.



## Nonfiction Reviews

### **Heinlein’s Children**

Bruce A. Beatie

Joseph T. Major. *Heinlein’s Children: The Juveniles*. Chicago, IL: Advent Publishers, 2006. Cloth, xvi, 535 pages, \$25, ISBN 978-0911682342.

Along with Alexei Panshin (in the introduction [xv]) I am, in most of the senses implied by Major’s title, one of “Heinlein’s children.” I was a Boy Scout in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and (if memory serves—see below) my introduction to science fiction was reading “Satellite Scout” in *Boys’ Life* late in 1950. Since I was working in my high school library, I quickly found and devoured *Rocket Ship Galileo*, *Space Cadet*, and *Red Planet*, and then looked eagerly for each new Heinlein novel as it appeared. I subscribed to *Astounding*, *MFSF*, *Galaxy*, and many of the short-lived magazines that appeared during the 1950s. My friends and I discovered the Elves, Gnomes, and Little Men’s Science Fiction, Chowder and Marching Society in Berkeley, California, and at the wonderful bookshop where it was based (whose name is lost in memory) I began collecting back issues of *Astounding*, *Unknown*, *Weird Tales*, and other fascinating journals (my nearly complete run of *Astounding* was, alas! largely sold to help pay for college). When I returned to college in 1957 after a stint in the Air Force, I worked part time in the University of California’s Bancroft Library, where I renewed acquaintance with Helen and Reg Bretnor; from a delightful dinner with them in July of 1962, I treasure a personally inscribed copy of the stories of Ferdinand Feghoot. (But memory may not serve well. Before reading Major’s book, I’d have sworn that I’d read *Rocket Ship Galileo* in *Boys’ Life*, and I have no memory of visiting Berkeley in 1962, during my second year of graduate study at Harvard.)

That paragraph both explains in part why it has been such a pleasure to read Major’s *Heinlein’s Children*, and gives some indication of the highly personal style in which it is written. But

before commenting on specifics, let me describe the contents. After a brief introduction by Alexei Panshin, Major presents interpretive chapters, in order of their publication dates, on all 14 of Heinlein's "juveniles," from *Rocket Ship Galileo* (1947) through *Podkayne of Mars* (1963). He notes on the verso of the title page that "Chapters 1 through 13 appeared in different form in *FOSFAX*, the journal of The Falls of Ohio Science Fiction and Fantasy Association, 1992–1999," which may explain why chapters 2 to 12 are remarkably similar in length, while chapter 13 on *Starship Troopers* is double that. I've been unable to locate a relevant copy of *FOSFAX* to check on the amount of revision the chapters have undergone, but his bibliography includes only two post-1999 items: James Gifford's *Robert A. Heinlein: A Reader's Companion* (2000), and *The Martian Named Smith*, by William H. Patterson and Andrew Thornton (2001). Patterson's "official biography of Heinlein" is mentioned but not listed in the bibliography, nor can I find it in any online bibliography. The clearest post-1999 comments are Major's parenthetical reference to Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* film, and his somewhat obscure mention of "a Hilton heiress...so notorious as of this writing" (472). Major doesn't mention Marietta Frank's 48-page Hollins University MA thesis on Heinlein's juveniles (probably as inaccessible to him as it was to me), or C. W. Sullivan's short articles on the juveniles of 1985 and 1993.

Each chapter opens with a bibliographic history of the book's publication, its opus number in Heinlein's files (from Marie Ormes's 1993 dissertation), and the number from Gifford's "New Heinlein Opus List"; dates of composition, and length as published. Each chapter has a clever title—for *Citizen of the Galaxy* it is "The Crying of Lot Ninety-Seven," a pun on Thomas Pynchon's 1966 novel—and is divided into subsections that range from 4 (*Citizen of the Galaxy*) to 13 (*Farmer in the Sky* and *Starship Troopers*) whose titles are also clever—those from *Citizen of the Galaxy* are "Illegal Champagne Begging," "I'm Strong to the Finnish," "Ho! For the Life of a Spaceman," and "Leveraged Buyout of Gor." His analyses of each book rather casually retell the stories, but with constant associative digressions. Major makes frequent reference not only to the other juveniles but to Heinlein's other works, especially *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*. His main sources of critical insights are Alexei Panshin's *Heinlein in Dimension* (1968) and the Heinlein chapter in Damon Knight's *In Search of Wonder* (3rd ed., 1996); but he takes issue with Panshin and Knight as often as he finds support in their work. He also makes extensive use of Heinlein's letters (*Grumbles from the Grave*, 1990) and his notes in *Expanded Universe* (1980).

Because I cannot take the time and space to comment on each chapter, let me at least offer some notes on the first and shortest chapter, on *Rocket Ship Galileo*, and the longest, on *Starship Troopers*. After setting the stage for the point in Heinlein's life when he began *Rocket Ship Galileo* and noting that its original title was *Young Atomic Engineers*, Major mostly retells the story in fragments, and wittily: for example, when the boys' first model rocket fails, "The trio fall into a brown, and von Braun, study analyzing the ruins of their test model" (2). He notes the areas where Heinlein's scientific extrapolation is on the mark ("stringent radiological safety measures" [7]) and where it's not (using plants for oxygen conversion on a small spaceship). His subtitles ("Rocket to the Morgue," "De la Terre a la Lune,"

"The Mouse on the Moon") evoke Anthony Boucher (at least for cognoscenti), Jules Verne, and Leonard Wibberly—the only one actually referred to in the text. He frequently compares aspects of this novel to Heinlein's earlier (and later) work, and concludes that "This is not one of the more highly regarded of Heinlein's books...it is hard to think highly of a book where a scientist and three boys build a spaceship and go to the moon to fight Nazis" (20).

The chapter on *Starship Troopers* is not only the longest in the book, but the most elaborate: each of the 13 subsections has an (often long) epigraph from Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*; and Major's argument is buttressed by reference to and quotations from a wide range of military writing—Dr. Richard Hornberger, author of the original *M\*A\*S\*H*; "Victor Suvorov" (Capt. Vladimir Bogdanovich), who wrote *Inside the Soviet Army*, tr. 1994; Thomas E. Ricks, *Making the Corps* (1997), to name only the first three mentioned. The novel was written, Major notes, in two weeks (November 8–22, 1958), in reaction to the call by the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy for an end to nuclear testing. The interpretive retelling of the story is harder to follow in this chapter as a result of the extensive digressions on military matters. Major's principal intent is to counter the charges made by critics (and there are more for *Starship Troopers* than for any of Heinlein's other juveniles—only in part because of the film) that Heinlein reveals himself here as a militaristic fascist. "What sprang from Heinlein's mind in the white heat of that visceral rage [over the SANE declaration] is a portrait of a society in which the art of governing is exercised by those who have contributed to the maintenance of that society...one in which the founding values of the nation were honored, respected, and acclaimed." "Those who deride this book are," he concludes, "doing so for a multitude of reasons. The most common cause stems from, as Heinlein himself put it, 'a failure to understand simple indicative English sentences couched in simple words'" (447).

The principal drawback of Major's book is the lack of any general introduction or conclusion that would place Major's commentaries in a larger context—Panshin's introduction, titled "Heinlein's Child," is, like my first paragraph above, largely a personal reminiscence, not a commentary either on Heinlein or on Major's book. And the body of the book effectively ends with Major's final paragraph on *Podkayne*; there is no concluding chapter that provides an overview or general commentary. (C. W. Sullivan provides a brief but excellent overview in an article in the spring 2006 issue of *Extrapolation*, one that fits remarkably well with Major's book-by-book commentary.)

Major includes the tables of contents of the first editions from which he has taken his own page references "as an aid to the reader who wishes to look up a citation but has access only to some other edition with different page numbering" (502). This is followed by a bibliography that is "limited to works that are quoted or are cited by page number" and a thorough index. There are few glitches deriving from the transition between fanzine and book.

Do Heinlein's 14 juveniles merit 500 pages of close analysis? Damon Knight wrote of the first eleven in 1956 that, "except for the first [*Rocketship Galileo*],...they've all been so good that it's difficult to choose among them—and impossible to find any precedent for them in this field" (*In Search of Wonder*, 82). After comparing Heinlein to Kipling, Alexei Panshin said in 1968: "In

the same way, if Heinlein becomes neglected, I think it is his work for adults that will suffer. I have no doubt that *Red Planet*, *Starman Jones*, and *Have Space Suit—Will Travel* will continue to hold readers for a good many years” (*Heinlein in Dimension*, 191). Both were writing before the drastic change in the nature of Heinlein’s novels after *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961), but to judge by Internet citations through Google, Panshin’s prophecy was off base: a search for the title of *Stranger* yields 1,310,000 hits, while the titles of the juveniles range from 21,900 (*Between Planets*) to 59,900 hits (*Rolling Stones*); *Starship Troopers* is an anomaly, with 2,870,000 hits—but that number derives mostly from the 1997 film. The Internet numbers represent popular interest; to evaluate scholarly or critical concern, one can turn to the online *MLA International Bibliography*, which lists some 112 articles and books on Heinlein between 1970 and 2005. Only nine of those focus specifically on the juveniles, and again *Starship Troopers* is the novel most frequently discussed.

A quick look at three recent general books on science fiction that happen to be in my university library shows the same pattern. Although Tom Disch’s 2005 *On SF* mentions Heinlein more often than any writer but Dick, the only one of the juveniles he discusses is *Starship Troopers*, which he finds “a veritable treasury of unconscious revelations” (13), arguing that the hero Rico is gay and that “such sexual confusions make the politics of the book more dangerous by infusing them with the energies of repressed sexual desires” (14). Brian Attebery’s 2002 *Decoding Gender in Science Fiction* looks mainly at post-Heinlein writers, but he does discuss Heinlein’s *Space Cadet* in relation to Suzy McKee Charnas’s *Walk to the End of the World* (1974). And finally, M. Keith Booker’s *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War. American Science Fiction and the Roots of Postmodernism, 1946–1964* (2001), which also mentioning Heinlein more often than any writer but Dick, discusses only one of the juveniles, analyzing *Starship Troopers* in a comparison with *Puppet Masters*. And from my own library: Elizabeth Anne Hull’s article on Heinlein in *Twentieth-Century Science-Fiction Writers* (3rd ed., 1991) briefly mentions only *Podkayne* and *Starship Troopers*. Gifford’s 2000 *Reader’s Companion* has alphabetically ordered entries for all the juveniles and treats them as respectfully as any other works. He notes in passing that *Have Space Suit—Will Travel* “is often considered, along with *Citizen of the Galaxy*, to be one of Heinlein’s best works” (97).

It is clear from this quick survey that most of Heinlein’s juveniles have generally been neglected by the critics and scholars, although all but one, *Have Space Suit—Will Travel*, are still in print, with all but four of those 13 in reprints since 2004, and for this reason alone, Major’s book fills a useful role. More than that, however, his book is both enlightening and entertaining. The breadth of his knowledge, not only about Heinlein’s work and life, but about SF in general, is astonishing, and his writing, for all its quirky individuality, is remarkably readable. The lack of a general introduction and/or conclusion that I noted above does not imply that Major cannot take a broader perspective. His chapters are full of more general insights, many of them tossed off casually. For example: “Most of the Scribner’s juveniles have rushed or weak endings” (336). This is true not only of the juveniles but of Heinlein’s fiction generally, especially before 1961. Panshin’s conclusion to his brief introduction to Major’s volume will serve also as a conclusion for my review: “Joseph Major of-

fers the close examination of these books they’ve long deserved. Joe has read widely, thought much, and knows his Heinlein. Read and enjoy” (xv).

## **A Critical History of “Doctor Who” on Television**

Karen Hellekson

John Kenneth Muir. *A Critical History of “Doctor Who” on Television*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1999. Paperback, 2008, 504 pages, \$29.95, ISBN 978-0-9864-3716-0.

This 2008 unrevised paperback reprint of 1999’s original edition comes out just in time to ride the wave of the critical acclaim of 2005’s revived *Doctor Who*. This British TV institution, which aired from 1963 to 1989 (although with several longish breaks), was familiar to American audiences during the late 1970s and the 1980s thanks to PBS broadcasts of the program, and a whole new era of fans is enjoying the show’s new iteration, currently starring David Tennant as the Tenth Doctor, on the SciFi Channel. Here, Muir condenses what has come to be called classic *Doctor Who*: the television episodes and films that aired before the show ended in 1989. This thus covers the first seven Doctors, although misleadingly, only the first five appear on the book’s front cover. The TV movie/failed pilot starring Paul McGann, which aired in 1996 in the United States on the Fox Network to uninspiring ratings, is mentioned briefly in a section on the history of the show and again in a discussion of spin-offs.

The book is divided into six large sections: “The History,” “Curriculum Vitae,” “The Series,” “*Doctor Who* Spin-offs,” “The *Doctor Who* Fan Matrix,” and a series of appendices. Notes (which seem all too brief) and an index are also included. The bulk of the text resides in part 3, “The Series,” which provides complete series information for all 26 seasons and 159 episodes of the original program, and this is where the interest in the book lies: as a reference guide to cast members and plot summaries. Black-and-white photographs of many subjects—from *Doctor Who* screen shots to movie stills to fan art to various actors in various roles—illustrate relevant factoids, but some of them seem to be a stretch. For example, the caption under a still from *Quatermass and the Pit* (TV version, 1958) indicates that *Quatermass* “is the spiritual ancestor” of the Third Doctor episode “The Daemons” (1971). The index is useful rather than exhaustive: a few quick tests revealed that minor guest cast and crew members listed in the summaries do not appear, so it’s hard to track them across episodes and series. In his acknowledgments, Muir notes his debt to Jean-Marc Lofficier, Terrance Dicks, Jean Airey, and John Peel, and the factual information contained in reference works by these authors is repeated here, although it’s now all in one handy place.

Part 1, “The History,” places *Doctor Who* within the context of SF, both American and British, at the time the show aired, and it provides a brief sketch of each Doctor as portrayed by each actor, including background on their roles to show why they might have been cast and analysis regarding what they brought to the role. Part 2, “Curriculum Vitae,” traces *Doctor Who*’s lineage

both backward and forward, for the latter particularly in terms of time-travel TV. Muir also contemplates the show's longevity, attributing it to the sheer scope of an incredibly elastic format. The Doctor can regenerate (so the actor can be recast), and he can travel anywhere in time and space, not to mention alternative realities. Muir concludes that "the setting and playground of *Doctor Who* is all of existence itself" (52)—indeed permitting a wide, wild variety of stories and adventures.

Part 3, "The Series," is the longest section of the book and includes detailed plot synopses, cast and crew listings, and original air dates, plus a section of critical commentary for each episode. Because some of the early episodes have been lost (for example, most of Season 5, with Patrick Troughton's Second Doctor), some of the synopses are based on other sources, including scripts, episode adaptations, and Lofficier's 1980 *The Doctor Who Programme Guide Volume 1*, to which this book clearly owes a debt. The synopses follow an entire story arc through multiple episodes; the number of shorter parts, which each averaged 25 minutes, is provided in the informational headnote with the original air date. Very early episodes gave each separate 25-minute episode a separate title, but although this practice soon ceased, Muir has noted them all—a wise practice because early episode overarching titles are not set in stone but are so called according to custom. The commentaries range widely. In addition to screening the episodes and talking about things like cinematography, story structure, and special effects, Muir discusses the behind-the-scenes players and the politics of the show, continuity, and fan and audience response. More importantly, Muir links many stories to other TV shows and films, revealing an impressive breadth of knowledge that contextualizes the show and draws useful connections.

Part 4, "The *Doctor Who* Spin-offs," provides the same cast, credit, crew, synopsis, and commentary information as the previous section, but for the two Peter Cushing films (1965, 1966) featuring the Daleks; the TV spin-off *K-9 and Company* (1981) with Elisabeth Sladen reprising her role as companion Sarah Jane Smith; and the 1996 McGann Eighth Doctor Fox broadcast, known formally as simply *Doctor Who* and informally as "The Enemy Within." Radio and stage adaptations and specials released on VHS are also mentioned, but they are briefly sketched, with no production information provided. Also discussed is *The Stranger*, which is not quite a *Doctor Who* spin-off in that it is unauthorized as *Doctor Who* by the BBC, but which is meant to strongly evoke *Doctor Who*. The books are also addressed, including the authorized Target Books adaptations, Virgin Books's New Adventures series (1991–1997, focusing on the Seventh Doctor and Ace, along with created character Bernice Summerfield, who was spun off into a series of her own), and Virgin's Missing Adventures series (1994–1997, focusing on all the other Doctors). Nonfiction, role-playing games, and comics are also addressed, again briefly.

Part 5, "The *Doctor Who* Fan Matrix," discusses fan and Internet sites devoted to the show. Muir does not give any direct URLs (although some of the sites he names are still in existence), instead choosing to classify the online presence into several categories, such as unauthorized *Doctor Who* fan fiction, picture downloads, single-character analysis, news, and merchandise. The section on "Fan Clubs" is similarly sketchy, although of historical interest. It does not link fandom or fan activity to

any larger cultural practice or attempt to analyze it through any analytical lens. Muir's point here is to show the range and scope of fan interest in *Doctor Who*, not explicate it.

The appendices provide lists of information, with a little something for everyone. Scholars and completists will find the listing of the *Doctor Who* production codes valuable. Newbies and dedicated fans alike will enjoy the "Recommended Viewing" list, which is articulated as a three-step process: "First Watch" (a particular *Doctor Who* episode), "Then Watch" (a film, a particular episode of a TV show), so that you might "Look For" (common themes, situations, treatments). Muir's listing of "The 20 Best Episodes of *Doctor Who*" may be taken to task by some fans—I noted with disapproval the omission of 1970's "Inferno"—but Muir's intent is to show the program's "quintessential characteristics" in episodes that are available, and a glance at the 20 best reveals not a bad one in the bunch.

This book is a reprint from 1999, before DVD remasterings and rereleases. Muir mentions which episodes are available (as opposed to those that are altogether lost and completely unavailable in any medium), but on VHS tape, which will strike most readers as downright ridiculous. Also glaringly absent is any discussion of Big Finish's line of audio dramas, which features the voice talents of all the living actors who have played the Doctor except for Tom Baker, along with their relevant companions, all reprising their roles. These audio dramas were released beginning in 1999, the same year this book first appeared, and continue to date. The discussion of the comics needs to be greatly expanded. In addition, his allusion to certain media scholarship is dated: he mentions *Battlestar Galactica* in terms of the 1990s resurgence of interest in the show, which jars against the ambitious 2003 miniseries that completely rethought the show and that resulted in the 2005 TV version. However, the book is clearly situated as classic *Doctor Who*; I just kept bumping up against aspects of the book that reminded me of its datedness.

This book is a useful episode guide, and I enjoyed the sections where Muir shows links between *Doctor Who* and other TV shows and films. Although the series information alone is more usefully presented in Lofficier's two-volume program guide (because more brief), Lofficier's work is long out of print. Scholars looking for analysis will find the commentary sections to be one informed person's take on a program historically important to SF TV; Muir's analysis is not sourced, and it does not try to place the analysis in a realm of scholarly thought—but it's not meant to be. Although I wish the book had been updated since its 1999 release because so much has happened in the *Doctor Who* world, I understand why it wasn't: such an update, to be done right, would require deep revision, not a sketchy rewrite, and some of the other texts, such as the Big Finish audios, now have reference books of their own. I find this book useful as it is: an informational tour, taken in 1999, with a witty, well-read guide, with entertaining pictures. It's a great beginning place for an overview on classic *Doctor Who*, and it's a must-have for fact-checkers who require episode guides.

# One Earth, One People

Brett Chandler Patterson

Marek Oziewicz. *One Earth, One People: The Mythopoeic Fantasy Series of Ursula K. Le Guin, Lloyd Alexander, Madeleine L'Engle, and Orson Scott Card*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008. Paper, 271 pages, \$35, ISBN 978-0-7864-3135-9.

Assessing the literary legacy of J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis is a daunting challenge. Numerous studies have followed the easier path of focusing on the works of one or both of these authors, perhaps offering some tentative statements about how these works have influenced authors since midcentury, but Marek Oziewicz pursues the more ambitious project of defining a specific tradition, which he identifies as “mythopoeic fantasy,” that has developed within twentieth-century literature. Unlike most of the studies that have come before, Oziewicz does not offer much in terms of writers before Tolkien and Lewis; his claim is that these authors offered something new which has influenced a series of writers ever since. Oziewicz also seeks to show how this literary tradition parallels similar cultural turns in the twentieth century (particularly by Carl Jung, Mircea Eliade, Joseph Campbell, and Northrop Frye) toward the reclaiming of “myth” for the purpose of offering a counter interpretation of human existence to the reductionist view of rationalism. Oziewicz argues that mythopoeic fantasy, rather than being ostracized as extraneous escapist entertainment, should be mined for symbols and ideas that will equip us to handle the challenges of the contemporary world. Though not always successful, Oziewicz’s book is certainly an important contribution to our ongoing assessment of this literary tradition. He has geared his text (which displays an impressive bibliography) primarily toward academics, but all those with a love of this literature will find much to recommend this book.

Oziewicz opens with a defense, correctly arguing that mythopoeic works have largely been misjudged in the literary world by the application of terms that are foreign to the very concept of mythopoeic fantasy. Realism has dominated the literary world for at least two centuries; this literary perspective attends the rationalism of the post-Enlightenment world, a materialist view that seeks to “understand” the world by breaking it into its components. Oziewicz argues that the debate over the worth of speculative fiction represents a clashing of world-views, for mythopoeic fantasy seeks the grander perspective of how we fit into the pattern of the universe. He argues that “reductionist critics,” like Tzvetan Todorov, Rosemary Jackson, Christine Brooke-Rose, and Lucille Armitt have ignored the theory of the authors of these works and have not met mythopoeic fantasy on its own terms. On the other hand, “holistic critics,” like Sheila Egoff, Ann Swinfen, Kath Filmer, and Diana Waggoner, have sought to show that the genre depends upon poetic knowledge, which is open to the possibility of the supernatural. Here Oziewicz is careful to emphasize that he is not seeking to restore a transcendental foundationalism, but supporting a “holistic postfoundationalist” perspective. Oziewicz laments that there has been much confusion also over the naming of the genre and asserts (and I agree with him) that mythopoeic fantasy is a better

title than fairy-story, speculative fiction, symbolic fantasy, serious fantasy, and a host of other names that have been proposed. For Oziewicz, mythopoeic fantasy offers imaginative visions of a secondary world, where metaphysical concepts become real and affect the lives of the main characters. The quests of these characters inherently promote the value of existence and suggest a purpose or moral plan for all life. These literary qualities define mythopoeic fantasy, but the identity of the genre also arises from “functional criterion,” Oziewicz’s attempt to reclaim authorial intention as relevant to literary criticism, arguing that the criticism presented by these authors helps us to see that the genre expresses a vision of “our most basic desires to live a full life, see other people treated fairly, share in a good society, and experience the deepest human hopes for emancipation and happiness” (90).

Oziewicz ultimately argues that our era, because of dramatic changes resulting from technology and other sources, needs a new mythology if human beings are going to survive our age’s challenges. He believes that this mythology should include four elements, which he sees mythopoeic fantasy imaginatively promoting: the new story must stress (1) the unity of all humanity across cultures, (2) the importance of claiming the past as we pilot into the future, (3) the necessity of contextualizing our humanity within the “awesome spectacle of the universe,” and (4) reconnecting to the precious resource of the natural world around us. Oziewicz then insightfully argues that Ursula Le Guin’s Earthsea series, Lloyd Alexander’s Prydain books, Madeleine L’Engle’s Time stories, and Orson Scott Card’s Alvin Maker novels respectively present these themes. Oziewicz’s treatment of each of these authors, limited by the scope of the book, effectively presents his arguments, but I am not convinced that all of these authors would agree to some generalized human mythology. Overall, I am dissatisfied with Oziewicz’s omission of the Christian elements in the tradition of mythopoeic fantasy. Lewis and Tolkien both shaped their vision of this literature from a Christian worldview. L’Engle, Card, and perhaps Alexander in various ways also draw on that tradition. I am sympathetic to Oziewicz’s identification of these themes in mythopoeic fantasy and to his call for a new mythology for our age, but I believe that such reflection cannot happen apart from particular cultural and religious traditions. Oziewicz does address the particularities of the different authors, but all too quickly generalizes from those specifics.

## ***SciFi in the Mind's Eye: Reading Science through Science Fiction***

Rebecca Janicker

Margret Grebowicz, ed. *SciFi in the Mind's Eye: Reading Science through Science Fiction*. Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2007. Paperback, xx + 323 pages, \$34.95, ISBN 978-0812696301.

This collection stands as a collaboration between academics who work in such fields as film, literature, and media studies and researchers in more science-based areas like virtual real-



ity and visual and representational technologies. Divided into five sections entitled “Races,” “Genders,” “Technologies,” “SF as STS,” and “At the Limits of the Imagination,” the chapters, combined with contributions from science fiction authors and interview fragments with Stanislaw Lem, serve to explore the relationship between science fiction and its real-life counterpart.

Harvey Cormier draws on scientific research on race in his analysis of the *Star Trek* franchise, including classic episodes such as “Let That Be Your Last Battlefield” (1969), arguing that the two-part *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode “Birthright” (1993) depicts an essentialist view of the dark-skinned Klingons that sits far from comfortably with the findings of evolutionary biologists. He suggests that *Enterprise* failed to achieve the franchise’s previous levels of popularity because of its return to *Star Trek*’s roots in promoting “America-first revivalism” (20). Cormier postulates that morality should be shown to be as experimental in nature and application as science; neither, he argues, showed any signs of maturation on the show despite its potentially life-changing voyages. It would have been of interest here to have seen some consideration of existing works on *Star Trek*—Daniel Bernardi’s *Star Trek and History: Race-ing Toward a White Future* (1998) is an important work on this very subject.

Naomi Zack considers cinematic representations of H. G. Wells’s *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) before moving on to consider scientific research on the nature—and, ultimately, the nonexistence—of “race.” She argues that the original novel (and some cinematic versions) was couched in essentialist ideas of race as destiny, particularly in the context of turn-of-the-century beliefs, linking miscegenation to atavistic decline, that were backed up by legislation persisting well into the twentieth century. Her investigation of how science fiction blurs with science fact leads her to ponder whether, in light of real-life advances in gene transplantation that allow the possibility of mixed species, there will emerge some kind of “racialism” on the kind of objective scientific grounds previously claimed only erroneously by those who argued for differences on “race” lines. Her analysis also raises wider issues about the nature of human identity.

In terms of gender, Janet Vertesi considers literary, cinematic and anime depictions of the gynoid—the female cyborg—arguing that this figure shows female identity to be inextricably linked to physicality, and further, that femininity need not be bound to humanity. She argues that the gynoid only retains her power if she remains sexually unavailable (or if sexual activity culminates in motherhood), making links to real-life situations, where unattainable sexiness is the only type of power permitted to females.

Jeremy N. Bailenson, Nick Yee, Alice Kim, and Jaireh Tecarro, as virtual reality researchers, point to a long collaboration between cyberpunk and virtual reality research, showing how the former raised questions that scientists have worked to answer ever since. They draw on scientific research, including psychology and social science journals, to explore the human experience of cyberspace and avatar realism. These are linked to literary examples such as accounts of how Vernor Vinge’s definition of “the other plane” shaped real-life research and William Gibson’s influential *Neuromancer* (1984) led to research into the augmentation of human experience in cyberspace. Ultimately, they conclude that “scientists may provide new research answers

concerning the use of technology, but will have more difficulty in creating new research questions, as many [sic] these questions have largely been exhausted in fiction” (162). In contrast to this, Andrew Pavelich argues that postapocalyptic science fiction often puts forward visions of dangerous scientific and technological advancement as cautionary tales. He discusses the inherent ambivalence about technology and draws on the philosophy of science to show that intelligence does not necessarily entail extensive technological advancement.

Two of several “Interventions,” written by authors Nicola Griffith and Nancy Kress, discuss SF’s concern with the potential surrounding the “intense curiosity aroused by the knowledge that there’s so much out there yet to be known” (141–42) and the ethical dimensions of scientific progress, respectively. Kress’s piece considers some of the drawbacks associated with the science fictional form—subjectivity, emotionality, negativity, and bias—but rounds this out by showing the novel’s unique ability to serve crucial issues by familiarizing and ultimately humanizing them.

Overall, this book provides thought-provoking and diverse contributions to the field of science fiction criticism. Although some of the chapters on literature and film do not engage with existing works as rigorously as they might need to for more specialist scholarly audiences, the collection’s chief strength lies in its unique combination of creative, critical, and scientific expertise. Grebowicz’s editorial assertion that the book stands to “represent such radically different readings of the way that SF affects and could affect the world” (xvii) is certainly borne out here.

## Dreams and Nightmares

Thomas J. Morrissey

Mordecai Roshwald. *Dreams and Nightmares: Science and Technology in Myth and Fiction*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008. Paperback, 221 pages, \$35.00, ISBN-13: 978-0786436941.

This book, appearing right around Mordecai Roshwald’s eighty-seventh birthday, is the ninth of eleven books in McFarland’s series *Critical Explorations of Science Fiction*. Roshwald is a professor emeritus of social science and the humanities at the University of Minnesota and is the author of *Level 7* (1959), one of the bleaker of the early cold war post–nuclear holocaust jeremiads. The present volume consists of an introduction and conclusion, eleven chapters, notes, and a thin bibliography. The discussion is organized chronologically for the most part, starting with the Bible and ending up with the nuclear age.

The problems with this book are many and fundamental. Its unelaborated thesis is that myth and science fiction are important venues for critiquing the uses and misuses of science and technology. This is a central idea that no longer needs proving. Its methodology is to discuss selected fictional representations of the human response to the open question of our capacity to handle tool-making responsibly. The chapters move through the history of the Western world from biblical and classical times to

1959, the year in which *A Canticle for Leibowitz* and Roshwald's *Level 7* appeared. Later chapters address specific topics such as evolution, robotics, behavioral conditioning, and nuclear war. Individual chapters are heavy on straight plot summary and light on original observations. Although most of the exemplary texts are classics, there is little attempt to explain why these were chosen over others. Among the science fiction classics treated are *Frankenstein*, *From the Earth to the Moon*, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, *We*, and *Brave New World*. There is no SF after 1959, which not only eliminates many possible titles but fifty years of science as well. In short, the book is dated. There is almost no reference to science fiction criticism; only two of the few critical items in the bibliography were published within the last 20 years. This is not a successful scholarly book, nor is there much that is likely to appeal to a nonspecialist audience.

There is no reason for me to go further. Reading the book was a chore. Early on, I was distressed at having to write a review that might be hurtful to a man who successfully contributed to the nuclear holocaust megatext and who has been a consistent voice of sanity and compassion in our dangerous age. I still feel that way. Still, other than those who might be interested in this book as a companion piece to *Level 7* (Roshwald provides an analysis of his novel), it is hard for me to imagine an audience for it. Let *Level 7* stand as Professor Roshwald's literary legacy.

## "Lilith" in a New Light

Amelia A. Rutledge

Lucas H. Harriman, ed. *"Lilith" in a New Light: Essays on the George MacDonald Fantasy Novel*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008. Paper, 191 pages, \$30, ISBN 978-0-7864-3810-5.

Nine of the 10 essays (two published previously) in this anthology were written in response to a paper by Robert A. Collins at the 24th International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts in 2003. Collins, expressing a dissatisfaction with the ending of MacDonald's *Lilith* (1895), notes that the "mythopoeic" and heroic schemata proposed by C. S. Lewis and Joseph Campbell, respectively, are inadequate in the face of the novel's concluding paradoxes. Even Collins's provisional solution—liminality—does not account for the absence of "the message" that a Campbellian hero should carry back, and the work's failure to communicate what "most serious readers" know of MacDonald's religious beliefs (8).

Collins's essay, which is the first printed in the collection, does not question the adequacy of any of the schemata; that is the starting point for others. For example, in "Myth, Mysticism, and Magic: Reading at the Close of *Lilith*," Verlyn Flieger asserts that the many variants on the heroic trajectory need not conform to a "pre-determined road map" (41). Flieger chooses to accept the ending as forcing an intuitive response (40). C. N. Manlove, in "The Logic of Fantasy and the Crisis of Closure in *Lilith*," suggests that Collins's analysis "look[s] for some external pattern into which to fit *Lilith*" (47). He offers possible readings that argue for the appropriateness of MacDonald's conclusion. David

M. Miller's "The (As Yet) Endless Ending of *Lilith*" (with its occasional burlesque of an unidentified poststructuralist "Caliban" who cannot distinguish between indeterminacy and the thrill of chaos) kindly suggests that Collins's question does not fit MacDonald's answers. Kelly Sears Smith's "Chiasmatic Christianity: *Lilith*'s Sense of an Ending" asserts that the novel's original readers, accustomed to the conventions of the *Kunstmärchen*, may not have found the ending unsatisfactory. Tom Shippey's "Liminality and the Everyday in *Lilith*" suggests that the novel is a mediation (17) between Vane's own world, which is relatively unimportant *sub specie aeternitatis*, and the afterlife.

Like Shippey, Michael Mendelsohn, in "Lilith, Textuality, and the Rhetoric of Romance," accepts the ending of the novel as given and suggests that MacDonald uses boundary crossings as a device for defamiliarization, reworking of the conventions of fantasy (32). The essays by Rolland Hein and the anthology's editor, Lucas Harriman, also discuss MacDonald's rhetorical strategies. Hein's essay, "A Fresh Look at *Lilith*'s Perplexing Dimensions," notes the increased references to Dante in MacDonald's revisions and offers a reading grounded in Dante's fourth allegorical level, anagoge. Harriman's essay, "The Revelatory Potential of *Lilith*'s Immanent Eternity," reading the text via Ricoeur, argues that *Lilith* is a story not of "myth making" but of "myth receiving" (86).

Vane's movements across the magic mirror receive a Lacanian reading in John Pennington's "Frustrated Interpretation in *Lilith*," which describes *Lilith* as a "writerly" text (95), as opposed to the purely "readerly" mythopoeic text; desire for an ending must be frustrated because the novel is not a riddle with an answer (101). Roderick McGillis's "Liminality as Psychic Stage in *Lilith*" views *Lilith* as rite of passage likened to Lacan's "mirror stage" (106); the ending is not a failure if one considers *Lilith* as Vane's endlessly sought-after imaginary completion.

Four essays, including Roger C. Schlobin's "Collins Agonistes; or, Why Did I Bother To?," deal only tangentially with Collins's questions about the ending. "Cosmic and Psychological Redemption in *Lilith*," by Bonnie Gaarden (previously published), is a Jungian reading. "Lilith as the Mystic's Magnum Opus," by Elizabeth Robinson, compares Vane's story to the "Dark Night of the Soul" from the writings of St. John of the Cross, while Jeanne Murray Walker's previously published "The Demoness and the Grail: Deciphering *Lilith*" focuses on the "Grail" (more accurately, the Waste Land) motif in MacDonald's novel.

Although a short bibliographical essay focusing on some of the valuable earlier scholarship about *Lilith* would have been helpful, the anthology is ultimately a worthy addition to scholarly collections. Collins's questions, answered in so many ways, seem, in retrospect, to be a seminar heuristic for eliciting rich discussion.

## ***Cylons in America***

Kristina Busse

Tiffany Potter and C. W. Marshall, eds. *Cylons in America: Critical Studies in "Battlestar Galactica."* New York: Continuum, 2008. Paper, x + 278 pages, \$24.95, ISBN 978-0-8264-2848-6.

This is the first essay collection on the critically acclaimed fan favorite, now in its fourth and final season. The 278-page paperback offers 18 essays plus introduction as well as a bibliography and episode list. Any collection on an ongoing series balances the advantage of timeliness with the risk that unaired episodes may complicate or contradict its contributors' arguments. *Battlestar Galactica*, with its serial format and sweeping epic storylines, is particularly prone to change course and tone, to surprise the viewers and critics, and to overthrow classic alliances of good and evil, right and wrong. This is, after all, the show that ended its second season by terminating the odyssey that was the premise of the show and its third by revealing that four main human characters were stealth Cylons.

All 22 writers in the collection know the difficulties of writing about an ongoing series, and they often address it directly as they acknowledge character, plot, and thematic changes that may occur in the show's final season. Instead of trying for universalizing comprehensiveness, therefore, the collection strives to illuminate individual points, and it is at its strongest when it focuses narrowly on particular motifs, themes, or characters, on particular approaches to or facets of the show.

In *Battlestar Galactica's* success, the show's viewership has moved well beyond its initial science fiction audience to encompass a diverse fan base that includes academics in many fields. *Cylons in America* sets out to address such a varied readership with an interdisciplinary approach that sets musical analysis next to game theory, presenting critical theory that remains accessible even to those not fully immersed in the respective fields. The collection successfully addresses a readership of academically interested fans and fannish academics, providing an important contribution to pop cultural criticism in media studies.

However, at times, such a broad approach prevents the theoretical depth and academic insight for which a media scholar might wish. Some essays repeat arguments that are spelled out in the show and are apparent even to casual viewers. This is particularly true in the first section, which often argues points that are clearly articulated in the show already (its allegorical relationship to contemporary U.S. politics, for example) and yet does not move beyond the obvious. For example, an essay addressing a central lesbian figure offers a compelling discussion of her cultural representationality yet chooses to ignore the political impact of her sexual identity.

The book's title indicates its U.S.-centrism and national focus, a factor which can equally be read as valuable delineation of scope and unfortunate limitation. Given the international background of the contributors and the fact that this is the first book-length academic engagement with the show, it remains disappointing that the show's parochial tendencies are not challenged and that its more complex interventions—such as its complex dealings with class, race, and sexuality—foregrounded.

To address the book's limits is not to deny its value, of course: some of the essays succeed in making important intellectual interventions without dealing in the kind of jargon that can alienate readers outside the academic context. Brian L. Ott, for example, uses the show as a case study to illustrate how television serves an almost ethical imperative for viewers' lives, and Suzanne Scott offers a significant intervention in media and fan studies as she analyzes the tension between corporate and fan cultures with the example of Ronald Moore's fan service.

The collection offers various essays with close analyses of various of the main characters—Admiral Cain, Gaius Baltar, Sharon Agathon, Kara Thrace—and of certain specific aspects of the show, such as the functions of games and music in the *Galactica* universe. Several essays (Ott, Johnson-Lewis, Mulligan, Gumpert, Deis, Dzialo) situate *Battlestar Galactica* within post-9/11 U.S. culture, connecting current political issues with the themes of the show.

The collection's most provocative essays include Carl Silvio and Elizabeth Johnston's Marxist analysis of labor, alienation, and utopia in the show; Alison Peirse's psychoanalytical approach to Cylons and their bodies; Tama Leaver's reading of the show in terms of artificial intelligence and reproduction; Matthew Gumpert's reading of hybridity and binary oppositions in Cylons and humans; Chris Dzialo's exploration of the show's mirroring relationship to contemporary cultural tropes; and—in the collection's furthest-reaching paper—Suzanne Scott's suggestive argument about corporate fan cultures.

*Cylons in America* is a useful essay collection for the interested viewer or fan of the show, worthwhile in particular for its close readings. Although some of the essays may cover familiar ground for science fiction or media scholars, it provides an important first collection on *Battlestar Galactica*, and its provocations offer ground on which future scholars will be able to usefully build.

## ***Serenity Found***

Karen Hellekson

Jane Espenson, ed. *Serenity Found: More Unauthorized Essays on Joss Whedon's "Firefly" Universe.* Dallas, TX: BenBella Book, 2007. Paperback, 224 pages, \$17.95, ISBN 978-1933771212.

*Serenity Found* follows 2005's *Finding Serenity*; both are entries in BenBella's Smart Pop series, which aims to cover cult media, including film, TV, and games. This entry comprises 18 essays by a variety of people, mostly journalists, screenwriters, and novelists, about the canceled TV program *Firefly* (2002) and its spin-off movie *Serenity* (2005). Each chapter includes a brief journalistic headnote penned by editor Espenson, who also wrote an introduction to the volume that touches on her own link to the show: she wrote popular episode "Shindig."

The entries range widely and are not scholarly in tone: there are few footnotes and nary a Works Cited section. This book is really by and for smart, thinky fans who have seen all 14 episodes of the show and know them by heart, and who were

delighted when the film came out, so they could see all their favorite people again. A subtext of the volume is Joss Whedon's brilliance: the "Jossiverse," as Espenson calls it (it's better known as the Whedonverse), which encompasses *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, its spin-off, *Angel*, and of course *Firefly/Serenity*, has been a point of much critical discussion. Buffy studies is an entire field of critical work, and even though *Firefly* had such a short run, it has many of the same *Buffy*-esque qualities that capture devoted fans. A Whedon text is driven by human characters, some of whom are women. In the genre of SF and horror, this is revolutionary.

A few contributors' names will be familiar. SF novelist Orson Scott Card's rambling "Catching Up with the Future" discusses his youthful reaction to *Star Wars* and the sad state of TV/film SF, as opposed to written SF, concluding that *Firefly* was the show that finally married the best of both genres. Nathan Fillion, the actor who played Malcolm Reynolds, the ship's captain and the lead of the large ensemble cast, contributes "I, Malcolm," a hilarious take on the grueling audition process, remembrances of time on the set, and tidbits about characters (Sean owes him money). In "Signal to Noise," Television Without Pity recapper Jacob Clifton analyzes *Firefly/Serenity's* use of media, surveillance, subliminal messages hidden in broadcasts, and news via Mr. Universe ("There is no news. There's the truth of the signal: what I see" [209]). Embedded in the essay are italic notes telling us to click, as though we'd be hyperlinked, as though this were another form of media altogether. His point is really the point of the whole volume, and likely the reason the book ends with this essay: "By taking [*Firefly/Serenity's*] message more deeply into our lives, . . . by keeping and spreading vigilance and awareness of our entertainment and its meanings," "we perform our part of the alchemy: we join in the signal, and ensure it never stops" (214–15). The cofounder of the Multiverse, Corey Bridges, in "The Virtual 'Verse," discusses *Firefly/Serenity's* resurrection as a MMORPG (massive multiplayer online role-playing game) by way of an overview of the entire genre. Bridges discusses the reasons why the *Firefly* universe is a good fit for this genre: it's partly the visuals, partly the opportunities inherent in the universe and characters, and partly the dedicated community associated with the 'verse. In the real world, hard-core *Firefly* fans are known as Browncoats, and they are indeed an organized and passionate bunch. If Bridges can seize on that kind of support, his MMORPG—still presumably under licensed construction, although I can't find anything about it dated after about 2006 or 2007—will be a massive hit. The final you've-heard-his-name contributor is Loni Peristere, who was *Mutant Enemy's* visual effects guy. In "Mutant Enemy U," Peristere links visual effects to story. He also summarizes the thing at the heart of the universe, the thing that makes *Firefly/Serenity* so special and beloved: "We wanted characters, places, and things we all knew, in extraordinary places doing extraordinary things" (127).

That idea—normal people in extraordinary places doing extraordinary things—informs many of the essays that focus on characters, particularly those that deal with women. Maggie Burns's "Mars Needs Women" contemplates why the women on *Firefly/Serenity* are believable and those in, say, *Stargate SG-1* are not. She concludes that it's because they are us, people we know—people like the character of Kaylee, an uneducated girl with bad taste in clothes, who is often covered with oil smudges

from her job in *Serenity's* engine room, who makes birthday cakes, who fascinates the men at a fancy party with her talk about engines while the mean girls cut her. In "Girls, Guns, Gags," comedian/writer Natalie Haynes explains why *Firefly/Serenity's* women are still feminist expressions, even though they exist in the all-too-familiar male-dominated hierarchical world of personnel on a ship with a male captain. She buys the women because they are funny, and because, like regular people (even men), they are good at some things and not so good at others.

The girls don't get all the attention: Shanna Swendson, in "A Tale of Two Heroes," argues that two male characters, ship's captain Mal Reynolds and ship's doctor Simon Tam, are really co-heroes, each with an overarching, character-driven quest story arc. Mal's character and story are analyzed in detail in Alex Bledsoe's "Mal Contents," which traces the captain's path toward responsibility and heroism. In "The Good Book," Eric Greene discusses the most enigmatic character of the series and film: Book, a Bible thumper with a secret past. Greene's discussion includes an analysis of the shadowy Alliance, held in opposition to the peace that Book espouses. Natasha Giardina, in "Geeks of the World, Unite!," organizes her discussion of geeks around *Serenity's* Mr. Universe, the uber-geek who provides the means to save the day. Her discussion juxtaposes the action hero with the technology-savvy geek, contending that "geeks are making sure the truth gets out" (138). She concludes with a bow to the interconnected geek world of *Firefly/Serenity* fandom: the Browncoats, united by online fan sites, blogs, and e-mail.

The overarching theme of the volume, and a topic that many writers mention directly, is that Whedon's take on the genre is unique in SF: the stories exist to tell us more about the characters, instead of the other way around. Further, some kind of truth is inherent in these stories, because we know and recognize these people. The SF situations they get into are really displaced human situations, and more than one contributor remarks that *Firefly/Serenity* may be unique in the SF TV genre in that there are no aliens. The 'verse seems to be populated only with humans, be they the terrifyingly other Reavers, whores trying to make a go of it on an outpost planet, psychotic bounty hunters, or well-dressed cads ready to duel. In her introduction, Espenson summarizes it like this: "What better way could there be, really, to invite analysis? Create a world that floats on a layer of metaphor, drench it in big ideas about the world, fill it with real people, and then absolutely demand intelligence of your viewers" (4). This book of smart essays is for all those intelligent watcher-critic-fans. It is most emphatically not a scholarly book, but it's not meant to be. The essays have a personal, amusing side that densely written academic prose lacks, but that doesn't mean the ideas are trivial. There are wonderful, smart ideas here, just ready for the reader to seize on as a point of discussion, to make us say, "I didn't think of that, but it's true!" Fans of the show will love it unconditionally. Fans who want to write densely written academic papers will want it for Espenson's and Peristere's contributions because they have behind-the-scenes cred. Those looking for hard-hitting analysis need to look elsewhere.

## ***Pretend We're Dead***

Janice M. Bogstad

Annalee Newitz. *Pretend We're Dead: Capitalist Monsters in American Pop Culture*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006. Paper, 232 pages, \$21.95, ISBN 978-0822337454.

Looking at popular culture products across a century, Newitz links television, film, and fiction in what she identifies as the increasing immersion of masses of people in late capitalism. As she describes in her introduction, we are “humans turned into monsters by capitalism. Mutated by backbreaking labor, driven insane by corporate conformity or gorged on too many prices of a money-hungry media industry, capitalism’s monsters cannot tell the difference between commodities and people” (2). Although she focuses on television and film, historical novels are considered as they initiate the mythos that most of us live little better than zombies, with our lives controlled by late capitalism. Although she initiates a nod to theories that films, especially pornography and snuff films, encourage individual loss of agency in audiences of popular culture, her thesis is rather that they reflect the process of manipulation and ultimately zombification inherent in modern capitalist society. Her chapters feature the themes of serial killers, mad doctors (science, having become commodified itself, makes them mad), the undead (especially zombies as a racial metaphor), robots, and the culture industry itself.

Newitz plunges right in to the theme of the commodified individual and alienated labor with her first chapter on serial killers. She examines fictionalized accounts of real serial killers such as *Executioner's Song* (Mailer) and *Henry Lee Lucas* (Norris) and uses these as a basis of commodity analysis for later fiction and film. She also filters the real history of serial killers like Jeffrey Dahmer into her interpretation of their social pathology. They kill to feel alive, to transfer the “dead time” produced by their alienated labor onto their victims and off of themselves. Although I may not agree with a simple Marxian analysis of commodification’s psychological effects, I find her argument intriguing from a cultural perspective. Yet her blurring of the differences between real events and artistic reflections of events and states of being reduces the force of her critical insights. Her analysis is at the level of suggestion rather than argument. It is as if she is saying, “These real events and cultural products coexist and so are related,” without specifying any of the mediations between the real and the imaginary. Her insights would become more convincing arguments if the distinctions and mediations were more clearly delineated.

Yet Newitz’s book is eminently timely and readable. As with several other current titles on mass culture such as *Postfeminist Gothic* (Brabon and Genz, eds., Palgrave, 2007), and works by such critics as Janice Radway, whom she cites in her final chapter, Newitz highlights late nineteenth- and twentieth-century novels that establish these thematic groupings. In fact, she discusses critical perspectives on the manipulative and deleterious effects of novels as precursors to twentieth-century skepticism about media popular culture and its negative influence on

the behavior of its audience. Inevitably, Dracula, Frankenstein’s monster, and many of Lovecraft’s stories are identified as models for later work. Lovecraft especially is linked to emerging tensions about race relations in America of the early twentieth century, and his Cthulu mythos has inspired novelists from Stephen King to J. G. Ballard. It is a defining force in cinema as America struggled through reinterpretations from racism to melting pots to multiculturalism. Newitz’s discussion of *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, where ghouls steal the bones of Europeans from their graves, is especially interesting. She identifies it as a parallel reflection of colonial traders’ attitudes toward colonized cultures which they robbed for their trinkets, naming especially Africa and India. She then takes on *Birth of a Nation* as representing the “death” rather than the “birth” of whiteness, and Tournery’s *I Walked With a Zombie*, which takes place on a sugar plantation in the West Indies island of St. Sebastian in the 1940s. Here the black zombies who battle their white masters, the Rand family, also serve as a metaphor for the process of decolonization as described by Franz Fanon.

She takes on the alienation of sexuality, especially for women, first in the antimedia attacks by McKinnon and Dworkin on the increasingly portrayed violence against women in the final chapter, “Mass Media: Monsters of the Culture Industry,” but she assumes that their take on media pornography has been largely dismissed, an assumption I cannot agree with. At the same time, she identifies a series of films where the triumphs and failures of the female body, especially as it ages, have become part of the filmic mythos. So, for example, *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane* and *Sunset Boulevard* chart the trajectory she subsumes under the statement: “The most shocking and hideous Hollywood monsters is, no doubt, an actress. Playing on traditional fears about the female body, movies about actress-monsters focus on what happens when a person depends entirely upon her outward appearance for both money and social status” (157). Classical feminist film theory (Kaplan, for example) on the nature of the male gaze is linked to the felt alienation of the body. We do not own our bodies because we do not get to define their value in any aspect of our lives, she asserts.

In this penultimate chapter, she also takes on cyberspace and AI as subsuming the human, starting with *Logan's Run* and moving on to *The Matrix*. Her focus here is the mass media portrayed through the media—that is, “mass media which swallow up the people who consume it.” This discussion, which is one of her more convincing arguments, about the way that media representations are embraced by their audiences so that they try to become what they see links both machine control of humans as in *Logan* and *Matrix*, where supercomputers literally control the human body, to the mediated self-reflexive gesture found in such films as *Pleasantville* (a comment on 1950s television defining the family for its viewers) to *The Truman Show*, which attempts to create a candid, reality-television feel with a person who does not know he is a character being viewed by millions.

*Pretend We're Dead* covers a lot of ground, and it doesn’t consistently separate social and economic analysis from cultural products. It is difficult to determine whether the author subscribes to the theoretical perspective that cultural products are reflections of the real or can create the individual, and perhaps social, identity. This methodological weakness in the work is ultimately mitigated by the broad overview of twentieth-century

American culture afforded by the many examples of cultural production addressed within its pages. The work is well within the parameters of current critical dialogs on mass culture and its relationship to the individual and the social, even though it offers no single opinion on the debates engendered by that dialog.

## ***The Influence of Imagination***

Justin Everett

Lee Easton and Randy Schroeder, eds. *The Influence of Imagination: Essays on Science Fiction and Fantasy as Agents of Social Change*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008. Paperbound, 228 pages, \$35, ISBN 978-0786432301.

In recent years, there has been much talk about the irrelevance, if not the outright death, of SF. The claim has been made that the genre, for the most part, is a product of the twentieth century, and with the passing of that century, SF is also due to fade away. Additionally, some have claimed that SF is beginning to show signs of old age as the genre has passed through the arc of its development, and no significant generic innovations have occurred since the appearance of slipstream. Even this is the best-case scenario for this argument. Some have stated that the last great literary phase for SF was the New Wave era. Still others have proposed that as the innovations of SF have begun to cross over into reality that it must begin to be viewed as a relic of the past. All of these arguments, erroneous or not, demonstrate the concern that SF may be entering a new phase at least, a period in which an aging genre must demonstrate its relevance to the culture at large in order to continue to be viewed as valid. This recent collection adds a welcome dialogue to this discussion by bringing together essays that not only consider how SF provides social commentary, but also how it may “influence society’s political and social agenda” (2).

The collection originated with the “Future Visions 6.0: SF and Social Change” conference held at Mount Royal College in Calgary in 2004. Though many excellent chapters are included in this collection, the origin for the collection—admittedly a common feature of the publication of papers associated with a particular conference—was a limiting factor in allowing the collection to settle easily into particular topical areas or themes. The editors have attempted to use the concept of a “critical singularity” as a theoretical mechanism for organizing the collection. The (very apt) question they asked was whether SF should be viewed as a single vision or multiple visions for the future. The collection unquestionably implies the latter.

I was intrigued with the concept of the critical singularity as a theoretical apparatus for understanding the voices in this conversation. The first essay, Schroeder’s “Introduction: Polarities at the Singularity,” does a fine job of introducing the idea of the critical singularity as a multivoiced text. This is followed by Marie Jakober’s “The Continuum of Meaning: A Reflection on Speculative Fiction and Society,” which discusses the fluidity of SF/F as having a particular advantage in influencing society because it is not bound to a particular time and place. Todd C.

Nickel’s “Science and Science Fiction” discusses the singularity by emphasizing the unlikelihood that a technological singularity (which would, in some sense, make SF “reality”) will bring an end to SF. The collection closes with Brian Greenspan’s “Surfing the Singularity: Science Fiction and the Future of Narrative Media,” which discusses the role that new media plays in opening SF to new audiences, new narrative tools, and communally influenced texts. Greenspan falls just short of admitting the possibility that new media may see the rise of new genres in the form of communally authored texts. Though I disagree with him on this point, I think this essay is the most powerful and forward-looking piece in the collection and worth the price of the book by itself. Together, the chapters I have mentioned above construct a dialogue on the meaning of the critical singularity in SF, drawing the conclusion that SF’s strength lies not in a unified vision of the future but in the wide spectrum of futures it offers.

The limitation of the collection lies in the critical distance between the framing discussion and the other fine essays that make up this collection. I do not consider this a weakness because most of these essays are strong in their own right, though they engage in conversations that are not always taken up in other chapters. This, again, is a limitation caused not by any weakness on the part of the authors or the editors, but the local context in which the book originated: the Future Visions conference. Though the topics engaged in the other chapters silently demonstrate some of the principles discussed in the controlling pieces, I would have preferred to see more essays gathered around common texts and themes. At times I was frustrated because I felt that I was witnessing one voice in an interesting conversation, and I wanted to hear the replies. On the other hand, the inclusion of so many freestanding pieces made it possible for the collection to represent a wide variety of genres. I was particularly pleased to see that this collection was not limited to written SF but included the graphic novel, new media, SF art, and film among its offerings. However, I would have welcomed some contributions related to SF television, which continues to be largely ignored.

Overall, this collection makes a significant contribution to SF/F and popular culture studies, and I want to see many more like it in the future. This book would make a fine contribution to any serious SF critic’s research library.

## ***Superheroes and Gods***

Amelia A. Rutledge

Don LoCicero. *Superheroes and Gods: A Comparative Study from Babylonia to Batman*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008. Paper, 255 pages, \$39.95, ISBN 978-0-7864-3184-7.

The author’s stated method is to “select a number of mythological superheroes from varied time periods and cultures and demonstrate how they all follow archetypal patterns”; the preface also notes that “While not intended as a reference work on the superhero, this would could very well serve that purpose” (1). Were the approach less simplistic and mechanically applied, and were the text more accurate in its discussions, it might serve the latter purpose. The book, which began as a short course that

developed into a regular liberal arts offering, is more a compilation of lectures than a critical study of the epic hero; the tone and sometimes labored humorous phrases of the lecture room are more often disruptive than enlightening. Further, the scholarship is too often dated and unevenly applied to the tales under consideration.

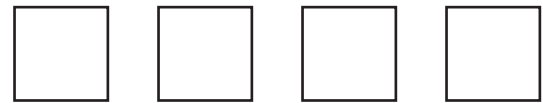
On the positive side, LoCicero goes beyond the usual focus on Western epic heroes and includes Persia, Egypt, India, and Finland (the *Shahnameh*, the Osiris/Set/Isis tales, the *Ramayana*, and the *Kalevala*, respectively) as well as *Gilgamesh*, the Homeric epics, Virgil's *Aeneid*, and *The Nibelungenlied*. The author also recognizes the persistence of ancient epic in popular culture's comic books and graphic novels, although the contemporary graphic novel does not figure in his discussions. LoCicero does not discuss *Beowulf*, an odd omission given popular culture's recent interest in that narrative. The bibliography provides a key to one weakness of the book: although he does list some modern editions—the Lattimore translations of Homeric epics and the Hatto translation of *The Nibelungenlied*—most of the primary sources are dated. For example, he uses Julian Hawthorne's 1900 edition of the *Shahnameh* and W. F. Kirby's translation of the *Kalevala*; both of these texts are available in modern scholarly editions (Dick Davis's 1997 translation of the former and Francis Magoun's 1963 translation of the latter). LoCicero also neglects the substantial body of contemporary scholarship on mythology, its cultural work, and its appropriations, as well as a burgeoning body of work on comics and superheroes.

Each chapter consists of a generally accurate extended synopsis of the work or works under consideration; each chapter or subsection ends with a listing of the relevant archetypes listed by Otto Rank. At no point does LoCicero provide a rationale for his use of Rank's schema as a means of rating the archetypal content of each epic. At times, LoCicero uses the terms *archetype*, *archetypal image*, and *motif* with precision, but too often, the terms are not used with any attempt at consistency. He seems to be aware of Wendy Doniger (O'Flaherty)'s scholarship on Indian epic, but not of her lucid discussions of how archetypes work. Too often the author falls into special pleading, because almost no epic protagonist can be matched to Rank's criteria; in most cases, the discussion then includes a list of "archetypes" such as the "suitor test." If an epic protagonist has an analog in a comic book series, a discussion of the modern character is appended to the chapter or section, again followed by a list of the relevant archetypes.

In general, LoCicero gives scant attention to the cultural work of the fantastic hero except in passing when he discusses comic books. He notes, for example, that the Superman and Captain Marvel series arose at a time of cultural anxiety about the threat of Hitler and European war. When he discusses Norse and Germanic epic, however, he ignores the appropriation of these mythologies by German facism, evincing no awareness of the body of scholarship—Bruce Lincoln's, for example—about such uses of mythology. In addition to the gaps in scholarship, there are careless errors, ranging from a statement that the basic subject matter of *The Nibelungenlied* is well known from Richard Wagner's *Das Rheingold*, to "Larousse writes..." (63) when referring to a translation of the *New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology* or a works cited listing of E. O. G. Turville-Petre as "Petre-Turville," cited in the text as "Petre." A reference to the charac-

ter "Mr. Data" for *Star Trek: The Next Generation* offers little reassurance for the substance of the popular culture scholarship. On the whole, the discussions of comic books are severely time limited because LoCicero focuses on the Marvel and DC Comics series, without much indication of the ways those series evolved in the late 1970s through the 1990s or of the explosion of the graphic novel as a focus of study.

LoCicero's assertion of student enthusiasm for the subject of epic heroism is accurate, but the task of any teacher or scholar is to cut through the oversimplifications of motif hunting and schemata (Rank, Ragland, or Campbell). Students are curious about the ways these stories have been used and misused in history, and such knowledge, presented with critical awareness, is vital for them and for popular audiences. A slight updating of Bulfinch is not the most useful text for today. This text, flawed in conception and not well edited, is not recommended.



## Fiction Reviews

### **SFWA European Hall of Fame**

David N. Samuelson

James Morrow and Kathryn Morrow, eds. *SFWA European Hall of Fame: Sixteen Contemporary Science Fiction Classics from the Continent*. New York: Tom Doherty, 2007. Paperback, 336 pages, \$26.95, ISBN 978-0765315373.

European writers invented SF long before the American invasion after World War II, but little popular interest here has met their postwar productions, often read as imitative or overly divergent from the American idiom. European short fiction is especially scarce, found most prominently in David Hartwell's *The World Treasury of Science Fiction* (1989) and James Gunn's *The Road to Science Fiction: Around the World* (1998). SF writer James Morrow and his wife, Kathryn Morrow, now update us with a selection of stories from the last two decades. Stories in translation from 13 languages by authors well known for SF in their native countries were commissioned for this volume, some even workshopped by writers, translators, and editors. Unlike most Hall of Fame volumes underwritten by the Science Fiction Writers of America, which reflect a vote of (sometimes under-qualified) members, this one has a personal dimension. The editors had to be "moved" by a story, a criterion with much to recommend it when anthologists know their stuff. Most selections certainly meet my aesthetic standards, and the editors offer them as superior examples for their countries of origin.

What is evident in these recent stories is that artistry trumps philosophy, which in turn predominates over both mindless adventure and meticulous allegiance to science and technology, Zipping from Voltaire to Calvino, the necessarily cursory introduction does slight a few German and Russian predecessors to American pulp magazines, and more contemporary contexts emerge in one-page prefaces to authors, their reputations, and

each story's fit to American expectations (translators are credited in a minimal appendix).

On tropes usually familiar to American audiences, stories often work less familiar changes, mostly leaving scientific rationalizations implied or perfunctory, though a couple verge on dramatized essays. Imagined societies tend to the dystopian, deeply rooted in European experience, but some endings are hopeful, and styles (in translation) vary from workmanlike to inspired, approaching surrealism more often than technical writing. The stories do not divide neatly into categories, but I have separated them below into somewhat overlapping groups.

The most traditional American SF topics, interstellar travel and alien contact, trigger three elegies. "Wonders of the Universe" (German, 1997), by Andreas Eschbach, is a conventional apology from a stranded astronaut on Mars to those she leaves behind; she laments her piloting mistakes but not becoming an explorer and foregoing traditional women's roles. Travel through time and alternate dimensions underlies "A Blue and Cloudless Sky" (Danish, 1996) by "Bernhard Ribbecki" (Palle Jul Holm), a long and complex tale of a Terran visitor to a distant planet whose colonists were German Catholics whose continued existence seems to depend on him. Enigmas abound, including a paradoxical game one wins by losing, and a star cluster, the Crown of Stars, linking astronomy with religious dread. Seeking to fulfill a prophecy, he beds the "wrong Maria," then kills two people at a religious ceremony, before his return to his own world and time results in a dry "correction" of the records—that is, the colony never existed. In another striking story, "A Birch Tree, a White Fox" (Russian, 1989) by "Elena Arsenieva" (Elena Grushko), instant death greets human speech (but not writing, mechanical reproduction, or even coughing and grunting). Grieving his colleagues, and beset by illusions apparently created by the planet, the surviving astronaut seeks to warn his rescuers. Seizing on the image in the title, from a woman's letter to a colleague, he shouts it out when they arrive, calling attention to a message painstakingly carved into the land. Although physically implausible, the problem is metaphorically deep, given the close relation of human identity with language, and the solution is poetically fitting.

Art and science also combine in other interesting ways. In Jean-Claude Dunyach's "Separations" (French, 2005) a hard-bitten captain oversees a shipload of hibernating colonists. On this trip, he is plagued by a jaded artist avid to recreate the rumored "dance" of the ship-controlling AIs passing through the short cutoff of a singularity. When that passage divides the ship into two universes, however, the artist experiencing the dance can never return to tell the tale, to the mordant joy of the captain. How we get to read about it is unexplained, but we learn that his two selves once kept in contact, with psychologically disastrous results. A different sort of dance unites a woman and a dangerous alien in several senses of "possession," in the most sensuous and surreal story in the book, Joelle Wintrebert's "Transfusion" (French, 1982). Rock music with a political message topples a military regime in Paragotis Koustas's "Athos Emforio in the Temple of Sound" (Greek, 2003), a tale that verges on magic realism in which ancient coins and a balky computer help the hero summon the myriad pilgrims. Alluding to Goethe's definition of architecture, the title of "Verstummte Musik" (Danish, 2005), by W. J. Maryson (Wim Stock), characterizes a palace of civiliza-

tion whose bricks are made of human remains. It is inhabited by a succession of lonely guardians, powerless to do anything but embody a sense of civilization and individualism, until a replacement appears by chance or by plan. When Laira is found wanting by computers that measure everyone's fitness annually, her technician husband smuggles her out, the only escape route leading to the palace she inherits as a wild card to the society's perfect order. Frozen music also characterizes this society as well as the palace, but the story exudes more aesthetic fatalism than satire.

Satire does dominate other stories, however, least effectively Lucian Merisca's "Some Earthlings' Adventures in Outrerria" (Romanian, 1999). In this parody of adventure tales, natives of an alien planet have light bulbs for faces, "shaving" means torture, and a human attempt at colonization ultimately fails. Satire also underlies Valerio Evangelisti's "Sepultura" (Italian, 1998), which evokes Brazilian tribal magic channeled through prisoners locked in a protoplasmic "melt" enveloping their legs and lower torsos. By using both technical and mystical means, a revolutionary force succeeds in destroying the prison, but the prisoners don't survive. A past revolution of sorts undergirds a "time patrol" story, "The Day We Went through the Transition" (Spanish, 1997) by Ricard de la Casa and Pedro George Romero. Their job is to maintain the past, with special relevance to Spain's liberation from the Franco regime. Terrorism and romance filtered through the corkscrew logic of time travel are tempered by the reality that nobody in the time force has any possible home outside their job. In the black comedy of Joao Barrieros's "A Night on the Edge of the Empire" (Portuguese, 1996), political correctness runs amok. After a highly risible confrontation at the spaceport, a taxi deposits a feathered ambassador to our backward planet at a red light district for literal chicks. In the name of species liberation, the disgusted dignitary is mugged and forcibly separated from his indispensable robotic aide, the separation proving fatal for both. Marleks Huberath's "Yoo Retoont, Sneogg. Ay Noo" (Polish, 1987) posits a radioactive and war-torn future in which fertility is limited and there are no "normals." Programmed education of birth-deformed children by the central state is ruthlessly inhumane, the unfit being warehoused for body parts. After becoming a "person," adequate to work, Snorg tries to liberate two companions from their Room—one intelligent with virtually no body, the other beautiful but nearly mindless (the title is her version of "You return, Snorg, I know")—but his brief single-handed rebellion fails. Satire also bites sharply in Joanna Sinisalo's "Baby Doll" (Finnish, 2002), in which sexualization of minors is amplified by sibling rivalry, bitchy competition among prepubescent girls, and parental helplessness. Told by a hardened nine-year-old, this devastating extrapolation and send-up of today's commercial practices recalls Tiptree's "The Girl Who Was Plugged In."

No explicit or implicit science or technology underlies three philosophical puzzles. In "The Fourth Day to Eternity" (Czech, 1987), by Ondrej Nest, a mathematician seeking a theory of time travel is attacked every four days by unknown commandos, who always use different methods, whose provenance is unknown and whose effects on his castle seem invisible to outsiders. The story implies the paradox that the attackers wish to prevent him from the solution that makes their attacks possible, but the castle and regularity also invoke fairy tale motifs mixed with



surrealistic imagery. “Destiny Inc.” (Russian, 2002), by Sergei Lukyanenko, proposes a business exchanging limited events destined for its clients with others who don’t fear them, with no clear explanation of how the entrepreneurs profit. No more plausible, but possibly more fascinating, is the theory propounded in “Between the Lines” (Spanish, 2000), by Jose Antonio Cotrina. In a Faustian bargain with a piratelike university instructor, a student learns “Advanced Reading Techniques,” reading books hidden behind or between the lines of other books, possibly ad infinitum. He loses interest in his girlfriend and virtually everything else, instead devoting himself exclusively to this pursuit of possibly infinite knowledge. Given that many of the “hidden” texts are available separately, his neglect of the quotidian world and the literal “black eyes” developed by the process suggest a send-up of postmodern literary study.

With legitimate intellectual credentials and a generally high degree of artistry, all of these stories approach at least conceptually both the traditional and shifting ideals and practice of science fiction. The usual longevity of Hall of Fame volumes bodes well for an admirable anthology that should prove of continuing interest to libraries, instructors, and anyone who values the broader reach of the genre.

## ***Queen of Candesce and Pirate Sun***

Dominick Grace

Karl Schroeder. *Queen of Candesce*. New York: Tor, 2007. Cloth, 332 pages, \$25.95, ISBN 978-0-7653-1544-1.

Karl Schroeder. *Pirate Sun*. New York: Tor, 2008. Cloth, 319 pages, \$25.95, ISBN 978-0-7653-1545-8.

*Queen of Candesce* and *Pirate Sun* are volumes 2 and 3 of the Virga trilogy, following *Sun of Suns*. Though part of a larger sequence, each novel is designed with reasonable efforts at self-containment. Knowledge of the first book deepens one’s reading of the second, and of the first two one’s reading of the third, but each novel focuses on a different protagonist and carefully weaves in sufficient exposition to provide readers with enough information to follow the action, of which there is a significant amount. Like Schroeder’s other novels, this trilogy unfolds in a far future world radically affected by technology; in this instance, the “world” is a manufactured environment somewhat like a Dyson sphere. Virga is a constructed hollow world, powered by artificial suns, including the main central sun, Candesce, and populated by wheel and cylinder city-states that maintain artificial gravity by rotating but that, despite the technology necessary to create Virga in the first place, otherwise operate at technological levels for the most part closer to nineteenth-century than twenty-first century standards. Virga has been designed as a kind of haven from radical technological advancement, so most technology requiring electricity is nonfunctional as a result of a dampening effect created by Candesce. As a consequence, these novels might be described as far-future steampunk. Tor describes them as hard SF space opera, an equally applicable designation, given the careful attention Schroeder pays to the

scientific underpinnings of Virga and the evident glee with which he invokes typical space opera conventions and tropes, albeit with a twist.

By setting his trilogy in a relatively small space (Virga’s diameter is 5,000 miles) inhabited by mostly independent city-states, each with its own unique culture, Schroeder is able to invoke the worlds-spanning action and colorful multiple cultures of space opera without having to deal with problems such as FTL travel. Indeed, part of the impact of the books depends on the sense that while on one hand Virga is a diverse and complex world, it is on the other only a small mote in a much larger universe. Characters must deal not only with threats from competing cities within Virga, but also with the threat (and promise) represented by the vast and largely unknown universe that exists outside its balloon. Each novel in the series deals with one protagonist coming to terms with his or her complex relationship with the world. The novels deal not only in sense-of-wonder world-altering transformations, but also with the more localized landscape of character, and with the importance of the latter to the former.

*Queen of Candesce* details the adventures of Venera Fanning, one of the ambiguous villains of *Sun of Suns* (Schroeder generally avoids simple binaries of good/evil in his characters, with some notable exceptions). She barely escapes death (in a highly improbable happenstance) at the novel’s beginning, and by the end, she has reconstructed herself as a figure of power and authority, and a significant contributor (though not intentionally) to the destruction of the city-state of Spyre. This summary of the action up until just beyond the halfway point gives some sense of Schroeder’s focus on action, his style, and his thematic interests, as well as his humor: “after weeks of running, of being captured by Liris and made chattel; after run-ins with bombs and bombers, hostile nobility, and mad botanists—after all of that, she had simply boarded a ship and left. Life was never like you imagined it would be” (179). At least as much action and excitement follow; Schroeder packs a lot into what are by the standards of epic space opera relatively short books (each novel in this series could probably have been a trilogy in the hands of some writers). Fanning has come into possession of the Key to Candesce (a plot McGuffin), which grants its holder the power to control Candesce and therefore to control all of Virga. Consequently, she is much sought after by others eager to use this talisman’s power. Fanning’s trajectory as a character is in the other direction, though, as she gradually sheds her own ambitions for power and control, symbolized by the bullet she carries with her. Years before, this bullet hit her in the face, permanently scarring her and leaving her in ongoing pain. She carries it with her, hoping eventually to find its source (in the weightless environment of Virga, bullets simply fly until they hit something, so it could have come from anywhere) and wreak revenge. Of course, she does find its source (improbable as such a development may be, it is also inevitable in what is at least superficially an epic action-adventure story), and of course she has been sufficiently changed by her experiences that she no longer desires revenge but in fact has joined forces with those who initially launched the bullet.

This character arc echoes that of Hayden Griffin, the protagonist of the first novel, and anticipates a similar pattern in the third novel, in which once again shared experiences and mutual understanding transform antagonisms into alliances. *Pirate Sun*

focuses on Chaison Fanning, Venera's husband and an admiral in the fleet of Slipstream, their home city-state. Like Venera, he travels from the depths to the heights. He is imprisoned, undergoing torture, and on the verge of being executed when the novel begins, but by its end, he has not only fought to try to save the very culture that imprisoned him at the beginning, but has also been instrumental in overthrowing the corrupt Slipstream government and putting in place an embryonic democracy, rejecting the possibility that his accomplishments and aristocratic status provided for him to take over as the new ruler of Slipstream himself.

Schroeder invokes the tropes of space opera—adventure, the lone hero capable of changing the fate of the universe, myriad cultures, transformative technologies, and so on—not only to tell an exciting adventure story (Peter Watts compares *Queen of Candescence* to Dumas and to Tolkien in a blurb on that book's cover, and though comparisons of epic adventure stories to Tolkien are beyond a cliché by now, in Schroeder's case, it is almost appropriate) but also to meditate, relatively subtly, on larger questions. His consistent focus on characters overcoming their own prejudicial judgments of other cultures and of their own desires for power in favor of reconciliation and accommodation, and especially his focus on the necessity of choice and self-empowerment, make these books interesting commentaries on contemporary political issues. Although it would be unfair to suggest he is writing anything like political allegory, he is clearly interested in what Tolkien called “applicability”; a political leader, for instance, who is willing to cover up real events and mislead his people in order to pursue his own military agenda, or to characterize those fighting for their own independence from a repressive state as terrorists, for instance, can't help but resonate in our contemporary world. Schroeder also has some fun with political economy in his depiction of the rebel group, which interprets the concept of a Bill of Rights in literal terms, creating “bills” of currency that confer the rights named thereon to those who hold the bills.

Nevertheless, despite the focus on action and the humorous touches (one almost throwaway example is the city-state of Gretel, which we are told has modeled its culture on fairy tales), the novels do provide grounds for serious discussion of political and social realities, and even ecological ones. Because Virga is a closed system, Schroeder is able consistently but subtly to suggest the fragility of even massive and complex systems and the necessity of good stewardship; indeed, the climax of *Queen of Candescence* involves the literal destruction of the “world” inhabited by one culture as a result of its rulers' ruthless and careless exercise of power. He evidently sees fiction not only as a medium of entertainment but also as one in which pointed social commentary can be embedded. The repeated metafictional elements of the novels, as characters meditate on the differences between experience and narrative, point up Schroeder's self-awareness as a writer but also his larger ambitions. These novels provide excellent opportunities not only for exploring the conventions of a major SF subgenre reimagined, but also of SF as a relevant rather than an escapist literature. They are not only first-rate stories but also well suited to classroom use.

## ***The Girl Who Loved Animals and Other Stories***

Warren Rochelle

Bruce McAllister. *The Girl Who Loved Animals and Other Stories*. Urbana, IL: Golden Gryphon Press, 2007. Cloth, 306 pages, \$24.95, ISBN 1-930846-49-5.

*The Girl Who Loved Animals and Other Stories* is Bruce McAllister's first collection, published by Golden Gryphon Press, a small press that initially made a name for itself with beautiful and well-made and scrupulously edited short story collections. (And before I go any further, in the interests of full disclosure and transparency, my two novels, *The Wild Boy* [2001] and *Harvest of Changelings* [2007], were both published by Golden Gryphon Press.) This collection provides an overview of McAllister's five-decade career in science fiction and includes his first professional sale at the ripe old age of sixteen, “The Faces Outside.” The best way to describe the kind of stories in *The Girl Who Loved Animals* would be eclectic, as they cover a wide range of the various subgenres, such as the near future and far future, alternate or hidden histories of the Vietnam war, the cold war, and Fidel Castro (with clear echoes of the paranoid *X-Files*), superheroes, and ecological cautionary tales.

That there is such a wide range of stories makes it somewhat difficult to find a place or places for this collection to fit into the genre. As any story collection does, this is something of a retrospective of the author's career, much like another Golden Gryphon Press title I reviewed, Effinger's *Live! From Planet Earth* (*SFRA Review* #273). This is particularly so here, from McAllister's aforementioned first story, “The Faces Outside,” published in 1963, to two stories published in 2006. Also, like Effinger's collection, because both have a wide range of kinds of stories, I would argue that this collection is also something of a primer on storytelling and writing science fiction. The inclusion of McAllister's story notes underscores this, giving the reader valuable insights into the author's thoughts and influences and intentions for each tale. Like the stories, McAllister's thematic choices are varied; he does seem particularly interested in exploring the human condition as it is affected by war and violence and the abuses of power and the resulting evils. “Dream Baby,” a story both touching and dark, is about a Vietnam war army nurse, who is gifted, or afflicted, with precognitive dreams that reveal how soldiers will be wounded or killed. That the U.S. army sees her gifts—and of others like her—as potential weapons is almost a foregone conclusion, but this predictability does not take from McAllister's thoughtful examination of human nature and the abuse and use of power. Alien intervention is given a fresh perspective in “Kin,” as a boy hires an alien assassin to protect his unborn sister. “The Boy in Zaquitos,” while using a familiar motif of the abuses of power by the American intelligence agencies, makes this up close and personal from the perspective of both the operative and the victim.

I can easily see this collection, with its helpful and interesting story notes, being a text in a creative writing classroom, particularly one devoted to genre fiction. The range of McAllister's stories in its subgenres would make it a good fit on a list of textbooks for a class that covers contemporary science fiction.

That McAllister's poignant stories are not just about clairvoyant nurses and alien assassins and miscast heroes but also about love and loss and parents and children and coming of age would make this volume useful in a scholarly examination of literary science fiction. "The Ark" is a prime example of the latter: clearly, an ecological cautionary tale: animals around the world are dying in a "tidal wave of death," and zoos become arks, with tragically long waiting lists, to save the surviving species. For some species, there is no room. Equally clear is that this is a story of a father and a daughter and the extreme and heartbreaking behavior in the name of love this bond can demand. Beckman's daughter is dying of grief that two pandas have no place in the Los Angeles Zoo; there is no room. Beckman will make a place...

*The Girl Who Loved Animals*—all its stories—is well worth the reader's time.

## ***Nano Comes to Clifford Falls: And Other Stories***

Thomas J. Morrissey

Nancy Kress. *Nano Comes to Clifford Falls: And Other Stories*.

Foreword by Mike Resnick. Urbana, IL: Golden Gryphon Press, 2008. Hardcover, 340 pages, \$16.47, ISBN 978-1930846500.

Nancy Kress's first book of 2008 (her novel *Dogs* appeared on July 1) is a short story collection featuring thirteen hard SF tales, all of which have appeared in English-language periodicals or anthologies since 2000. *Asimov's Science Fiction* published six of them. Every story—whether near or far future—is about human adaptation to science and technology, even though some of the humans are genemods whose relationship to us is best seen at the molecular level. Each story is followed by a short note by the author. Some of the notes describe the circumstances surrounding the writing of a particular story, but some also display Kress's authorial credo. Don't skip them. Although the stories share a common theme, each is a unique blend of character and style. From the humorous epistolary "Patent Infringement" to the complex far-future "Mirror Image" to the hauntingly beautiful and poignant "My Mother Dancing," this is a first-rate collection.

We all live in Clifford Falls, even if not everyone knows it yet. Nancy Kress not only knows it, but she has turned her knowledge into art. For her, future shock is present opportunity. Clifford Falls is the small town in this collection's title tale whose inhabitants are unceremoniously initiated into the brave new world of tiny machines that make work unnecessary. The devil's workshop runs full blast with so many idle hands while the wise and genetically industrious shun nanotechnology as a way of life. Older people may fret over programming their cell phones while young people grow up cyber savvy, but is anyone prepared for a technological revolution that will challenge a million years of our evolutionary history? To one character, nano is "Satan's work," and to another it is "a gift from god," but for the level-headed narrator, "it was kind of like everyone won the lottery at the same time" (18). Could we really take such universal good

fortune in stride?

"Nano Comes to Clifford Falls" is the first of five more or less here and now stories. Two are humorous send-ups of contemporary capitalism. "Patent Infringement" (which some readers might remember the author reading at SFRA 2006) is told in a series of letters beginning with a request by a man who is seeking a share of the profits from the sale of a pharmaceutical that originated with his immune system. In a nation where property often trumps life and liberty, things do not work out well for him. "Product Development" shows how a lousy idea can make lots of money in a nation full of media addicts. In the nail-biter hostage negotiations tale "Computer Virus," the perp is an escaped Department of Defense AI. "To Cuddle Amy" is a variation on the theme set out in Kress's 1996 story "Sex Education." What happens to the proverbial bad seed when biology has given parents return privileges? Nano is but a glint in scientists' eyes, and even Ray Kurtzweil thinks we are few decades from true AI. However, all of these stories have a contemporary feel that attests to the degree to which SF is so well suited to imagining our responses to life-altering technologies that are barely around the corner.

In his brief foreword, Mike Resnick observes that Nancy Kress knows "that eventually every story is about *people*" (x). This is so much the case that we never actually meet the sentient aliens that visit Earth in the book's three first contact stories. "The Most Famous Little Girl in the World," "Savior," and "Wetlands Preserve" all focus on the human response to potential alien contact, even if the human experience turns out not to be the most important one. "Wetlands Preserve" is a first contact/ecoterror story in which a scientist abandons any semblance of objectivity in response to ideological violence. Ever since her novel *Nothing Human*, there should be no one accusing Nancy Kress of human chauvinism.

The five stories with outer space settings showcase Kress's range. In "First Flight," she deftly coopts conventions of space opera, specifically Tom Corbett. "Ej-Es" treats the phenomenon of going native with the help of fragments of a made-up language that we learn along with the heroine. "Shiva in Shadow" is an engrossing story of interpersonal dysfunction at the core of the galaxy. Both the story and the author's insights demonstrate how hard science functions as metaphor in her writing. As the characters and their avatars experience the unimaginable chaotic and powerful beauty of the central black hole and its environs, they are themselves affected at their cores. Here is the author's telling comment: "All I needed was human relationships being born, turning deadly, shimmering with love, swallowing each other's identities, and taking the terrible risk of closeness" (219).

The two pieces that close the book are for me the most extraordinary. Each has as its premise that, freed from labor by nano and freed from natural evolution by biotech, humans adopt as a purpose the Great Mission. Their cause is a species-centric belief that Earth is the source of all life and that it is the duty of humanity to spread DNA across the galaxy by manipulating it in every conceivable way so as to create viable species for just about any planetary environment. This brilliant concept pits science against faith in a new way. Arlbenism is a religion based on logical extrapolation of data; however, once that extrapolation becomes creed, reason can no longer function in the face of new data. Such is the case with "My Mother, Dancing," the grace-

fully written story of a mission of mercy and celebration turned sour by dogmatic intransigence. The moral dilemma of the crew, the innocent belief by the DNA-based life forms that those who seeded their colony have the deepest maternal instincts, and the use of genderless pronouns and evocative prose makes “My Mother, Dancing” a real tour de force, a science fiction jewel. “Mirror Image,” which the author tells us is her favorite story in the collection, is a brilliant first-person narration whose teller remains the same person despite multiple body changes. Told in the voice of a biologist charged with genetically modifying colony species for maximal adaptability who also happens to be one of five clone sisters, the story focuses on a central mystery: why and how did one of the clones blow up an entire sentient-inhabited star system? Another of the sisters is a cosmologist, which affords Kress the chance to have someone explain to her layperson clones and to us how the galaxywide QUENTIAM AI operates and how its operation suggests cosmic theories at the heart of speculative physics at the start of the twenty-first century. The complex science, the interactions among the clones and with QUENTIAM, and the artful first-person narration combine to give this tale a mass and power that strains but does not break the boundaries of the short story form. It is a gripping achievement.

Although Kress’s 1998 collection *Beaker’s Dozen* features a wider range of themes and forms, this one displays consistent high quality. It offers a glimpse into the mind of someone who is interpreting our rapidly changing world as it changes and who sees in the more distant future possibilities that might emerge from contemporary cutting-edge science. This collection is absorbing reading and would make an excellent text in a course in reading or writing SF.

## **Future Americas**

Ed Higgins

John Helfers and Martin H. Greenberg, eds. *Future Americas*. New York: DAW Books, 2008. Paperback, 320 pages, \$7.99, ISBN 978-0756405083.

Something is to be said about the reading pleasure of an SF theme-collection anthology of original stories, as for the frequent usefulness of such collections to the classroom. Many of these abundant anthologies, whether reprints or original stories, offer up the experience of a concentrated focus on a new (or renewed) discovery around a thematic focus particular to the conventions of SF storytelling. Such collections can run the gamut from aliens to time travel, to best-ever SF, to robots/androids/cyborgs, steampunk, feminist science fiction, to...well, whatever an editor and publisher care to conjure up as explorations with, presumed-ly, a potential market of readers. I have often used such gatherings of short fiction around a particular theme as additions to my science fiction course or in my fiction writing course.

But I found this collection less than thrilling. The anthology’s sixteen original stories are from authors in several cases well known to SF and fantasy readers: Mike Resnick, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, Pamela Sargent, and George Zebrowski, among others. Short story anthology readers will also recognize the near

omnipresence of anthologist-editor Martin H. Greenberg, paired this time with editor/writer John Helfers. Despite all the name-recognizable folks and a back cover promising a “farseeing... challenge of gazing into the future,” my own challenge was more a dutiful finishing of a rather boring collection of SF stories for this review.

John Helfers’s brief introduction contents itself with a few clichés about postapocalyptic and dystopian conventions in SF, noting “who can possibly guess what the future might hold...?” Still, “what might an America of the future look like?” is up for grabs, as “Sixteen of today’s finest authors responded to my invitation to write stories supplying their version...and their takes on it may surprise you, as they surprised me.” I would say Mr. Helfers’s surprise should have been—if indeed it was not—that these stories are so drearily written and so dull that a page would hardly inflict a paper cut if dragged repeatedly across one’s knuckles.

Three of the stories are overkill polemic screeds on contemporary politics that lack even cleverness. Their strident slams at the Bush administration lack saving humor, or the saving grace of effective barbs. Unless, of course, in Pamela Sargent’s “The Rotator” humor is a parallel continuum where doppelganger Bush/Cheneys escaping impeachment “rotate” out of their (our) continuum to a parallel Oval Office gleefully shooting their parallel selves, thus keeping themselves in power—only to be undone by another set of continuum traveling Bush/Cheneys bursting into the Oval Office yet again to assassinate the celebrating assassins. Another screed story, George Zebrowski’s “Jesus Runs,” is about a cloned Jesus running for president of the United States with plans for a god-ordained theocracy. First, however, the Supreme Court, seated by stem-cell-rejuvenated, near-immortal members of today’s court, has to decide which of twelve cloned Jesuses is the real Son of God. A spoiler here: When Jesus One fails to resurrect the “body of great President Ronald Reagan,” his claims suffer a temporary setback. Another politics-gone-awry story, Jean Rabe’s “Better Guns,” has Elvis’s Graceland, now the nation’s capital, under assault by local rednecks attacking with gatling guns and other era weapons retrieved from a Civil War museum, because all gun ownership is now illegal. The sometime agriculture secretary, now president, is killed with an old Confederate La Mat pistol lovingly fired by the protagonist. The rebels melt away under counterattack, having made their point about the desecration of the once-public Elvis Museum as well as “for taking away our guns.”

Although I do suspect the intent in these (and other) stories was extrapolated political satire or attempted jeremiads, none rises above discordant diatribe. Although much of the writing is competent, little is engaging storytelling. Mostly one feels these “original stories” are from their author’s slush piles and wouldn’t make it past editorial scrutiny elsewhere. Perhaps these are less than stellar performances because there was no question they would be published by DAW editors, who only needed to fill a requisite sixteen stories vaguely hitched to the anthology’s theme.

It’s noticeable almost all the contributors have themselves been theme anthology coeditors with either Helfers or Greenberg (some several times over) or have been included in other theme anthologies edited by the Greenberg machine. Not that there isn’t genuine virtue in having writer friends-colleagues who produce

on demand and can meet production deadlines, but the list of contributors seems overly incestuous, including Rabe who has coedited “several” DAW theme anthologies, Donald Bingle who has published “primarily in DAW themed anthologies,” with Ed Gorman’s headnote claiming “more than twenty anthologies” edited with Martin Greenberg. None of this is *prima facie* evidence of bad writing or bad editorial choices, but the coziness seems to have taken a toll on something.

Plodding my way through the collection, there were few moments of combined quality writing and quality storytelling. To my great relief, the anthology’s last story, Kristine Kathryn Rusch’s “The Power of Human Reason,” at last offered something to redeem the painful/dutiful reading of all that went before. Rusch’s contribution is an impressive and skillfully imagined future-crime story in which major crimes are thought impossible, given advanced forensic technology. A multiple murder has somehow subverted the fail-safe technology, and “good old-fashion investigation” must be carried out by an aging, throwback protagonist detective who, naturally, eventually solves the crime. Yes, something of a conventional plot setup, but Rusch pulls off her piece with engaging skill. I was reminded of a classic Lewis Padgett (Henry Kuttner/C. L. Moore) story, “Private Eye.”

As for teachers seeking for a text anthology that might be attractive to students in a futures or science fiction course, I’d say look elsewhere. There may be some benefit here for SF scholars working in postapocalyptic literature—on the whole, doubtful. Or perhaps a general reader might find something of interest in this collection. But I’m not that farseeing.

## ***Stretto***

Ritch Calvin

L. Timmel Duchamp. *Stretto: Book Five of the Marq’ssan Cycle*. Seattle: Aqueduct, 2008. Paper, 455 pages, \$19, ISBN 978-1-933500-18-8.

*Stretto*: A final section, as of an oratorio, performed with an acceleration in tempo to produce a climax (*American Heritage Dictionary*).

As its name suggests, *Stretto* comprises the fifth, and final, movement of L. Timmel Duchamp’s Marq’ssan series. In total, the series contains 2,566 pages, and it narrates the events of a time period of twenty years. Volumes 1 and 2, *Alanya to Alanya* and *Renegade*, were previously reviewed in *SFRA Review* (#275 and #278, respectively). Unlike many—most?—multivolume series, though, *Stretto* does not fill the reader in on all the backstory. For one, with four long preceding volumes, such as task would be cumbersome. For another, aesthetically, backstory devices are often clumsy. And finally, economically, it takes a risk. Many publishers demand that a book in a series be self-standing, primarily because that facilitates sales if readers know they do not have to read all the preceding volumes in order to comprehend the current installment. As such, it encourages impulse buys and acknowledges the economics of contemporary bookstores. All too often, by the time a third or fourth volume appears, the first volume will no longer be stocked.

Duchamp, though, in part because the publishing house is her own, and in part because she resists that very model, offers the five volumes as one continuous (more or less) tale. Since that requires an enormous investment from the reader in terms of money and time, it is a risk for Duchamp and Aqueduct.

*Stretto*: In a fugue the *stretto* is an artifice by which the subject and answer are, as it were, bound closer together, by being made to overlap (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

At the beginning of the *Stretto*, several years have passed since the end of volume 4, *Blood in the Fruit*. Elisabeth Weatherall has effected her coup of the Executive; she’s manipulated Alexandra Sedgewick into betraying her father, the former head of security for the Executive; and he has committed suicide. Elisabeth has wrested control of Sedgewick’s estate from Alexandra and holds her prisoner in her own house, primarily because she thinks that Alexandra has possession of the transcripts of her torture sessions of Kay Zeldin.

In this installment, almost none of the narrative takes place within the Free Zone, and the Marq’ssan make very limited appearances. Instead, the narrative takes place largely in Washington, DC, and on Sedgewick’s island. The narrative also shifts away from the previous central characters. For example, Elisabeth only appears peripherally within other character’s narratives.

Part of the narrative follows Anne Hawthorne—a heretofore bit character. While she had gone renegade from the Executive to follow a lover, she has been transformed by her experiences there. When she returns to DC and Executive society, she finds life there unbearable. The narrative also follows Celia Espin, the civil rights attorney who has long battled the human rights violations of the Executive. When she is taken prisoner and held without due process, she refuses the help of the Marq’ssan, claiming that that, too, would violate the law. In this, Celia represents a sort of liberal reform—she believes in the (abstract) Law, and she hopes to improve or perfect its application and practice.

*Stretto: adv.* A direction to perform a passage, esp. a final passage, in quicker time (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

Perhaps most important—though oddly enough she gets little face time—is Emily Madden. She is the daughter of privilege, a renegade from the Executive. She too is concerned with human rights violations, but she is closely aligned with Astrea, the most heterodox of the Marq’ssan. Astrea finds herself at odds with many of the Marq’ssan policies, and she tends to act unilaterally. As an example, she has altered Emily’s brain structure—ever so slightly—which allows her to “see” like the Marq’ssan. In the overarching argument of the narrative, the metaphor of seeing becomes crucial.

As we have seen in the first four volumes, the Marq’ssan have the ability to destructure matter, and they have used the threat of destructuring as a leverage mechanism to insure behaviors and the punish transgressions. They have wiped out communications systems, military bases, and prisons. Astrea, however, is the first to use destructuring as a positive incentive. For example, she clears up the environmental degradation in DC that had rendered life out of doors virtually impossible.

As Emily develops her own mental perceptions and abilities, the two beings discuss the mechanism and practice of destructuring, restructuring, and constructing. According to Astrea, destructuring is easy: simply destroy the current structure. The

other two forms, however, require some knowledge of the structure being created: “how could one impose a new structure without knowing in advance what that structure was to be?” (453).

Herein lies the crux of the matter, and of the series. Throughout the five volumes, a whole host of individuals have been trying to restructure U.S. (and, peripherally, global) society. Some want it to return to the way it was before the Marq’san imposed the Blanket (the male Executive, including Robert Sedgewick); some want to maintain the Executive system but open it up for women (Elizabeth, Lisa Mott, etc.); some want to alter the Executive so that it does not oppress non-Executives (Celia); some want to tear down all the hierarchical structures (Hazel, Emily); and some seem content to reside in the “safe spaces” of the Free Zone (Anne). Given Astrea’s explanation of the process of restructuring matter, it follows that the most difficult of all these pathways would be the transformation of society into something new, precisely because it requires some foreknowledge of the desired outcome.

From the very beginning of the series, Duchamp makes it clear that one of her interests in the series is to examine how revolutions take place. Too often, the narrative conceit is that a revolution has already taken place in the past and a new society has emerged. For Duchamp, the interest is in the very messy process of working through the changes, the personalities, the conflicts, the contradictions. Too often a novel will show individuals and societies that are united, at times over generations, by a single cause—terraforming a planet, for example. However, the case of 9/11 demonstrates clearly that such unanimity and momentum are impossible to create and sustain. Duchamp and the Marq’san series demonstrate this beautifully. Perhaps it does not create the sort of narrative arc to which we are accustomed; perhaps it does not create the sort of resolution and closure we would like to see, but just as she resists the marketing strategies, she resists such easy narrative devices. Practically speaking, the books and the series would be difficult to teach, at least in most classroom settings. However, they do raise interesting and important thematic issues as they challenge contemporary conventions of narrative and plotting.

## ***Saturn’s Children***

Andrew Kelly

Charles Stross. *Saturn’s Children*. New York: Ace, 2008. Cloth, 336 pages, \$24.95, ISBN 978-0-441-01594-8.

Even before opening *Saturn’s Children*, one is presented with the book’s subtitle: *A Space Opera*. We’re immediately given the book’s subgenre and set up for intrigue, romance, and travel on a grand scale, immediately distancing readers from *Halting State*’s “mundane” premise. Following the struggles of “Femmebot” Freya Nakamichi 47, the novel opens with Freya perched on a ledge floating high in Venus’s stratosphere, contemplating suicide. Freya is understandably listless: she is a robot designed and built as sexual companion for the centuries-extinct human race and was initialized long after their extinction. Given her primary purpose, Freya and her dwindling kind are chronically underemployed. Desperate for passage off Venus after a violent encoun-

ter with an angry dwarf, Freya accepts a job from the Jeeves Corporation as a courier. She agrees to transport a mysterious package for this company of “Gentleman’s Gentleman,” named in a nod to the fiction of P. G. Wodehouse, and quickly becomes embroiled in interplanetary intrigue.

Stross constructs a society built on slavery; one operating for the benefit of only those most powerful individuals. Aristos are former servants who worked most closely to humans and had the legal footholds to buy their own freedom. A lapse into bankruptcy means body and will are literally put up for auction. The robots here are not the sometimes simple-minded automata of Asimov, operating largely without personality almost solely to provide labor. Stross’s androids are bound by the novel’s epigraph, Asimov’s Three Laws, but they are also subject to far more subtle and sinister psychological manipulations imposed by their “Creators.” Asimov’s Three Laws are predicated on the existence of humans, and humanity’s extinction renders only the most brutal and domineering traits apparent. Stross’s robots are human by another name, their minds closely emulating a humans, but psychologically designed to be dominated or dominate. The characters here are all too human in their capacity for cruelty, desire for power, and susceptibility to the pitfalls of love.

The hard science fiction elements here come through in a way typical of Stross: a steady ease that gives the reader just enough information to understand and appreciate the context once one has surmounted the jargon and universe-specific usage. We’re given glimpses of a great variety of propulsion systems and presented with the harsh realities of interplanetary travel: it is long, dangerous, and uncomfortable. There is no glorious and intriguing final frontier, just opportunities to spread out, making the universe safe for an extinct species. Stross leaves the cause of humanity’s extinction shrouded in mystery and in so doing resists an easy jab at topicality in dooming humanity by some threat torn from headlines. We are also given just enough description of planetary bodies and their corresponding environmental conditions to properly understand practical problems there. Stross goes so far as to acknowledge these descriptions as sometimes awkward, often jarring breaks from the narrative, with the narrator apologizing to the reader for sounding too much like a tour guide. Stross’s androids easily make a home throughout the solar system and the planets but lack the human explorer’s emotional reactions to alien landscapes.

In keeping with his focus on issues on sexuality and gender in Stross’s earlier works, sex plays a major role in the novel. This is to be expected, of course, from a book whose main character is an android sex worker with retractable high heels. The ability to have sex is pervasive and expected throughout, and rendering an intelligence asexual by depriving it of sex organs is a sin second only to slavery, and most entities with intelligence have some capacity for receiving and giving sexual pleasure. Everything from landing pods and fission powered spaceships to hotels and former domestic servants “does it.” The sex permeating this book plays a multivalenced role as a pleasurable pursuit to pass time or as a tool for manipulation via jealousy or seduction. Gender is fixed and assigned; we’re told a ship is male or female, and this distinction seems to emerge from the mind of the entity under consideration, not physical manifestations of gender. The power of female characters here emerges from both physical strength and aptitude as well as an apparent ease in manipulating

others. Freya remarks that she has no need to be multitalented, refuting Heinlein's Lazarus Long's notion that "specialization is for insects"; rather, Freya can trade sex for any other service.

From the novel's dedication to Asimov and Heinlein and to the setting of the final scenes of the novel in a city called Heinleingrad, Stross acknowledges the debt owed to these early SF giants by those working today in the genre. The naming of characters gives them the bulk of their identity when physical features can be made interchangeable and the use of one name or another dictates class and behavior. Personalities are also interchangeable and deeply intertwined, as each individual has his or her personality written on a piece of hardware, called a "soul chip," separate from the workings of their mind. Freya's "template matriarch," the model on which she is based, is named for Rhea, wife of Kronos, Saturn's Greek equivalent and mother of the earliest Olympians. Freya's name is also taken from a mythological tradition, though Norse and not the classical Greek/Roman pantheon. These mythological origins don't figure as simple archetypal correspondences but allude to broad roles. The book's title also refers to the superhuman nature of the androids and their power over the universe, since Saturn the planet is conspicuously absent from book's diverse settings.

*Saturn's Children* is a novel whose characters grapple with establishing their identities as individuals, exercising their autonomy and combating threats to their power as sentient willful beings. Contemplation of the broad themes Stross considers are sometimes sacrificed to the plot's action and intrigue and left me feeling some issues were left open. Stross continues to raise important issues through entertaining and fast-paced fiction, and the novel is sure to please fans of his earlier work or those more generally interested in a uniquely imagined take on when androids rule the remnants of human civilization.

## ***The Golden Volcano***

Brian Taves

Jules Verne. *The Golden Volcano*. Translated and edited by Edward Baxter; preface to the French edition by Olivier Dumas. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008. Hardcover (\$29.95) and softcover (\$15.95), xvi + 340 pages, ISBN 978-0-8032-9635-0.

Over a dozen years ago, newspapers around the globe heralded the discovery of a long-lost Jules Verne manuscript among the family heirlooms. *Paris in the 20th Century* was quickly published in France and translated into many languages, including English. However, the literary cache that journalists reported was only a single nugget of the unearthed ore.

What was described by the press as the product of happenstance on a single day was instead the result of years of research among the Verne papers. In fact, several unpublished books by Verne had been found, along with novelettes and short stories (some have yet to be translated into English; details can be found at the North American Jules Verne Society's Web site, <http://na-jvs.org/>, under "The Work to be Done"). These were all published in France in the late 1980s and early 1990s. But there was an

equally important but more complex discovery.

When Verne died early in 1905, he had a number of books ready or nearly ready for publication, and it fell to his son, Michel, to bring his father's legacy to readers. With only his editor's awareness, Michel altered all of his father's stories as he brought them to print, transforming them in minor and major ways. He added or changed subplots and characters, and he shifted subtexts, in some cases originating works in his father's name. With the discovery of these original manuscripts, scholars are now debating the merits of Michel's variations, keeping in mind that Verne often drastically rewrote his books at the point of seeing the proofs.

The first of these books to appear in English was *Magellania* (Welcome Rain, 2002), which Michel had expanded into the epic *The Survivors of the Jonathan*. In that case, Michel's intervention seems to have enhanced the literary merit of the sketchy novel his father bequeathed, even while changing its ideological bent. By contrast, the reverse seems to have been true of *The Meteor Hunt*, one of the four rewritten novels to be published in their original form by University of Nebraska Press (others are *Lighthouse at the End of the World* and the forthcoming *The Secret of Wilhelm Storitz*).

The latest in the Nebraska series is *The Golden Volcano*, the only one of the novels Michel inherited that was of two-volume length, its serialization filling the entire final year of the fabled *Magasin d'Éducation et de Récréation* in 1906. With Verne's series of "Extraordinary Journeys" aiming to explore "Worlds Known and Unknown," the Klondike gold rush of 1897 could not fail to intrigue the writer. He had already discussed the foolhardy quest for riches in other novels, particularly *The Meteor Hunt*. As in the latter, nature intervenes in *The Golden Volcano* to snatch the precious metal from those seeking it. *The Meteor Hunt* tells how an object made of gold hurtles from space and lands on earth, only to tumble into the sea. The prospectors of *The Golden Volcano* are dismayed by the climax of each of the two parts of the book, forming a perfect symmetry. At first their claim is submerged in an earthquake, and at the close, an Arctic volcano they have discovered erupts and spews its treasure of nuggets into the ocean instead of on land.

Like many of Verne's novel's, *The Golden Volcano* is rich in geographic lore, the first volume largely recounting the journey of two cousins from Montreal to the wilds of the Yukon. Unfortunately, from a plot standpoint, this portion lacks conflict, and it is to address this problem that Michel made his primary change, introducing an active female character and romantic interest.

Although the first half of *The Golden Volcano* may be as much metaphorically tough sledding for the reader as it is literally for the characters, the second half is far more exciting and imaginative in its search for a remote volcano said to be dormant and filled with gold. Volcanoes were pivotal sites in many Verne stories, whether creating or destroying islands, offering entrance and escape from the center of the earth, or providing refuge on a comet swirling far out into the solar system (*Hector Servadac*). The rousing conclusion of *The Golden Volcano* offers Verne at his best, integrating social satire, imaginative but plausible science, and rousing adventure.

In only one way may this edition be faulted: its lack of a map. All of the Nebraska editions of the original Verne manuscripts have avoided any of the original illustrations in the French edi-

tions. These have been vividly utilized in Wesleyan University Press's modern translations of Verne books, the primary other series currently in progress. Many of Wesleyan's publications are from texts that were published during Verne's lifetime, but which, for political reasons, English and American publishers at the time chose not to translate.

One of the overlooked books that Wesleyan issued, *The Invasion of the Sea*, was also translated by Edward Baxter, who has expertly and faultlessly rendered *The Golden Volcano* into English. Baxter is the only Verne prose translator working today who has also brought one of the writer's plays into English, *Journey through the Impossible* (Prometheus, 2002). Baxter's career as a Verne translator began in the 1980s when he was commissioned by the Canadian Translation Grant Programme to produce fresh translations of two of Verne's other novels set in that country, *Family without a Name* and *The Fur Country*. Baxter was set to undertake *The Golden Volcano* next, but the government changed its policy to include only Canadian writers. However, at that time, the original manuscripts had not been discovered. Thanks to the wait, Baxter is now able to bring us *The Golden Volcano* as Jules Verne left it. Baxter's regional expertise has also corrected many of the geographical errors that had crept into Verne's manuscript and had not been noticed by the modern French publishers, making this English edition, by these annotations, an improvement on its French counterpart.

## **The Stone Gods**

Bruce A. Beatie

Jeanette Winterson. *The Stone Gods*. New York: Harcourt, 2007. Hardcover, vi + 209 pages, \$24, ISBN 978-0-15-101491-0.

The first sentence of this novel is: "This new world weighs a yatto-gram" (3). The only Web entry for that last word that is not a reference to the novel is at <http://individ.blogspot.com> (dated 3-31-2005, two years before the novel was published), discussing a zeptogram and mentioning a yattogram "which is yet three zeros smaller." Fortunately, a Live Journal reference to the novel leads one to the prefix "yotta-," which Wikipedia says "is an SI prefix in the SI (system of units) denoting  $10^{24}$ .... the largest and last SI prefix to be confirmed." That same Wikipedia entry lists "yocto-" ( $10^{-24}$ ) as the smallest prefix, following "zepto" ( $10^{-21}$ )—so a yoctogram would indeed be "three zeros smaller" than a zeptogram.

This little search is symbolic of what happens in Winterson's novel. Page by page, she presents the reader with riddles whose answers, when finally revealed, are not the ones the reader expects. The first section, "Planet Blue," is set in an indeterminate future apparently of our world (but which the narrator, Billie Crusoe, calls "Orbus" [7]), where there are three main political entities: the Eastern Caliphate, the SinoMosco Pact, and the Central Power, which has just discovered a livable extraterrestrial planet and proposes, according to Billie, to "leave this run-down rotting planet to the Caliphate and the SinoMosco Pact, ... while the peace-loving folks of the Central Power ship civilization to the new world" (7). Life on Orbus, or at least in the part under the Central Power, Tech City, is enabled by specialized robots

of infinite variety. For the colonization of Planet Blue, a sort of robot has been developed, a "Robo sapiens" named Spike, a beautiful female equivalent of *Star Trek's* Mr. Data who is, as I believe Data himself once said, "fully functional." Billie (whom we discover is also female) is asked to interview Spike for *The One Minute Show*. Through various plot convolutions, Billie ends up on the colonizing spaceship, where she and Spike become lovers.

Blue, it turns out, is a paradise planet with one flaw: it has huge and dangerous dinosaur-like monsters. The plan by MORE (the corporate entity that runs the Central Power) is to shift the orbit of an asteroid to impact Blue, cause an ice age, and so destroy the monsters. In the process, the ship is damaged and the captain and most of the colonists set off in the hope of reaching one of the sites established by earlier trips. But solar-powered Spike is condemned to die because no sunlight now reaches the surface. Billie chooses to stay with Spike. They leave the ship, hoping to find more breathable air higher up. To conserve power, Spike dismantles herself. As the first part ends, Billie removes Spike's head from her torso. Presumably dying, Billie cradles Spike's still-animate head: "Snow is covering us. Close your eyes and sleep. Close your eyes and dream. This is one story. There will be another" (93).

On the previous page, Billie is reading a book the captain had given her, explorer James Cook's journals. She begins reading the entry for March 13, 1774—and the next part, "Easter Island," repeats that entry. But the entry doesn't correspond to anything in the published *Captain Cook's Voyages of Discovery* (ed. John Barrow, London, UK: Dent, 1941, and later reprints), which describes the expedition's arrival at Easter Island on March 11, but as a third-person narrative with different details. The remainder of this short section is told by an English seaman named Billie, whom the expedition leaves behind. After being captured by the natives and watching one of the great torsos (which Billie calls "the Stone Gods") being ritually overturned, Billie leaps into the sea, "determined to drown myself" (105). He is saved by a half-caste Dutchman named Spikkers, whose father had deserted the 1722 Roggevin expedition that had first discovered the island. Over the next six months, Billie comes to love Spikkers, but Spikkers is involved in a ritual competition between the two tribes on the island, and he dies in Billie's arms.

The "Easter Island" part is short and apparently unrelated to "Planet Blue" save for the parallel names, but its relevance becomes clear in the third part. Cook's journals reported the island as having been virtually denuded of wood; modern scholars presume the trees were cut down to enable the huge torsos to be transported and erected. When captured by the natives, Billie had fought to keep at least his trousers from the natives who tried to strip him naked, and he later comments:

I must have some covering, the world must have some covering for its nakedness, and so the simplest things come to impart the greatest significance—a piece of bread becomes a body, a sip of wine, my life's blood. That one thing should stand for another is no harm, until the thing itself loses any meaning of its own. The island trees and all of this good land were sacrificed to a meaning that has become meaningless. To built the Stone Gods, the island has been destroyed, and now the Stone Gods are themselves destroyed. (113)

There are other oddities in Billie's narrative that point outside



it. The goal of the natives' competition is a nest on a cliff "as high and impossible as a moon landing" (112), and when Spikers is thrown off the cliff by a native competitor, Billie observes: "And in the air a body falling like a star out of its orbit and coming to earth and seen no more" (115). The first seven, then the first ten, and then the first fourteen words are repeated as a kind of litany before the fragmentary sentence is concluded.

The third part, "Post-3 War," is nearly as brief as the second, and is set fairly precisely in time: "I was born in the third quarter of the twentieth century," the narrator Billie says (115); that she is also Billie Crusoe is suggested by a reference to Robinson Crusoe (122). The narrated time is even more specific: as this part opens, Billie finds a manuscript titled *The Stone Gods* on the Tube (Winterson is British), and as it ends, she tells Spike she'd found the manuscript "on the Underground last night" (146). Billie's narrative repeatedly quotes passages from the "Planet Blue" section. The terrestrial setting is as dystopic as in the first part, but different, though the "Post-3 War" world is also run by MORE, whose representative says: "MORE has done all it can to rebuild our countries since the blow-up, but we have no credible systems of government left" (132). It is constructing a Robo *sapiens* named Spike, but this time Spike is only a head connected wirelessly to a mainframe computer. Billie's job is as an intermediary between Spike and the mainframe. Much of this part is Billie's fragmentary story of her background and life, and thus indirectly a picture of the world she lives in. As this part ends, Billie is taking Spike on "Mobile Data Recognition," a "walk in the gardens of MORE" (146)—but she finds an open gate, and leaving the garden, says, "I had a strange sensation, as if this were the edge of the world and one more step, one more step..." (147, suspension points original).

The fourth part is titled "Wreck City," the overtly dystopic parallel to "Tech City," which she and Spike have left behind; it is a "No Zone—no insurance, no assistance, no welfare, no police" (151), and beyond it is the "Red Zone" and the Dead Forest, a still-radioactive product of the recent war. What Billie and Spike find there, however, is freedom and friendship. When the forces of MORE invade Wreck City seeking the "stolen" Spike (who has disabled her mainframe connection and "chosen to live as an outlaw" [176]), they flee, finding the Lovell radio telescope, moved from Jodrell Bank as part of a space museum. Spike hears a signal from the supposedly inactive dish sent 65 million years ago, when the asteroid hit the Yucatán Peninsula, causing an ice age, destroying the dinosaurs, and enabling the rise of mammals and humanity. The signal, Spike says, "is one line of programming code for a Robo *sapiens*" (202). At the end of the novel, Billie leaves Spike (the head) sitting on the manuscript of *The Stone Gods* and, fleeing the forces of MORE, comes (presumably in death) to "the compact seventeenth-century house" in which the Billie of Planet Blue had lived. The last words, repeated for the third time in the novel, are: "Everything is imprinted for ever with what it once was" (86, 119, 207).

I have deliberately left the description of "Wreck City" sketchy, in the hope of leaving some suspense for a reader. The novel is not easy reading, but it rewards multiple rereading. The relationships between the first two parts are not obvious on a first reading; the links consist mainly in the frequent repetitions of lines and passages from the first two parts within the remainder. It is a progressive metafiction, with each new section decon-

structing and reinterpreting what has come before. And though its structure is cyclic, it does not simply return to the beginning, like Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*, but leaves the reader wondering what in fact *is* the beginning. Is the asteroid that destroys the atmosphere of Planet Blue in the past or the future of Tech/Wreck City, or simply a parallel fiction? Is the deliberate asteroid impact of "Planet Blue" an analogue of the Easter Islander's destruction of their insular environment, of the nuclear war in the immediate past of Tech/Wreck City, or of both? The novel is certainly science fiction, though it was not published as such.

Winterson's Wikipedia entry notes "science fiction" as one of her genres, but in an interview in *New Scientist* (August 25, 2007), she says "I hate science fiction," but she praises "good writers about science, such as Jim Crace or Margaret Atwood." Her first novel, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985), won the Whitbread Prize for a first novel, and her 1990 television adaptation of it for television won the BAFTA award for best drama. Susann Cokal, reviewing *The Stone Gods* in the *New York Times Book Review* (March 30, 2008), notes that the narrator of her 2000 *PowerBook* is "a computer-savvy storyteller blurring fiction and reality," and that phrase could stand well for Winterson's work in general. Her second part reminds one that Kurt Vonnegut's *Galápagos* was also published in 1985, and that its narrator commented: "the only true villain in my story [is] the oversized human brain"—here the Robo *sapiens* brain is the most positive character.

## ***Null-A Continuum and Firstborn***

Arthur O. Lewis Jr.

John C. Wright. *Null-A Continuum*. New York: Tor, 2008. Trade paperback, 317 pages, \$25.95, ISBN 0-76531629-5.

Arthur C. Clarke and Stephen Baxter. *Firstborn*. A Time Odyssey 3. New York: Del Rey, 2007. Cloth, 364 pages, \$25.95, ISBN 978-0-345-49157-2.

Those of us fortunate enough to have been introduced to the Null-A (non-Aristotelian logic) concept in its first appearance in *Astounding* (1945) were probably already familiar with A. E. Van Vogt. Such works as "Black Destroyer," "The Weapons Makers," and especially *Slan*, all of which previously appeared in or were appearing in *Astounding*, had announced the appearance of a new star in the golden age of science fiction. *The World of Null-A* (book form, 1948) introduced the concept of a future society in which non-Aristotelian logic had come to dominate Earth and Venus, and the Games Machine chose leaders in government and business. Unfortunately the Games Machine has been corrupted, and Gosseyn, the book's protagonist, is forced into a series of often inexplicable adventures, made all the more interesting by the fact that he not only has a double brain, but cannot truly be killed. Null-A was much influenced by the work of Alfred Korzybski, in whose system of General Semantics a major premise is that a proper understanding of the relationship of words and reality will lead to a mind that can be trained to concentrate completely and to integrate the activities of cortex (reason) and thalamus (emotion). The Van Vogt series is continued in *Pawns of Null-A* (1956) and *Null-A Three* (1964), and now in Wright's

“homage and continuation.”

In his excellent 13-page summary of events in the first three volumes, Wright admits to disregard for several “inconvenient events” that do not make sense in *Null-A Three*, and he ignores them in his continuation of the trilogy. Where the first *Null-A* contained not only a startling new concept that expanded on the work of Korzybski but an adventure that rivaled the best science fiction of its day, Wright sends his hero, in one form or another, through a series of adventures of ascending difficulty in search of the source of the relentless enemy that threatens not only Earth, Venus, and mankind, but the Universe itself. But there are so many mind-dazzling events that it is difficult to follow the story.

A valuable result of Gosseyn’s mastery of Null-A techniques—and essential to the story—is his ability to visualize a location where he has been and transport himself there with no lapse of time or need for a physical conveyance. He saves himself from numerous dangers by this means. His enemies are many: Enro the Red, the Ydd, the mysterious “X,” the Predictors of Yalerta, even his wife Patricia when she appears as Empress Reesha. He meets himself in various guises, dies several times, picks up a third brain along the way, discusses his future with “the Living Universe,” and on one occasion even finds himself “in a condition outside of space and time.” Furthermore, “The universe was gone.” Suffice it to say, he is able to restore a better universe, dispose of the last opponents, and return to the life he had been forced to leave behind in *Null-A*. A truly happy ending: mundane, but comprehensible and somehow fulfilling.

Wright’s homage has succeeded in plot, tone, and style. Even so, I must admit that I did not much like the book. But then I found the second and third volumes of this remarkable series about space, time, and human and alien activities to be big drop-offs from the first volume. It may well be that even back in the 1960s, the best science fiction was often found in space opera that, like today’s, depended not on things of the mind but on the battling spaceships, alien cultures, and new species of the early science fiction written by Doc Smith, Frederik Pohl, Jack Williamson, and Van Vogt himself, and more contemporary writers like Lois McMaster Bujold, Eric Flint, and David Weber

*Firstborn* is the final volume of the Clarke-Baxter near-future trilogy entitled *A Time Odyssey*, which describes three attacks on Earth by the Firstborn, builders of that mysterious monolith first discovered in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. In this volume, the discontinuity of *Time’s Eye* and the Solar Storm of *Sunstorm* are succeeded by a quantum bomb, now approaching, that will obliterate Earth within five years if its discovery.

Most of *Time’s Eye* was concerned with adjustment to Mir, the newly formed version of Earth, and to the military campaigns of Alexander and Genghis Khan; the fight to save Earth from the solar storm sent by the Firstborn was the subject of *Sunstorm*; and this volume concentrates on the final battle against the Firstborn’s Q bomb. Earth mobilizes all its forces, sends a great space warship against it, tries unsuccessfully to push it off course, sends potential survivors off into space, and in the end is saved by a signal from an Eye trapped on Mars by ancient Martians before a Firstborn attack had ended their civilization. Earthlings now living on Mars attempt to destroy it; the Q bomb turns aside and obliterates Mars, saving Earth.

The heroine, if there is one, of the trilogy is Bisesa Dutt, a

UN peacekeeper who makes a connection with one of the ubiquitous observing Firstborn Eye in the first volume, is transported back to the twenty-first century, plays a leading role in the defense against both solar storm and Q bomb, and survives to join the Lastborn, rebels of the Firstborn, who, behind the scenes and unknown to her, have been helping her from the early pages of the trilogy. Clarke’s interest in ancient races that watch the development of civilizations on Earth—for example, the benevolent Overlords of *Childhood’s End*—again provides a starting point for the story.

The wonders of science, engineering, and technology are displayed throughout the book. Clarke’s space elevators have arrived, with many deployed near the equator. Satellites, near-sentient space suits, colonies on the Moon, on Mars, and at L5, artificial intelligences (Aristotle, Thales, Athena) recognized as sentient beings with the same rights and privileges as humans—all play important roles in the story. Clarke is thus able to explain some of his theories about things to come, sometimes in great detail. Bisesa and her daughter, Myra, are abducted by a spacer and taken to the Moon by way of a space elevator, one of many, and a lightship (another AI named Max, also an intelligent being with legal rights) that uses the solar wind for propulsion. On Mars, they learn much more about the spacer not-quite-open rebellion against Earth. On the last page of the book, Bisesa and Myra meet a Lastborn, whom they join in the continuing fight against the Firstborn.

*Null-A Continuum* and *Firstborn*, despite their likeness as continuations of multivolume imaginative views of a future universe, are very different in their approach to what that future would be like. For Wright, it is a place where human beings have achieved mental capacity far beyond that of today. It is their ability to use such advances that in the end saves not only Earth but the universe from poorly understood enemies bent on destruction. Clarke and Baxter, on the other hand, concentrate on the human capacity to overcome the hitherto unknown enemy by advanced technological means. In both novels, humanity is able to defeat the current enemy, and in Wright, the victory appears to be permanent. Clarke and Baxter leave the possibility of further attacks (perhaps hinting at another book, now unlikely because of Clarke’s death).

Both books are quite readable. Contemporary readers will probably find *Firstborn* more interesting, but *Null-A Continuum* may well send them back to Van Vogt’s great *The World of Null-A*, and that would make Wright’s continuation a true homage to an early pioneer of science fiction.

#### MINIREVIEW

### **Saga**

Jennifer Moorman

Connor Kostick. *Saga*. New York: Viking, 2008. Cloth, 367 pages, \$18.99, ISBN 978-0-670-06280-5.

*Saga*, Connor Kostick’s sequel to *Epic*, his successful young adult SF novel, imagines a full-fledged virtual world. The story centers on Ghost, a member of an anarchopunk airboard (that is, flying skateboard) gang. Their world is periodically being invaded by strangely dressed and oddly behaved human beings, including Cindella, Erik’s swashbuckling avatar from *Epic*, and

it turns out that *Saga* is not simply their world; it is a sentient computer game, the replacement to *Epic* on New Earth. It is also lethally addictive—the “Dark Queen” (yes, that is her name) who controls *Saga* is attempting to enslave both its people and the people of New Earth. Most of the plot revolves around the attempts by Ghost and her friends, and Erik and his friends from New Earth, to find a way to stop her. The gaming addiction plotline—“The game, it’s destroying me and I can’t stop” (142)—enables the book to be taught in the context of addiction in literature more broadly, or of texts dealing with mind/body control by an alien life form (in this case, a sentient virtual life form).

Although subtlety cannot be counted among its virtues, *Saga* is a fast-paced, relentlessly engrossing read. Its broad strokes and young protagonists mark it as young adult fare, but it is overtly political and at times surprisingly violent. *Saga* is a world where colored cards grant different levels of access to malls, apartment buildings, and so on to people of different classes—red, for the poorest, only grants access to shabby apartments and bleak malls carrying the bare necessities. Ghost and her friends form a guild calling for the abolition of the red and orange grades and the establishment of something approaching socioeconomic equality. The overriding theme of this novel is a certain strain of Marxist—or, at the very least, stridently anticapitalist—sentiment, in conjunction with an advocacy for nonviolent rebellion. As such, the novel easily could be taught in terms of class consciousness or social change in SF literature. Additionally, the idea of embodiment, particularly as it pertains to gender, is prominent and could enable productive discussion. As in *Epic*, Erik’s avatar is a powerful woman, though everyone seems more impressed with her beauty than with her remarkable physical and magical abilities: “she is probably the most beautiful of all the human beings who have arrived here” (51). The Dark Queen is depicted as powerfully evil, but certain moments convey what could be called gendered condescension on behalf of the author: “A woman scorned, especially one in a dress like Ours, is a force to be feared” (257). The book’s cyberpunk framework allows it to repeatedly address the issue of embodiment in a virtual world in interesting, if occasionally implausible or contradictory, ways.

and-blood SF couples portrayed by Keanu Reeves and Carrie-Anne Moss or Hayden Christensen and Natalie Portman, on the long-abandoned Earth after the human diaspora saves consumer culture from global warming and ecodisaster. It is WALL-E and EVE’s love that ultimately saves humanity from a hermetically sealed “Buy-n-Large” corporatized future and reconnects the human (and robot) passengers of the *AXIOM* starship with the organic Earth.

It is interesting talking about *WALL-E*, an animated film, in terms of its carefully selected cinematography and complementary shooting styles that seamlessly mesh with the setting photographed. It is even more interesting to talk about how this short film carries the weight of such heavy SF themes such as consumerism, ecodisaster, gender roles, and robot subjectivity. The film engages these themes with a wide-eyed sense of wonder that the Pixar creative team have developed through a succession of blockbuster films ranging from *Toy Story* (1995) to *Ratatouille* (2007). Above the waterline, there is the obvious integration of these topics in the narrative, and floating on the surface are a number of references and homage to other SF films such as *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), *Star Wars* (1977), *Alien* (1979), and *Blade Runner* (1982). However, *WALL-E* goes beyond imitation or pastiche and rises to the level of good SF because it engages SF themes as well as turns them around and upside down not only to disorient the audience (as much as possible in a commercially viable children’s movie), but also to provide a critical engagement of those themes as extrapolations and commentary on the here and now.

The obvious allegorical message from the film has to do with ecodisaster, which interconnects with other SF themes. This binding theme corresponds with Leo Marx’s work, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (1968), which predates the earliest SF film inspirations for *WALL-E* by one year. Marx’s thesis is that the American pastoral uses technology as a means to return to the idyllic garden—an Eden in the Americas. However, the more technology is utilized, the further removed we become from the dreamed and sought ideal.

*WALL-E* figures into this pattern because it is the little robot WALL-E and his robot girlfriend, appropriately named EVE, who challenge Marx’s argument by leading humanity back to the Earth/soil/garden and a more organic, yet technologically cooperative lifestyle—the techno-co-op. The film reinforces this idea through EVE’s directive to seek out green plant life and to place that life into what can only be described as a womb. Once the organic matter is stored within her body, she withdraws into herself, with only a softly glowing green plant icon pulsing as a heartbeat underneath her iPod-like exterior, awaiting return to the “motherhip,” the *AXIOM*. Returned and reawakened, WALL-E and EVE battle against the Buy-n-Large capital enforcers, AUTO and GO-4, to activate the *AXIOM*’s automatic Earth-return system by giving the plant EVE carried in her womb from Earth to the ship’s holodetector. Successful, WALL-E and EVE reveal that robots may be more human than human in the far future, and in so doing, they arrive at more equal gendered identities, which invert currently accepted gender roles of male/female and protector/protected. Furthermore, these robots mediate the reawakening of humanity’s connection with the Earth through their own burgeoning love that began with a spark while watch-



## Media Reviews

### **WALL-E**

Jason W. Ellis

*WALL-E*. Dir. Andrew Stanton. Perf. Ben Burtt and Elissa Knight. Walt Disney Pictures. 2008.

*WALL-E* (2008) is the first smashing science fiction film to come out of Pixar Animation Studios. Veiled as a children’s animated feature, it is an engaging space opera about two robot lovers, WALL-E and EVE, making an electric connection, conveying more emotion and human feeling than the flesh-

ing a VHS tape of *Hello, Dolly!* (1969). Humanity is reestablished in the garden, but they found their way with the help and cooperation of autonomous technologized robot subjects with the potential and desire for love.

This is only one sampling of the SF themes in *WALL-E* that begin with late 1960s SF and other aspects of American culture, and it is evident that the film merits further consideration in a variety of academic contexts. In the undergraduate classroom, this film will be a terrific hit. It is a one-stop shop for class discussion, and it is accessible to SF fans as well as the uninitiated. Also, its one-and-a-half hour run time easily facilitates in-class viewing, leaving half of one class to begin conversation. More libraries are trying to make films available to students and faculty, and *WALL-E* should be part of that growing media archive—there will be demand for this title when it is made available on Blu-Ray and DVD!

Finally, SF scholars should not ignore this film, because it may appear at first glance to be what one person I know called a “silly cartoon.” *WALL-E* is a nexus of insightful and imaginative meaning making that I’m sure you will find exciting, with the above only one of many possible readings, but what makes the film great is that its many layers and meanings don’t detract from its moving narrative and SF allegory.

## ***Iron Man***

Ronald C. Thomas Jr.

*Iron Man*. Dir. Jon Favreau. Perf. Robert Downey Jr., Gwyneth Paltrow, Jeff Bridges. Marvel Films. 2008.

The apocryphal quote attributed to legendary producer Samuel Goldwyn is, “If you can’t fit your idea on the back of a business card, you ain’t got a movie.” So here’s the pitch: “There’s this billionaire playboy who develops an armored disguise full of gadgets that lets him kick the hell out of the bad guys while he learns to be a better man in the process.”

Until 2008, the general public would have immediately thought of Bruce (“Batman”) Wayne, but now, with *Iron Man* being the #1 film in the country as of this writing in late May, Tony Stark is becoming a household name after over forty years in the comics, as well as animated cartoons and assorted merchandise.

The film updates the comic’s origin from 1960s Vietnam to current-day Afghanistan, but it still tells the story of prodigy weapons inventor and irresponsible playboy, Tony Stark. When he goes to personally see his weapons in action, he is mortally wounded. While a prisoner, with shrapnel lodged next to his heart, he builds a life-saving device and a suit of armor to effect his escape. This transformative experience sets him on the path toward heroism.

Tony Stark, not so loosely based on playboy inventor Howard Hughes, continues to tinker and upgrade his armor and also seeks to evolve his company. However, as he becomes engrossed in his personal invention, his late father’s business partner, Obadiah Stane, maneuvers Stark out of control of his namesake company. Discovering that Stane is selling Stark technology weapons to Afghan warlords, Stark dons the Iron Man armor to fly across the world and set things right. Upon his return, he is

betrayed by Stane, and a final showdown over control of the Iron Man technology leads to a clanging climax.

Director Jon Favreau does an excellent job of capturing the grittiness of the combat sequences to keep the story’s hard edge. It is inspired casting to put Robert Downey Jr. in the lead role. Charlie Sheen could have grown the facial hair and done the jaded playboy. However, Downey’s personal issues add a subtext that layers his performance. Two decades earlier, some fans were concerned that Michael Keaton wasn’t broad-shouldered enough for the Batman role, just as Downey was an unconventional choice for an action hero, but both were ultimately spot on once the cameras rolled because they had the dramatic acting ability to get under the masks. In fact, Favreau said that because Marvel was producing this film, he was allowed to cast it like a small indie film, and that allowed him to go with an edgier, nontraditional lead actor.

To fully understand why this casting choice was so good, it is important to analyze why Tony Stark *is* Iron Man and not just a secret identity. Kenneth Burke’s theory of dramatism provides an excellent toolset for this task. Burke proposed a pentad that should be applied to the analysis of symbolic activities, such as storytelling, later adding a sixth term. The original five parts of the pentad were: (1) act—whatever is done by the person; (2) agent—the person performing the action; (3) agency—the process the agent uses to perform the act; (4) scene—the context of the act, including time as well as place; and (5) purpose—the agent’s goal for the act. Burke added a sixth factor, attitude, representing the manner in which agents position themselves relative to other persons. This framework is still commonly called the pentad, not unlike the Big Ten conference after adding Penn State.

Many superheroes have secret identities that strongly contrast to the heroic identity, as with meek Clark Kent and dynamic Superman, playboy Bruce Wayne and grim Batman, or nerdy Peter Parker and wisecracking Spider-Man. However, the Iron Man guise provides an extension for many of the attitudes and personality traits of Tony Stark, all of which are rooted in his place in the American military-industrial complex. From his dealings with the defense industry to his personal battles and business dealings, Tony Stark makes Iron Man go. In other superhero stories, we wait for Bruce Wayne or Clark Kent to get off stage so the real action can begin. However, in the Iron Man mythos, the drama revolves around Tony Stark, and Iron Man is a tool he uses to get to the climax of the story.

Burke’s pentad is not an equilateral shape. It is skewed toward whichever factor has the most gravitational force in the storytelling. If applied to two D-Day-themed movies, *The Longest Day* and *Saving Private Ryan*, the first would be skewed toward the setting of Normandy because it was an ensemble piece, and the second would be skewed toward the purpose of rescuing Ryan. *Iron Man* would clearly be skewed toward the actor of Tony Stark (and less toward the Armored Avenger himself). The Iron Man armor is just another invention to be tweaked, a hot rod to be souped up and driven to the edge by Tony Stark.

*Iron Man* also explores the interface of man with technology, a reliable SF theme for fiction writers but also one that has been well explored by futurists like Ray Kurzweil. When the character was created in 1963, one could still go into a mom-and-pop hardware store and buy vacuum tubes to put in the back of a

black-and-white television set. Iron Man's superpowers come from the application of the transistors inside those amazing radios coming from Japan at the time. Over the decades, Iron Man has always employed what I call "tenuous technology," just enough of a connection to something cutting-edge but amazingly amplified due to Tony Stark's genius. So the heads-up display in Iron Man's helmet, Stark's holographic workbench, and his placeholder-for-cold-fusion artificial heart are jumping off points for possible essay assignments on how science and technology can be stretched out of shape by artistic license.

There is another thematic "stretch" that presents itself on subsequent viewings of *Iron Man*. Other authors have made much of the religious undertones in some comics' tales. The Superman mythos is one that is often analyzed in this way, compared to Moses, but found as a baby in a rocketship instead of a reed basket, or to Jesus, sent down from heaven by his father. There is even the scene in *Superman Returns* where Bryan Singer has Superman hanging above the Earth in a crucifixion pose.

In the film version of *Iron Man*, Tony Stark is in a strange kind of trinity with himself. He is the father of Iron Man because he created the armor and is also the son when he inhabits it. The armor is also imbued with the spirit of Jarvis, the artificial intelligence program he also created. In the comics, Jarvis is a flesh-and-blood butler, but in the film, it's a virtual majordomo. But, if Stark wrote the "Jarvis" AI program, is that like talking to himself? In donning the armor, Stark gives his physical body over to the machines that he built. Once he is suited up, is he now a philosophical deus ex machina? Since he created two-thirds of himself, is he a triune mystery? Now there's a challenging essay question.

While film and philosophy students grapple with that, let's pitch the sequel to Mr. Goldwyn: "So, hard-partying Tony Stark loses his company and his technology, he retreats into alcoholism and his best friend has to take over as Iron Man. Tony has to fight his way out of the bottle before he can reclaim all the pieces of himself."

See you in line outside a theater in 2010.



News

## Calls for Papers

Jen Gunnels

### Journal

**Title:** *Fastitocalon: Studies in Fantasticism Ancient to Modern*, vol. 1, nos. 1–2, Foundations of the Fantastic

**Topic:** The journal aims at promoting a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of fantasticism across the ages. The individual issues of this series focus either on important authors and/or works in this field or on specific topics relevant to fantasticism. The first volume will be dedicated to the exploration of the historical, literary, cultural and poetical foundations of the

fantastic. Papers may not only focus on the historical development per se and the precursors of modern fantastic literature, but also discuss the theoretical prerequisites that made possible the emergence of the fantastic as a distinct literary phenomenon. Even though the language of publication is English, we would like to encourage the contributors to include of works in other languages.

**Due date:** June 31, 2008, for abstracts; November 30, 2008, for papers

**Contact:** Prof. Dr. Fanfan Chen (ffchen AT mail.ndhu.edu.tw or chenfantasticism AT gmail.com); or Prof. Dr. Thomas Honegger (Tm\_honegger AT uni-jena.de)

### Journal

**Title:** Perspectives on War: Media and Memory (InterCulture e-journal)

**Topic:** InterCulture is a peer-reviewed e-journal seeking academic papers (3,000–6,000 words), reviews (1,000–3,000 words), and creative work pertaining to the theme "Perspectives on War: Media and Memory." War, like the past, "can be seized only as an image that flashes up at the moment of its recognizability, and is never seen again." Walter Benjamin's discussion of history (1940) is only one way to articulate the relationship between individual or collective memories and media through either the "image" or media institutions. Public art is a media through which memory and war intersect. InterCulture is seeking papers, creative work, and reviews that connect media and memory through a discussion of a war or wars. This issue works alongside InterCulture's fall/winter issue devoted to "The Front." We are also interested in publishing reviews on academic texts, fiction, film, art exhibitions, video games, or any other cultural objects pertaining to the topic.

**Contact:** Katheryn Wright (kwright AT fsu.edu)

**URL:** <http://iph.fsu/interculture/submissions.html>

### Journal

**Title:** *Journal of Literature and Science*

**Topic:** The *Journal of Literature and Science* invites submissions (complete essays or abstracts) for forthcoming issues. The journal is dedicated to the publication of academic essays on the subject of literature and science, broadly defined. Essays on the major forms of literary and artistic endeavor are welcome. The journal encourages submissions from all periods of literary and artistic history since the scientific revolution, from the Renaissance to the present day. The journal also encourages a broad definition of "science": encapsulating both the history and philosophy of science and those sciences regarded as either mainstream or marginal within their own, or our, historical moment. However, the journal does not generally publish work on the social sciences. Contributors are encouraged to contact the editor before submission.

**Contact:** Martin Willis (mwillis AT glam.ac.uk) or Rachel Hewitt (rhewitt AT glam.ac.uk)

**URL:** <http://literatureandscience.research.glam.ac.uk/journal/>

## Conference

**Title:** NEWW (New Approaches to European Women's Writing, 2007–2010)/Theorizing Narrative Genres and Gender

**Conference date:** May 15–16, 2009

**Site:** Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany

**Topics:** Organized within the framework of the project NEWW (New Approaches to European Women's Writing), this conference would like to discuss (1) the ways in which certain narrative genres (novels, short stories, fairy tales, autobiographies, personal diaries, etc.) have been gendered, (2) the impact that these texts have had on readers, both men and women, and (3) the consequences this has had on readers' reactions and the gendered critical discourse for the formation and development of narrative literary genres. In keeping with the NEWW's objectives, the conference will cover a relatively long time period, 1400–1900, and will also present contributions treating European literatures that are considered "marginal."

**Due date:** November 1, 2008, with 250-word proposals in French or English

**Contact:** Suzan van Dijk, Universiteit Utrecht (Suzan.vanDijk AT let.uu.nl) and Lieselotte Steinbrügge, Ruhr-Universität Bochum (lieselotte.steinbruegge AT rub.de)

**URL:** <http://www.womenwriters.nl>

## Conference

**Title:** Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association

**Conference date:** April 8–11, 2009

**Site:** New Orleans Marriott, New Orleans, LA

**Topic:** Science Fiction and Fantasy. **We welcome any theoretical or (inter)disciplinary approach to any topic related to SF/F art; literature; radio; film; television; comics and graphic novels; video, role playing, and multiplayer online games.** The SF/F Area is also interested in featuring science fiction and fantasy writers and poets. Creative writers are welcomed.

**Due date:** November 15, 2008, with 250-word proposals for papers, panels, or workshops in Word, Rich Text, or PDF

**Contact:** Tanya Cochran (pcasff AT gmail.com)

**URL:** <http://pcaaca.org/areas/sciencefantasy.php>

## Conference

**Title:** Eaton Science Fiction Conference/Extraordinary Voyages: Jules Verne and Beyond

**Conference date:** April 30–May 3, 2009

**Topic:** The UCR Libraries' Eaton Science Fiction Collection, in coordination with the North American Jules Verne Society, proposes a two-and-a-half-day conference that will examine the traditions Verne exploited, Verne's own extraordinary work, and his far-ranging influence in modern fiction and culture. More significant is his influence on the shape of modern SF: the extraordinary voyage has become a foundational motif by which scientific knowledge is linked to the exploration of richly imagined worlds. This conference will explore the implications of the extraordinary voyage as a narrative and ideological model that resonates in world SF down to the present day.

**Due date:** December 15, 2008, with 300–500-word abstracts

**Contact:** Melissa Conway (mconway AT ucr.edu)

## Conference

**Title:** Diana Wynne Jones: A Conference

**Conference dates:** July 3–5, 2009

**Site:** University of the West of England, Bristol

**Topic:** On any and all aspects of the writing of Diana Wynne Jones, on her influence and influences. Papers on fan activity and scholarship, TV and film adaptations also welcome.

**Due date:** January 31, 2009

**Contact:** Farah Mendlesohn (farah.sf AT gmail.com)

## Conference and proceedings

**Title:** Space, Time, and Spacetime in Literature

**Conference date:** September 18–21, 2009

**Site:** London

**Topic:** The Albertina-Foundation and its partner institutions in Germany, England, and Israel welcome approximately 30 essays of interest to those concerned with the study of the modes of representation of space, time, and spacetime in literature. We are looking particularly for contributions on various topics in literary studies, literary theory, philosophy of literature, and anthropology answering to the publication's subject matter.

**Due date:** November 1, 2008, of English-language articles 10,000–30,000 words long

**Contact:** Dr. H. Trincherro (cfp.spacetime AT albertina-foundation.org)

**URL:** <http://www.albertina-foundation.org> and <http://www.stiftung-albertina.org>

## Conference—save the date

**Title:** British Society for Literature and Science Conference

**Conference date:** March 27–29, 2009

**Site:** University of Reading

**Topic:** Keynote speakers will include Dame Gillian Beer (King Edward VII Professor Emerita at Cambridge University), Patrick Parrinder (Professor of English Literature at Reading University), and Simon Conway Morris (Professor of Evolutionary Palaeobiology at Cambridge University). The formal call for papers will be announced this autumn.

**Contact:** Dr. John Holmes (j.r.holmes AT reading.ac.uk)

**SFRA 2009: June 11-14**

**Atlanta, Georgia**

## Engineering the Future & Southern-Fried Science Fiction

**Guest of Honor:** Michael Bishop

**Guest Authors:** F. Brett Cox, Andy Duncan, Paul Di Filippo, Kathleen Ann Goonan, and Jack McDevitt

The 2009 conference's two themes and its selection of guest authors are inspired by the conference's location and its co-sponsorship by Georgia Tech's School of Literature, Communication, and Culture. Atlanta, a storied locale in American history, is also in many ways an international city of the future, home to 21st century information, entertainment, technological and military industry, peopled with 21st century demographics, and prone to 21st century situations.

How is the future engineered in science fiction and how has science fiction already engineered our present? The American south has long been well known for its gothic fiction, but it has increasingly figured in works of science fiction and fantasy. So it is equally fitting to ask, how has the South been an inspiration of science fiction and fantasy and what will its global future in speculative arts and letters be?

The deadline for proposals is April 1, 2009 at midnight EST. Please submit paper and panel proposals by e-mail to [sfra2009 AT gmail.com](mailto:sfra2009@gmail.com). Include all text of the proposal in the body of the e-mail (not as an attachment. Please be sure to include full contact information for all panel members and to make all AV requests within each proposal.

[www.sfra2009.com](http://www.sfra2009.com)

THE 30TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE FANTASTIC IN THE ARTS

## Time and the Fantastic

The 30th International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts will be held March 18-22, 2009, at the Orlando Airport Marriott in Orlando, Florida. The conference begins at 3pm on Wednesday and ends at 1 am on Sunday upon the conclusion of the conference banquet. Malcolm J. Edwards and Brian Stableford write that "the metaphysics of time continues to intrigue writers inside and outside the genre" of the fantastic; thus, the focus of ICFA-30 is on the intriguing relationships between time and the fantastic. Papers are invited to explore this topic in science fiction, fantasy, horror, and other related modes of the fantastic. In addition, we especially look forward to papers on the work of our honored guests:

**Guest of Honor:** Guy Gavriel Kay, Aurora Award-winning, Caspar Award-winning, and Mythopoeic Fantasy Award-nominated author of the Fionavar Tapestry (*The Summer Tree*, *The Wandering Fire*, *The Darkest Road*), *Tigana*, *A Song for Arbonne*, and *The Last Light of the Sun*

**Guest of Honor:** Robert Charles Wilson, Hugo Award-winning author of *Axis*, *Spin*, *The Chronoliths*, *Darwinia*, *Mysterium*, and *A Bridge of Years*

**Guest Scholar:** Maria Nikolajeva, author of *The Aesthetic Approach to Children's Literature* (Scarecrow), *The Rhetoric of Children's Literature* (Scarecrow), and *From Mythic to Linear: Time in Children's Literature* (Scarecrow)

As always, we also welcome proposals for individual papers and for academic sessions and panels on any aspect of the fantastic in any media. The deadline is October 31, 2008.

# Science Fiction Research Association

[www.sfra.org](http://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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:rrodrigo@mail.mc.maricopa.edu)

### Treasurer

Donald M. Hassler  
1226 Woodhill Dr.  
Kent, OH 44240  
[extrap@kent.edu](mailto:extrap@kent.edu)

### Immediate Past President

David G. Mead  
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi  
Corpus Christi, TX 78412  
[Dave.Mead@tamucc.edu](mailto: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, visit the listserv information page: <http://wiz.cath.vt.edu/mailman/listinfo/sfra-l>

### *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.

