287
Winter 2009

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
sfrafiction@mac.com

Media Editor
Ritch Calvin
16A Erland Rd.
Stony Brook, NY 11790-1114
rcalvink@ic.sunysb.edu

In This Issue

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.
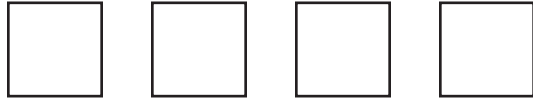
SFRA Review Business

Contribute Soon, Contribute Often

Karen Hellekson and Craig Jacobsen

This issue marks the start of a new year for the *Review*. As we move forward, we continue our effort to keep this publication useful to members, helping you to keep current in an ever-expanding, ever-changing field. To that end we continue our 101 feature articles (Fan Studies 101 in this issue), our focus on teaching SF, and, of course, reviews of important texts. None of this would be possible without the generous contributions of members like you, and none of it can continue without ongoing contributions. As a collaborative effort the *Review* is only as valuable as members make it. Contact the nonfiction, fiction, and media editors and volunteer to write a review. Contact us to propose a 101, teaching, or other feature. Be prepared to be approached at the summer conference and pressured into writing somthing for us.

Uncompensated work is good for the soul.
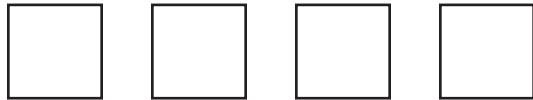
SFRA Business

Initial Thoughts

Lisa Yaszek

2009 promises to be a year of many new beginnings. I look forward to seeing if we will really have a new and different U.S. administration under the guidance of Barack Obama. I also look forward to what my husband Doug Davis and I are certain will be a new and different phase of family life with the birth of our first child (who, the doctors tell us, is likely to show up in the midst of Obama's inauguration). And finally, I look forward to my first term as SFRA president and to working with all of you to ensure the continued success of our organization.

Upon reviewing the notes from my first meeting with executive committee officers Ritch Calvin, Mack Hassler, Shelley Rodrigo, and Adam Frisch, it strikes me that in contrast to Obama (and the forthcoming baby), we are not so much promis-

ing to change the SFRA as we are hoping to foster developments already set in motion over the past few years. Consider, for instance, issues of membership. Our past two presidents have identified growth as a key priority for the organization and the initiatives that were put in place by various SFRA officers—including the distribution of new organization memorabilia, outreach to sympathetic academic groups, and revised membership renewal timelines—have paid off handsomely. In 2008 the SFRA had 346 paying members, the highest number in nearly four decades. The current executive committee intends to continue this trend. As vice president, Ritch plans to build on this success in the next two years by reinforcing ties between the SFRA and other organizations dedicated specifically to the study of fantastic literature. Meanwhile, as treasurer and secretary, respectively, Mack and Shelley plan to streamline renewal and directory services with state-of-the art software that members will be able to access on the SFRA Web site.

This brings us to the executive committee's second goal: raising the visibility of our organization through a variety of Web-based initiatives. Last year we began the process of updating our online presence for the new millennium by moving the SFRA Web site to a new server and by hiring Main Web FX to redesign our site with Drupal content management software. I hope you will join us in thanking SFRA members Len Hatfield for his years of service as SFRA's first Web site manager, Karen Hellekson for supervising the transition to our new server space, and Matthew Holtmeier for already beginning work as our new Web site director. Be on the lookout for the new site to launch this summer, complete with new features including a science fiction studies news feed, a password-protected membership directory, and a storefront offering SFRA memorabilia at modest prices.

While you wait for the unveiling of the new SFRA Web site, you can help promote our organization by joining our Facebook group and/or Wikipedia project. While Facebook provides SFRA members with an accessible social networking space, the Wikipedia project enables us to share our knowledge of science fiction studies with the larger online community through the strategic creation, revision, and management of extant science fiction wikis. By the time you read this column you are likely to have seen calls for project volunteers on the SFRA listserv and home page; for more information, contact either Matthew Holtmeier at mholtmeier AT gmail.com or SFRA public relations director Jason Ellis at dynamicsubspace AT googlemail.com.

I am also pleased to report that even as we continue updating SFRA for the new millennium, your elected officers maintain their commitment to building organizational community in traditional ways as well. This past year saw more donations to our Support a Scholar fund than ever before, thanks in large part to Carol Stevens's generous $1,000 gift. Between these recent donations and the interest we've earned on CD investments, this year we will begin distributing support funds to SFRA members through four new grant programs for travel, membership, scholarship, and organizational support. Descriptions of the travel award program and calls for applicants will appear on the SFRA listserv and Web page by February 1, 2009; details for all other programs will be released at the 2009 conference. If you have any questions about these programs, please contact SFRA secretary Shelley Rodrigo at rrodrigo AT mesacc.edu.

Finally, of course, we maintain our commitment to building community through the SFRA conference itself. Despite the last-minute change in venue from Dublin to Lawrence, Kansas, SFRA 2008 was a great success, with 117 active participants. Thanks to Ritch Calvin for all his hard work as conference director and, of course, to Jim Gunn, Lydia Ash, Chris McKitterick, and Kevin Curry of the Campbell Conference for generously sharing their conference resources. This year's conference (hosted by Doug Davis and yours truly) looks to be equally promising. Our two themes, "Engineering the Future" and "Southern-Fried Science Fiction and Fantasy," and selection of guest authors—including F. Brett Cox, Paul di Filippo, Andy Duncan, Kathleen Ann Goonan, Jack McDevitt, Warren Rochelle, and others—are inspired by the conference's location in Atlanta and its cosponsorship by Georgia Tech's School of Literature, Communication, and Culture. To date we have already received about a dozen paper and panel proposals on issues ranging from the future of science fiction television to the Confederate rebel as science fiction's archetypical hero. For more information about the conference and the paper submission process, keep your eye on the SFRA listserv and check out the conference Web site at http://www.sfra2009.com/.

And that just about sums things up for now. As SFRA president, I look forward to serving you over the next two years. As the 2009 conference cohost, I—along with Doug and baby—look forward to seeing you in Atlanta this June, where we can discuss everything from the state of the union to the future of science fiction studies.

Spread the Word

Ritch Calvin

Welcome to the SFRA, 2009!

Let me begin by saying that I am humbled and honored that you all have chosen me to serve as vice president of the SFRA. I was strongly reminded at the conference in Lawrence last summer as I talked to so many of you that this is a fantastic body of individuals, and I am very pleased to be working for you all.

As vice president, I will be working on recruitment and trying to grow the member base. Over the past two years, Lisa Yaszek, formerly vice president but now our current president, initiated a number of successful strategies for recruitment, and I will be working with Lisa to continue those strategies. However, in the very near future, we will be expanding our Web presence through a new Web site, a new wiki, a new Facebook group, and a new storefront. I am very pleased to be working with Jason Ellis, Matthew Holtmeier, and Stacie Hanes on these initiatives, and I appreciate their efforts and input.

And while all these avenues for reaching new members are exciting, the best and most effective strategy is word of mouth. So please help spread the word about the work that the SFRA does. If you know anyone who might be interested, please do not hesitate to tell them or to contact me, and I will reach out to that person. Furthermore, if you have any comments or suggestions, please feel free to contact me.

Thanks again, and keep sending me those reviews!

SFRA's Current Status

Donald M. Hassler

Income	
Dues and subs (346 members)*	$28,284.48
Excess from Lawrence conference (see below loss)	1,481.50
Royalties	346.47
Scholar support gifts	1,650.00
Bank interest	182.80
Carryover from December 31, 2007	69,754.78
Total income	101,700.03
Expenses	
President office	54.66
VP office	00
Secretary office	793.58
Treasurer office	231.00
Costs for Lawrence conference (guest air, lodging)†	4,238.06
Advance support for SFRA 2010	500.00
Student travel support for Lawrence	300.00
Graduate paper award	100.00
Bray award	100.00
Clareson award (costs)	89.65
Pilgrim and Pioneer awards (costs)	260.74
Review and *Directory* (print and mail)	4,960.00
Maine Web FX initial payments (Web site)	554.00
Discontented listserv recruit	60.00
Science Fiction Studies	6,427.00
Extrapolation	6,427.00
NYRSF	2,442.00
Foundation	3,420.00
JFA	1,625.00
Femspec (late publication schedule)	00
Locus	1,262.40
Total expenses	33,845.09
On hand December 31, 2008	**67,854.94**

*Because PayPal takes a percentage, amounts are not even; and with the new calendar-year system, some 2008 dues came in 2007.

†Hence net loss $2,756.56.

Executive Board Meeting Minutes

Shelley Rodrigo

Attending the January 17, 2009, via conference call:
Lisa Yaszek, President
Ritch Calvin, Vice President
Mack Hassler, Treasurer
Shelley Rodrigo, Secretary
Adam Frisch, Immediate Past President

Call to order 12:03pm MST
1. Review Official Duties of Each Office
It was discussed that unofficial policy will be for all outgoing persons to pass on unofficial duty lists, timelines, etc.

President—Lisa had no questions.

Vice President—Ritch asked if we should have whole list of chain of command be in section 3, or in the various sections. Also asked if we need to list duties of overseeing Web and PR persons? We all agreed that we would prefer to leave the descriptions vague enough for flexibility in the future.

Treasurer—Mack had no questions about his last term as treasurer; however, he voiced concerns about the position requiring a lot of work and we should recruit carefully and wisely. He hopes with technological support that the treasurer and the secretary can share workload in the future.

Secretary—Shelley had no questions and mentioned that overseeing the Support a Scholar processes might fall under the secretary's duties in the future.

Immediate Past President—We discussed that there is nothing official in bylaws. Traditionally the immediate past president helps finding new candidates for the executive board ballot and in his last term as president Adam added the responsibility of arranging for the award plaques. Lisa mentioned that the immediate past president also helps maintain institutional memory.

2. SFRA Awards Committees
Adam had already organized the 2008 committees. Lisa has already sent thank you notes and requests for award winner and presenter names by March 1, 2009. She will then get the names to Adam to get plaques printed up. Lisa was reminded to work closely with the conference programmer to let people know how long to keep award presentation and acceptance speeches.

3. SFRA Annual Meetings
SFRA 2008: Lawrence, Kansas (Ritch)—117 attendees; lost $2,700 based on inheriting airfare cost from guests from England. Collected numbers on attendees of panels, topics, timing, etc. There was definitely a trend of attendance dropping off in the late afternoon. Ritch was pleasantly surprised that a couple of book launches were really well attended. Media related events were also well attended. Technoscience panels were packed (however, it was noted they also had early morning sessions). There is going to be a proceedings volume; Karen Hellekson is receiving revised papers and everything is currently on schedule.

SFRA 2009: Atlanta, Georgia (Lisa)—Everything going smoothly! Hotel changed name and got a face lift; however, we are getting old prices. Got all guest authors set (seven guest authors, and an eighth asked to be added). Discussing with them bringing books, readings at local B&N, etc. Trying to get someone to run the bookroom.

4. Treasurer's Report: 2008 Calendar Year
[The Treasurer's report appears as a table in this issue of the *SFRA Review*.]

We need to follow up with Karen Hellekson to verify what/when/why the monthly fee to Maine Web FX. Adam asked whether or not we gave *About SF* money this past year. Mack said we gave them $1,000 in 2007 and asked that they wait to apply for the Support-a-Scholar grants. Adam also asked about the CD we started a few years back. Mack said it matured in early August; however, most of interest in 2007 showed in the 2007 treasurer's report.

5. Support-a-Scholar Grants
Lisa will announce in her President's report in the next *SFRA Review* about the revised Support-a-Scholar grants, specifically the Travel Grants. Shelley will make sure the updated call for proposals for the Travel Grants will be posted on the Web site by February 1 (and simultaneously sent out via the listserv). Shelley also needs to get in touch with Jason, public relations, about promoting the grants, especially travel. For at least the first round of grant applications, the process will be to send proposals to the secretary who will then scrub them and present to the executive board for reading. The executive board will then evaluate, rank, and award the grants.

There will be four types of grants:

Travel—The grants will be a maximum of $300. Awardees will receive reimbursement at the conference. We will now tell conference organizers they do not need to put the "hardship" line in the registration form and remind people they can apply for travel grants instead. Add criteria about the organization's funding available.

Membership—Membership grants will include criteria for awardees to present a methodology for sharing information about the organization to non-members. Membership awards will be for the following membership term (aka, awardees will not get reimbursement for past membership dues).

Research—renamed "Scholarship" so that folks can propose to work on teaching-related projects.

Organizational—Adam proposed the fourth category to support organizations that are not officially associated with the SFRA. Shelley will draft a call for proposals to present at the next executive board meeting.

6. Membership
346 members in 2008, highest in past decades

Currently 212 for 2009. Shelley will send out third round of renewal letters ASAP

Request from numerous members to update the membership form to include making more space to input information and correct some typos. Shelley will work on revising the registration form as well.

Shelley wants to develop a policy about how we maintain our lapsed membership list. At what point do we remove a person from the lapsed membership list? Shelley will outline a policy to propose at the next executive board meeting.

7. Web site

Karen Hellekson is currently working with Maine FX, the Web site development company. They are to the point where they need feedback on the test site. As treasurer and secretary, Mack and Shelley wanted to be able to see more of the inner workings of the draft Web site (content management system); however, they did not have the administrative username/password. Shelley has offered to work with Karen Hellekson, Ritch, and the Web site developers between now and the next executive board meeting. Mack mentioned concern about the organization requiring too much technical interfacing for members and we all agreed that we will always have paper registration and communication processes as well. We also agreed that Jason Ellis should have administrative/manager access to the organization's Web site for announcement/blogging purposes as well.

Ritch and Jason Ellis, the public relations person, have been working with expanded Web presence ideas including an SFRA store front (the are recommending Zazzle) and a Facebook group page (currently hosted by Stacie Hanes and Jason Ellis). Matt Holtmeier also suggested that instead of SFRA hosting a wiki site, we should organize members to take responsibility for revising and continually updating more popular wiki/Web sites like Wikipedia. The executive board agreed to give Matt Holtmeier and Jason Ellis permission to start what is now referred to as the "Wikipedia project."

8. **Plans for April 2009 Real-Time Executive Board Meeting**

Board members will fly into Atlanta, Georgia, on Thursday, April 30, fly out evening May 1 or morning May 2.

Adjourn 2:14pm MST
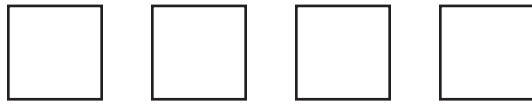
Features

Fan Studies 101

Karen Hellekson

The recent explosion on the Internet of fanlike activity has given fans and fan studies a higher profile. When journalists and media studies scholars speak about fans engaging on the Internet, high school students spending their time on FanFiction.net, or fans of soap operas gathering at an online forum to discuss their favorite plotlines, they are engaging in fan studies, even if they don't seem to know it. Web 2.0—that is, an interactive, networked Web, not a static, read-only Web—lends itself well to visible fan participation, and thanks to an explosion of copyright-ignoring, music-downloading, remix-happy Gen N–ers, interactivity of fans within and outside communities has generated a lot of journalism and scholarship. Fan studies as a field is still scrambling to catch up. It's done relevant work on fan-created works and fan communities over the years that is being ignored by current scholars, and those in other fields who tangentially run across fans seem unaware that an entire body of scholarship already exists to study fans and fan artifacts. In a parallel activity, women-dominated, old-style active fans and their contributions are now in the process of being erased by studies of (male) online fandom, although recuperative work is underway to write histories of these fans and preserve their artworks.

To define *fan* is a fraught activity, but generally, a fan is taken to be someone who engages within a subculture organized around a specific object of study, be it *Star Trek,* science fiction literature, Sherlock Holmes, anime, comics, gaming, or sports. Fans engage in a range of activities related to their passion: they write derivative literature called *fan fiction,* they create artworks, they write what's known as *meta* (analyses of fandom itself, or analysis of analysis), they play role-playing games, they blog, they make fan vids, and they organize and attend conventions. Not least, they create and pass along a culture, with its attendant rules of behavior and acceptability. Although the study of, say, avid coin collectors may fit the definition of *fan,* most of the work done in fan studies has focused on media fans and the derivative artworks they create. The two earliest active media fandoms were *Star Trek* and *Man from U.N.C.L.E.,* thereby cementing fan studies as at least tangentially related to SF, and marking the fan base as primarily comprising women.

Because studies of fan-created artifacts or of fans themselves range so widely, fan studies is a truly interdisciplinary field. The disciplines of English and communication study and interpret fan artifacts, their creation, and the rhetorical strategies they use to make meaning; ethnography analyzes the fan subculture; media, film, and television studies assess the integration of media into fan practice and artworks; psychology studies fans' pleasure and motivation; and law analyzes the underlying problems related to the derivative nature of the artworks, including concerns related to copyright, parody, and fair use. But fan studies can be usefully divided into two major approaches: study of fans themselves and fan culture, and study of the artifacts fans create.

Foundational Fan Studies

Important early fan studies texts date from the 1980s into the early 1990s, before the Internet changed the face of the fan world. Constance Penley's relevant work, published in 1991 and 1992, focuses on feminism and the integration of technology into fan culture. Camille Bacon-Smith's *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth* (1992) reports on fan practice in a study discussing her ethnographic fieldwork, conducted within a *Star Trek* fan community. Joanna Russ discusses her uneasy relationship with slash (homoerotic fan fiction) in her 1985 essay, "Pornography by Women, for Women, with Love." A work well known outside the field of fan studies is Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance* (1984), which analyzes a subculture of women romance readers. Patricia Frazer Lamb and Diane Veith's 1986 "Romantic Myth, Transcendence, and *Star Trek* Zines," like Russ's essay, attempts to understand why straight women write gay porn—a topic of particular fascination in early fan studies scholarship that deals with fan fiction. The valuable essays collected in Lisa A. Lewis's edited volume, *The Adoring Audience* (1992), focus on fans and fandom and range widely in topic.

But the single most important early text contributing to the field now known as fan studies is Henry Jenkins's *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Partcipatory Culture* (1992). In this crucial work, Jenkins, himself a fan as well as an academic, engages with fans and explicates fan culture as a response to mass media. Fans, he argues, are not passive consumers. Rather, they are active creators. He uses De Certeau's notion of textual poaching to inform fans' cultural production: "Fans construct their cultural and social identity through borrowing and inflecting mass culture images, articulating concerns which often go unvoiced within the dominant media" (23). Jenkins thus places fans in opposition to TPTB (The Powers That Be), the owners of the copyrighted text being poached—or, fan studies scholars would argue, being repurposed to fulfill particular cultural needs.

So useful is Jenkins's study, and so resonant is it with fan experience, that most fan studies scholarship takes Jenkins's thesis as read. Many published studies apply Jenkins's theory to a particular fan experience, or they explicate fan practice by studying its inflection. Jenkins has since broadened his research base to participatory culture more generally in two books published in 2006, *Convergence Culture* and *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers.* His Weblog (http://www.henryjenkins.org/) is a must-read for media scholars, and he remains friendly to fans.

Post-Internet Fan Studies

As people flock to the Internet and begin contributing content, they become part of a large, geographically dispersed, international community of people doing exactly the same thing. Fan culture used to be transmitted orally and in person. Fans would share activities like attending conventions, laboriously using VCRs to make fan vids, or publishing zines. Fan culture is still transmitted that way, although sophisticated editing software is used to create fan vids, and zines are likely to have a CD component along with the hard copy. But it's far more likely that a crew of like-minded people will get together informally, perhaps through a shared blogosphere, bulletin board, or Yahoo! group, many with no understanding that they are engaging in a culture with a relatively long history, or that their behavior may offend or upset people in other fan communities. To that we can add the number of people who would not describe their engagement as within the old-guard fan realm (and I put in parentheses the names of scholars who have written about these topics): posters at Television Without Pity (Marc Andrejevic); contributors to the original producer-run *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* bulletin board, the Bronze (Stephanie Tuszynski); and aficianados of *Lost* spoilers (Jonathan Gray and Jason Mittell). Further, the experiences of non-American fans may not parallel those abroad. It also doesn't do to privilege the Internet too much: many fans don't have access and thus engage differently with their passion. Nor do fans abandon one technological tool when another comes along: listservs and Yahoo! Groups are still sites for fan interaction, even as the blogosphere—particularly LiveJournal, which is the de facto site for fan-specific blogs—has become active. Some fans are even still on Usenet.

Scholarship was slow to follow along as fans took to the Internet. Fan scholarship assumed the existence of physical fan artifacts—artwork, vids created on VCRs, hard-copy fanzines. What about blogs repurposed as fanfic archives, wikis that gather media source facts, Photoshopped manipulations, file-sharing sites to disseminate TV shows, or that relatively new form of fan artwork, avatar icons? Scholarship on these very topics has lagged behind, although work dealing with these topics can be found in books dedicated not to fan studies but to Web 2.0 and collaborative learning. Research not on fans specifically but on collaborative communities provides valuable insight into fan behavior. Two recent examples: Don Tapscott and Anthony D. Williams's *Wikinomics* (rev. ed., 2008) has sections on collaboration and peering that mesh well with fan studies; and Lawrence Lessig's 2008 volume *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy* touches on the problems of megacorporations constraining the activities of fans, even as they attempt to appropriate their work—without compensation, of course.

The volume I coedited with Kristina Busse, *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet* (2006), has fan-specific essays that run the gamut from close readings of fan fiction to analyses of machinima to a study of reader as author/collaborator, and one reason it's a valuable book is that it was among the first to talk about online fan activities and attempt to explicate them. Its introduction provides a literature review and an overview of fan studies, and its bibliography is available online (http://karenhellekson.com/theorize/fanfic-bib.html).

Even as topics in fan studies became more acceptable to write and publish about, copyright concerns blocked scholars from pursuing their interests. Publishers dislike publishing screen captures or dialogue lifted from a TV show or film without explicit permission from the copyright holder, even though such illustrative content, particularly in the context of a scholarly article, falls within fair use. Meanwhile, similar copyright concerns have kept one important fan activity, vidding, long under wraps: vid creators, fearing cease-and-desist letters from copyright holders, often hid their artworks under eyes-only Web sites and password protection, further lowering the artworks' profile. The advent of vid-sharing sites like YouTube and Imeem has made it easier to watch and disseminate fan vids, although such vids may be blocked by copyright holders, particularly copyright holders of the music, as opposed to the images. An interview published on November 12, 2007, in *New York Magazine* profiling talented vidder Luminosity notes that the artist's real name can't be used, for fear that she will be sued by the copyright holders (http://nymag.com/movies/features/videos/40622/). This respectful article did much to raise the profile of fan vids and vidders. The fear of being sued because one is creating scholarship or transformative artworks can have a chilling effect on creativity, and it also means that important works analyzing our culture might not get written, because book and journal publishers will decline to consider them.

Several projects are underway to recuperate and legitimize fan-created artworks and clear the field to permit forms of criticism—be they creative artworks or scholarly essays—to be created without fear of reprisal. These activities are particularly important because the fan activities being elided tend to be those created by and for women. The Electronic Frontier Foundation has filed petitions with the U.S. copyright office to permit exemptions for bypassing copyright protection; one suggested exemption is for vidders who rip copyrighted material for fair-use remixes (http://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2008/12/remixers-unlockers-jailbreakers-oh-my). The fan advocacy

group Organization for Transformative Works (OTW; http://transformativeworks.org/), which I am a member of, is sponsoring two important historical recuperation projects. One is the Open Doors project (http://opendoors.transformativeworks.org/), which seeks to preserve fan works, including hard-copy slash zines. And along with MIT's Project New Media Literacies, OTW sponsored a video series about vids and vidding, including titles like "Why We Vid" and "What Is Vidding?" (http://www.henryjenkins.org/2008/12/fanvidding.html). In addition, OTW sponsors *Transformative Works and Cultures* (http://journal.transformativeworks.org/), which I coedit with Kristina Busse, an online-only peer-reviewed fan studies journal that, under its reading of fair use, permits screen captures and embedded video as forms of quotation.

In the field of fan studies, one thing is clear: copyright owners' hold on their properties is loosening as new forms of technology permit ripping, copying, and remixing, and their frantic attempts to regain their grip are forcing us all to rethink our relationship to popular cultural texts. Cohesive groups of self-identified fans have been analyzing and assessing their relationship to media since at least the 1960s, and their insights have much to offer those interested in the culture wars more generally.

Suggested Reading

Abercrombie, Nicholas, and Brian Longhurst. *Audiences: A Sociological Theory of Performance and Imagination*. London: Sage, 1998.

Bacon-Smith, Camille. *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992.

De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

Jenkins, Henry. *Confessions of an Aca-Fan: The Official Weblog of Henry Jenkins*. http://www.henryjenkins.org/.

———. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

———. *Convergence Culture*. New York: New York University Press, 2006.

———. *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers*. New York: New York University Press, 2006.

Lewis, Lisa A., ed. *The Adoring Audience*. London: Routledge, 1992.

Porter, David. *Internet Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Radway, Janice. *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984.

Hellekson, Karen, and Kristina Busse, eds. *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet: New Essays*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006.

Organization for Transformative Works. http://transformativeworks.org/.

Sanders, Joseph L., ed. *Science Fiction Fandom*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.

Teaching Science Fiction: Perspectives from AboutSF's Portable Workshop

Nathaniel Williams

This past summer, AboutSF designed and presented two full-day training sessions on science fiction instruction. "Teaching Science Fiction: A Portable Workshop" was delivered at the Joint SFRA/Campbell Conference in Lawrence, Kansas, on July 12, 2008, and at Denvention 3, the 66th World Science Fiction Convention, in Denver, Colorado, on August 7, 2008. AboutSF—a joint project of SFRA, SFWA, and the University of Kansas, with additional funding from Tor Books, the Heinlein Prize Trust, and other individual donors—provides resources for science fiction education and volunteerism. As such, these workshops represent a logical extension of AboutSF's mission.

SFRA has assisted greatly in this endeavor. SFRA's early support of AboutSF helped the project get off the ground. Several members have donated lesson plans for courses, and others have promoted the site to educators and librarians. AboutSF provides an additional resource where SFRA members can send new teachers who want to learn about the genre. The professor who wants to teach SF, the high school teacher charged with creating an SF course that he or she may not feel fully qualified to teach, the educator who hopes to incorporate SF into an existing class—all these individuals can benefit from AboutSF's material.

The portable workshop presents AboutSF's resources in a condensed, face-to-face training environment. Attendees received a packet and CD-ROM with lesson plans, sample syllabi, Microsoft PowerPoint slideshows, reading lists, video clips, and sample handouts. The course materials come from donations made to AboutSF from experienced teachers; the slideshows, video clips, and notes were assembled by AboutSF prior to the workshop. Nearly all these items are now available online at http://www.aboutsf.com/ and http://www.youtube.com/aboutsf/.

The workshop is purposefully modular and adaptable. Its components are designed to work in multiple venues and multiple audiences (hence, the "portable" moniker). It can be led by anyone with a working knowledge of the genre who is willing to present the materials compiled by AboutSF. It is also broken into shorter sections that can fit scheduling at other venues, such as teacher in-service days or single panels at conventions.

What follows is a summary of the materials presented at these workshops in the context of a larger discussion about SF's unique value to general education. Two guiding concepts lay behind AboutSF's teaching workshops:

1. Science fiction promotes critical thinking and rewards close reading as much as, and perhaps better than, any other literature. It has its own storytelling method and reading protocols (outlined elsewhere by Darko Suvin, Samuel Delany, James Gunn, and others[1]) that demand readers to process complex information in a meaningful way. It also engages students in thought-provoking inquiry about science, technology, and the sociological factors related to changes brought about by them. At the same time, students frequently *want* to read science fiction and are receptive to its ideas. SF's value in the classroom comes

from this combination of literary complexity and built-in student enthusiasm.

2. Teachers often want to teach SF for the aforementioned reasons, but may not undertake science fiction courses due to lack of readily available materials or uncertainty regarding which of the myriad of SF texts work well in the classroom. Simply put, teachers are often strapped for time and resources. This prevents them from being able to teach a course that they and their students would enjoy. If teaching materials are more readily available, SF would be taught more frequently and its intellectual benefits would spread.

On some level, "Teaching Science Fiction: A Portable Workshop" reconciles these inherent problems. By making it easier for educators to propose and teach science fiction courses effectively, the workshop increases SF readership and exposure to SF's core ideas. The two summer workshops were arranged based on questions that new educators would have, resulting in the three sections that guided each day's events.

Section 1: Why Should I Teach Science Fiction?

The first portion of the Portable Workshop began with a discussion of science fiction's value. A nine-minute montage from the Literature of Science Fiction DVD, culled from interviews with major SF authors at the University of Kansas from 1968 to 1978, established the groundwork. These rare clips featured nine legendary SF authors (among them Isaac Asimov, Harlan Ellison, Jack Williamson, and Clifford Simak) offering their thoughts on precisely *why* science fiction is important.

In these film clips, Fred Pohl notes SF's predictive capacity while emphasizing that good SF can't be judged purely on the accuracy of its predictions. Instead, SF "examines contemporary trends" to offer a "mail order catalog of possible alternate futures" that people can choose from (a theme he echoed in his 2004 Campbell keynote address). Similarly, Harlan Ellison explains how SF writers "entertainmentize" complex social issues to stimulate readers' deeper consideration. Poul Anderson asserts SF's connection to all other types of literatures, stating that no "real distinction exists" between SF and other literature beyond a set of storytelling techniques. In contrast, Gordon Dickson notes the difficulties faced by new SF readers who may be unfamiliar with SF's "whole thematic approach (which takes ideas) so far out of context" that readers must deal with the ideas themselves estranged from "everyday connotations." The subsequent slideshow and discussion reiterated how science fiction has shaped the contemporary world and stimulates readers to consider the future.

Two additional authors added their input to the Denvention workshop. David Brin recorded a video clip specifically for the event, highlighting the spirit of inquiry found in science fiction. Denvention's guest of honor, Lois McMaster Bujold, also made a personal appearance recounting her own early experiences as an SF reader and offering encouragement to the new teachers. Collectively, these authors provided insights into why people want to read SF and what it can teach. In one hour, the attendees received a fairly strong foundation in the way SF storytelling differs from other genres and what it can accomplish conceptually.

James Gunn's "The Worldview of Science Fiction," one of the essays included in attendees packets, summed up these ideas. SF accepts change as the nature of things and frequently encourages its readers to look beyond the problems of the individual in favor of the broader perspective. Unlike mainstream fiction that frequently emphasizes individuals' struggles, "Science fiction," Gunn states, "incorporates a belief that the most important aspect of existence is the search for humanity's origins, its purpose, and its ultimate fate." For first-time teachers, this distinction is important.

Section 2: What Science Fiction Should I Teach?

For additional background, more excerpts from the Literature of SF interview series were included. Damon Knight and Isaac Asimov's interviews gave what is essentially a 10-minute primer on the genre's history. The clips mentioned major works from Lucian of Samosata through to the late 1970s, when the interviews were filmed. Asimov's presentation focused particularly on John W. Campbell's contribution to SF, while Knight's covered the pre-Campbell era.

For a list of more recent works, attendees received a handout listing all best novel winners since 1980 for the Nebulas, the Hugo, and the John W. Campbell Memorial Award. The Basic Science Fiction Library, one of the resources originally put together by the Center for the Study of Science Fiction, gave additional suggestions for reading and assignments.

A slideshow on key SF films continued the discussion. A short clip from Forrest J. Ackerman, for example, underscored the need for teachers to be wary of Hollywood's tendency to overemphasize the dangers of science and overrely on the "mad scientist" as a stock type. Connecting film and literature continued as a theme throughout the day, particularly during the practical lesson plan discussion that followed.

Section 3: How Do I Teach Science Fiction?

This section provided the primary focus for the workshop's afternoon. Overviews of three complete courses in science fiction were presented (one college course from the University of Kansas and two high school level courses). The college science fiction course, along with a sister course focused exclusively on SF novels, can be taken online through KU's Continuing Education department; its lessons are fully summarized at AboutSF. com. The Campbell Conference was privileged to have two contributing high school teachers, Mary Rose-Shaffer and award-winning SF author James Van Pelt, available to give case studies in teaching SF at the secondary level. James Van Pelt returned for Denvention.

The anecdotes and advice from Van Pelt and Rose-Shaffer received a warm welcome from the attendees. Their presentations covered the realistic scenarios encountered as a secondary-education teacher prepares and delivers material in an SF course. James Van Pelt also offered perhaps the clearest, most succinct reason for teaching SF in high school: "I've never taught an American Lit course where I turned nonreaders into readers. When I teach SF, *that happens*." Mary Rose-Shaffer's presentation gave similar teaching advice, but also incorporated the additional element of course proposals. To provide a taste of the ideas they covered, some of their advice is listed below.

Sample Advice for New SF Teachers from James Van Pelt

• Use the first day to discuss short material that gets the students reading and discussing ideas immediately. Van Pelt uses Terry Bisson's "They're Made out of Meat"—a thematically complex, under-1,000-word short story of alien contact that can be read and discussed during the first class.

• Provide practical examples of the nature of change in the world. Van Pelt, for example, asks students, "How would your experiences in life be different if you went to school in the 1970s?"

• Don't start literary discussions with theme and meaning. Begin the class with initial reactions to simple things (the ending, the characters) to lead the students into complex ideas found in SF.

• Briefly cover the changes in special effects quality before students watch older films. This will prevent tangential discussion of "believability" of special effects that can derail film discussions.

Sample Advice for High School SF Course Proposals from Mary Rose-Shaffer

• Make sure all proposals conform to state standards. Use a curriculum course matrix (available at AboutSF.com's Lessons Library) to demonstrate to administrators how different areas of the class line up precisely with state requirements.

• When developing curriculum, it may help to choose books such as Wells's *The Time Machine* or Shelley's *Frankenstein* that the school has previously purchased for other courses. Decreasing the first-time expense of the course makes it much more likely to be approved.

• Include a few works of fantasy with the understanding that students read and enjoy them already. Rose-Shaffer's course spends 2 out of 18 weeks on pure fantasy rather than science-oriented material.

• When providing students with a creative writing component (i.e., a short story project), make sure to include a maximum page length. Otherwise, teachers may find themselves grading several lengthy magnum opuses from the students who find this the most compelling element of the class.

Although these recommendations might seem like second nature to experienced SF instructors, they are the sort of practical advice new teachers find invaluable. Both teachers emphasized the need to create projects for the class that engaged a variety of learning styles and student interests. They recommended blending creative projects, visual/slideshow presentations, exams, and research papers. Van Pelt underscored the need to help students connect with the material, delving into SF's answers to larger questions of "Who are we?" "Where are we going?" and "How should we behave?" Rose-Shaffer reiterated the ways to gain course approval, noting high schools' frequent need for additional electives. She added that courses with intensive reading/writing components often translate into higher test state profi-

ciency test scores for students—particularly those students who might be reluctant to take other literature electives, but who take SF out of crossover interest from other media. Her experience testifies that so long as one can prove that the class lines up to state standards and won't cost too much, an SF class should find favor with most administrators.

The Denvention programming had an extra hour and a half of material reviewing recent literature. Diana Tixier Herald, Susan Fichtelberg, and Bonnie Kunzel suggested new releases in young adult SF. They covered dozens of books in detail, supplemented with slides and a lengthy recommendation list. Herald, Fichtelberg, and Kunzel have presented this material at other workshops nationwide, together and separately.

Lindalee Stuckey provided additional new book recommendations at Denvention, and she also provided some of the most interesting materials of the day. Stuckey has created Accelerated Reading Tests for some of Robert A. Heinlein's major juvenile novels. Her tests represent a labor of love and cover five novels: *Between Planets*, *Citizen of the Galaxy*, *Farmer in the Sky*, *Podkayne of Mars,* and *Starman Jones*. Because they're carefully monitored tests, material on ARs is confidential and therefore difficult to distribute via the Web. While AboutSF doesn't host these materials, they were one highlight of the CD-ROM. Stuckey represents another one of those intrepid educators who made the time to create materials, then promptly shared them with others.

Tying the workshop to a major SF-related event like Denvention accomplishes two things. First, it allows the inclusion of such organized, previously road-tested presentations such as Stuckey's and Herald, Fichtelberg, and Kunzel's. As these added Denvention sections demonstrate, the workshop is somewhat organic, with the ability to add new panels depending on availability of presenters at the venue. Second, it allows teachers to see how SF fandom works. Elizabeth Anne Hull, for example, recommended to the Campbell audience that all SF teachers attend at least one con simply to gain such a perspective. Bringing teachers into the SF convention environment shows them the spectrum (and sheer size) of science fiction readership.

These two workshops, we hope, will beget subsequent workshops at other events. If such workshops proliferate, more teachers will propose science fiction courses and more students will become engaged by SF's ideas. This element follows part of James Gunn's charge to "save the world through science fiction." Science fiction can save the world, or at least take steps to change it for the better. SF provides a forum that considers the future, that demands individuals to consider the larger picture, and that valorizes the role science plays as a problem-solving force while weighing its costs against its benefits. Promoting SF in education means creating circumstances in which more students encounter and consider these complexities.

Acknowledgments

duplicate packets and CD-ROMs for the attendees. Coordinating and presenting at this pair of events could have been much more difficult without such a dedicated group of professionals.

Note

1. Although works like Suvin's "Cognition and Estrangement," Delany's "About 5,750 Words" or "Science Fiction and 'Literature'—or The Conscience of the King," and Gunn's "The Protocols of Science Fiction" aren't discussed at length during the presentations or included in the workshop packet, they inform the workshop's contents.

Works Cited

AboutSF. "Highlights from the 2004 Campbell Conference—Science Fiction Authors Meet Scientists." Video. *YouTube*. 4 Jan. 2009. 10 Jan. 2009. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CRZXWDrvp8.

AboutSF. "The Value of Science Fiction." Video. *YouTube*. 18 July 2008. 7 Jan. 2009. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crkt1kiNj4E.

Gunn, James. "The Worldview of Science Fiction" *The Center for the Study of Science Fiction*. 7 January 2008. http://www2.ku.edu/~sfcenter/sfview.htm.

Rose-Shaffer, Mary. "How Do I Teach Science Fiction?" Campbell Conference, Lawrence, KS. 12 July 2008.

Van Pelt, James. "How Do I Teach Science Fiction?" Denvention 3, the 66th World Science Fiction Convention, Denver, CO. 7 Aug. 2008.
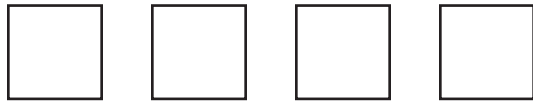
Nonfiction Book Reviews

Uncanny Action at a Distance

Neil Easterbrook

Christopher Bolton, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr., and Takayuki Tatsumi, eds. *Robot Ghosts and Wired Dreams: Japanese Science Fiction from Origins to Anime*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007. Paper, xxii + 269 pages, $20.00, ISBN 0-8166-4974-X.

This is a terrifically useful collection of new and reprinted essays. It will be valuable not just to those who have a special interest in Japanese or nonanglophone SF, but to the entire field of SF studies. Many of us are only beginning to come to an understanding of SF as a global phenomenon, and this volume is a welcome addition to the growing body of work that opens us to the traditions, genres, and nature of SF outside western Europe and North America. It indexes a cluster of concerns interesting to anyone involved with SF: the topoi and tropes are similar—disasters and monsters, lost worlds and robots, cybernetic

prosthetics and space operas—as are the thematics—progressive and reactionary responses to *mechanism*. (*Mechanism* is the nineteen-century Western name for the event of technological machinery transforming human life, and I take the term from Roger Luckhurst.)

Throughout the volume, there is a consistently high level of writing and editing. Seven of the chapters were initially published in *Science Fiction Studies* (2002 and 2004), two are translations of previous Japanese publications, and four are original to the book. The thirteen essays are divided into two parts: five essays in the first section on prose SF from the 1930s, and six essays in the second on post-1990 print, film, and game animation. Both the substantial introduction and afterword actually constitute separate chapters. Individually and across the entire volume, the writers also address aspects of SF criticism in Japan and fan culture. There is an excellent balance of topics and attentions, and the essays show a keen understanding of the needs of their audience. While some of the essays offer novel interpretive accounts of texts and their traditions, several are primarily expository, focused on a Western audience not already familiar with the main figures, texts, and movements of Japanese SF. The essays that do offer novel readings are those that address matters with which Anglophone audiences will have some familiarity. All are interesting and well crafted, and the weaker chapters are only minor disappointments.

The first problem for any study of Japanese SF is that, by its very nature, it is almost impossible to define under one phrase. Japanese SF is fundamentally synthetic, a blending of different cultures, genres, and audiences that renders problematic conventional chronologies or definitions: "Japanese science fiction and its subjects lack clear borders. Both cross time, space, and media" (xvi). Coupled with the associated problems of translation—cultural, linguistic, or temporal—the particular forms of Japanese SF seem both uncannily strange and uncannily familiar. The editors say that perhaps the central characteristics of Japan's SF is the way it reflects "global youth culture" (vii). Japan did not export its prose SF. Instead, it was monster movies, video games, and anime, and so was most appealing to youth culture worldwide.

Just as Anglophone SF did not suddenly spring, fully formed, from the head of H. G. Wells (or *x, y,* or *z,* depending on your preference), so too Japanese SF has a body of work that developed gradually over time. In either the East or the West, SF is best understood as a response to the rise of modernity—initially optimistic, but after Hiroshima increasingly problematic in its accounts of technology. As is well known and has been widely discussed elsewhere (as, for example, by Luckhurst), Western "proto-SF" begins with anxieties about technoscience and mechanism (as, for example, in the instance of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*). In Japan, there is a small body of work that corresponds to the "proto-SF" of the West, but the earliest influences came after the mid-nineteenth century, when after 250 years of isolation Japan opened itself to the Western influences that characterized the Meiji period. Some European works appeared in translation, and this had some impact on the nascent genre. But there were also some experiments in home-grown traditions—some are utopian, some are techno-scientific adventures, some pure extrapolations, fantasies of the sort that might be compared to the French *conte philosophique*.

From the Meiji period on, the influence has been two way: in the West, this is called the rise of *japonaiserie* (ix), the passion for and fashionable adaptation of some of the surface phenomena of Japanese culture, elements of deign, or techniques of art, such as various styles of porcelain or lacquered furniture. In Anglophone SF, one still sees this sort of *japonaiserie* in phenomena such as 1980s cyberpunk, with William Gibson's *Neuromancer* perhaps the most obvious example.

After 1926, Japanese SF has sharp parallels with Anglophone SF, though until World War II, the closest equivalence was with detective fiction. As Miri Nakamura tells us in "Horror and Machines in Prewar Japan," "The forerunner of contemporary Japanese SF" was the "irregular detective fiction" of Yumeno Kyūsaku's *Dogura magura* (1935—the untranslatable title might be rendered as "Trickery" or "Sorceries") (4). Nakamura's essay not only starts the volume's organizational scheme around rough chronological sequence, but it also offers an acute analysis of what will be the book's central interpretive trope—the uncanny, as drawn from Freud's famous but infrequently read 1919 essay "Das Unheimliche." (For a stimulating account of the trope, both in Freud and in subsequent developments and applications, see Royle.) Most of the book's contributors return to this trope, and several times explicitly. But implicitly, it is the central thread that connects each essay to the whole. While no one in this volume does so, one might argue that the uncanny is the most general trope for literatures of the fantastic, and in SF, it is even more essential than cognitive estrangement (one describes the other, but not vice versa). In fact, it also seems to be the trope that structures the same-but-different relations between Anglophone and Japanese SF, their spooky entanglement. In Nakumura's reading of *Dogura magura* and related texts, she is most concerned with notions of doubling and robotic automata, privileged tropes for the psychological and ontological problems produced by the intersection of machines and human beings, which she calls the "mechanical uncanny."

In his essay for David Seed's *A Companion to SF,* Tatsumi says the key transitional moment for Japanese SF was the 1970s, and following Nakamura's essay, the attention of *Robot Ghosts* focuses primarily on the 1970s and after. In "Has the Empire Sunk Yet," Thomas Schnellbächer investigates the important position of representations of the Pacific Ocean between 1945 and the mid-1970s. The book's third chapter is contributed by Kotani Mari: "Alien Spaces and Alien Bodies in Japanese Women's Science Fiction." Kotani traces the complex dialectic between women's writing and feminist rhetoric, as represented in figures of the monstrous, alternate sexuality and the dialogue with Western woman writers. In "SF as Hamlet," Azuma Hiroki, a critic known in Japan for his work on the relations of modernism and postmodernism, briefly speculates on Japanese SF's complex history and the new directions, configuring SF as a sort of Hamlet unsatisfied by both past and present and seeking a resolution in some possible future. The final chapter of the book's first section is William O. Gardner's "Tsutsui Yasutaka and the Multimedia Performance of Authorship." Tsutsui is a major and controversial figure in Japanese SF, and his work divides into several representative phases. Gardner outlines both episodes of the controversy and how Tsutsui was among the first writers to analyze "hypermediated society" (96).

The second section of *Robot Ghosts* concerns recent SF, primarily in film and TV. Here the first essay is Susan J. Napier's "When the Machines Stop: Fantasy, Reality, and Terminal Identity in *Neon Genesis Evangelion* and *Serial Experiments: Lain*." One reason for the prominence of visual media in Japanese SF is the history of aesthetics in Japan: "Japan has had a long tradition, through scroll printing and woodblock printing, in which narrative is as much pictorial as literary" (105). Napier considers how two complex series provide enigmatic treatments of the relation between the human imagination and mechanism. Christopher Bolton follows with "The Mecha's Blind Spot: *Patlabor 2* and the Phenomenology of Anime." *Mecha* is the general name for the mechanized or robotic bodies that humans use (or sometimes transform into) in anime or live-action TV. Both Bolton and Napier are concerned with the general question of whether "human–machine hybrids [reveal that we] have lost all humanity," whether these "increasingly technologized bodies…[will] turn out to be empty shells" (123). Anime then provides a general index of "cultural anxieties" (131). Bolton's specific concern is to ask how these matters might be given expression, especially when anime is already a second-order discourse: "a medium that substitutes animated representation and often computer animation for real bodies and real landscapes" (138). Also like Napier, Bolton concludes that Japanese SF is more often given to foregrounding the question than offing definitive conclusions.

The next essay in this section is perhaps of greater interest to linguists than critics of film or TV, and is almost purely expository: Naoki Chiba and Hiroko Chiba's "Words of Alienation, Words of Flight: Loanwords in Science Fiction Anime" is a rather dull account of loan words, especially those taken from English. But the essay does fit in with others in the volume, emphasizing the hybridity and heterogeneity of Japanese SF.

The fourth essay in part 2 is "Sex and the Single Cyborg: Japanese Popular Culture and Experiments on Subjectivity" by Sharalyn Orbaugh. Orbaugh is concerned to show how mecha and cyborg bodies identify anomalous representations of sexual difference (180), focusing primarily on *Neon Genesis Evangelion* and *Ghost in the Shell.* Livia Monnet then returns to uncanny representation, in this case of women, with "Invasion of the Woman Snatchers: The Problem of A-Life and the Uncanny in *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*." This version of *Final Fantasy* is the feature film coproduced between Japan and Hollywood that opened in the summer of 2001. Monnet is particularly interested in the ways the film attempts "to camouflage science fiction's own abduction and substitution of female agency" (194). In this interesting essay, Monnet identifies the most uncanny feature of the trope of the uncanny: the essence of woman that "refuses to go away, that she resists obfuscation and substitution" (214) despite attempts to subordinate, abduct, or ignore. The final two essays are Saitō Tamaki's account of "Otaku Sexuality" (fan culture critiques the notion of an asymmetrical sexuality in the passive embrace of SF, and instead presages creative, and highly heterogeneous relations with the aesthetic object of affection) and Tatsumi's afterword, "A Very Soft Time Machine: From Translation to Transfiguration" (which, taking up many of the themes raised in the volume, speculates on the future of Japanese SF).

From start to finish, this is an excellent book, leaving very little to quibble about. Yes, I was disappointed that there was

no discussion of *Ultraman* (a television program I watched as a child, and the first time I became aware of Japanese SF; *Ultraman's* lingering and emblematic importance might be suggested by the fact that he was part of the 2007 Hugo trophy), but leaving out things is the primary consequence of including anything at all. I could have benefited from an explicit chapter about representations of race, especially in the military or quasi-military contexts of much SF. For example, I've always been perplexed by the fact that in much anime (certainly much that appears in the United States), the characters appear clearly or primarily white rather than distinctly Asian. What's the cause of this? What are the interpretive consequences within Asia? What does this say about Japanese xenophobia, especially in relation to the United States? Is this the same sort of phenomenon that produced a white Juan (Johnnie) Rico in Paul Verhoeven's *Starship Troopers* or a white Ged in the Sci-Fi Channel's execrable adaptation of *A Wizard of Earthsea?* Is this racist revisionism, an index of cultural anxiety, or another instance of the uncanny's enigmatic operations? Although no single book on Japanese SF could exhaust SF in Japan, there are certainly many opportunities for additional volumes.

Finally, though seven of the essays are reprints, this remains a volume that libraries will want to add to their collection. Not only does it include several things not already printed (or otherwise available in English), it collects them in a single, handy volume. A few of the reprinted essays are modified from their initial publication. Actually, the reprints generally just serve to remind us of how good *Science Fiction Studies* really is—and the generous size of the current publication (10 × 7 inches) from the University of Minnesota Press reminds me of the only thing I really don't like about *SFS*: the compact printing. I don't read mass market paperbacks (if I can avoid it), and I often wish *SFS* packed in fewer words per page. But rest assured: *Robot Ghosts's* graphic and typographical design will not bother those aging curmudgeons who, like me, are rapidly losing their eyesight and blame it on the nefarious Cabal of Greencastle.

Robot Ghosts and Wired Dreams is an interesting, intelligent, and exceedingly rewarding volume. Highly recommended for all university libraries.

Works Cited

Luckhurst, Roger. *Science Fiction*. Malden: Polity, 2005.
Royle, Nicholas. *The Uncanny*. New York: Routledge, 2003.
Tatsumi, Takayuki. "Japanese and Asian Science Fiction." In *A Companion to Science Fiction,* ed. David Seed, 322–36. Malden: Blackwell, 2005.

Politics, Utopia, and Le Guin

Amy J. Ransom

Most utopian critics today view Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia* (1974) as a pivotal text, marking a dialectical synthesis in the development from the thesis of the classic utopia initiated with More's *Utopia* (1615), to the dystopian antithesis found in Zamyatin's *We* (1921), Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and Orwell's *1984* (1949) (Burns 2, 118–21; Moylan, *Demand* 2–12). Le Guin's novel along with Samuel R. Delany's *Trouble on Triton* (1976) debuts the open-ended, critical utopia according to Bülent Somay, Darko Suvin, and Tom Moylan. Two recent works further underline the signal contribution of *The Dispossessed*, although they diverge greatly in their conclusions about its genre and political position.

In *The New Utopian Politics of Ursula K. Le Guin's* The Dispossessed (2005) Laurence Davis (formerly of Oxford University and University College, Dublin) and Peter Stillman (Vassar College) offer "the first ever collection of original essays devoted to Le Guin's novel" (ix). They compile contributions by sixteen international scholars (US, UK, Canada and Turkey) with a bonus, a response by Le Guin. This interdisciplinary collection, although dominated by literary studies and political science, offers a variety of readings, some conventional, others startlingly new. Organized into sections titled "Open-Ended Utopian Politics," "Post-Consumerist Politics," "Anarchist Politics," "Temporal Politics," and "Revolutionary Politics," the essays flow one into the other, with citations from one often complementing the thesis of another. Other helpful apparatus include an introduction, an index, contributor bios, a list of "Further Reading on *The Dispossessed*," and a table indicating chapter pagination for six editions of the novel (US and UK). These essays all refer to the 387-page HarperCollins/Eos reedition (2001); finding it on my own bookshelf, I enjoyed one of those lovely ironies derived from the disconnect between a book's actual content and a marketing department's interpretation of it. The editors of a volume that approaches *The Dispossessed* largely from a left perspective, reading Anarres as the society "better" than that of the author, reference an edition whose back-cover blurb identifies Urras as "the utopian mother planet" of Anarres. Clearly, Le Guin succeeded with the "ambiguous" aspect suggested by the subtitle of her utopian novel.

Laurence Davis synthesizes past antiutopian criticism centered on the literary utopia's purportedly static nature and utopian social theory's tendency toward authoritarianism to reach the (mis-)understood goal of perfection. Davis concurs with the now widely held position that with "*The Dispossessed* Le Guin breaks radically from this static utopian tradition" (4). Simon Stow in "Worlds Apart" builds on the commonplace that *The Dispossessed* is not meant to be a blueprint for a future society. He argues that the alternating structure of the novel offers a dialectical approach, "a critical *method*…to engage in a potentially transfiguring journey between worlds" (44), which ultimately results in "some third position…a successful dialectic," pointing toward a Kuhnian paradigm shift (42).

A number of contributions bring to bear new perspectives on the novel's examination of "Post-Consumerist Politics." Coedi-

tor Stillman examines sustainability on Anarres, while Douglas Spencer examines attitudes toward the object in Le Guin's depictions of Anarresti and Urrasti cultures in light of radical theories of design and architecture (Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement, 1920s Soviet projects and the 1970s French Utopia and Italian Superstudio groups). Andrew Reynolds compares Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* and Odonianism in a reading based in the theories of Adorno, Horkheimer, Baudrillard, and Jameson. Like the latter, Reynolds asks: "Can there be a positive post-utopian imagination, one premised on the prior achievement of capitalist commodity surplus and addressing a new problematic rooted in 'post-scarcity'?" (78)

The essays dealing with Le Guin's "Anarchist Politics" problematize or answer the questions: can anarchy exist in scarcity (as on Anarres)? or is need fulfillment prerequisite to anarchy? Dan Sabia, Mark Tunick, and Winter Elliott consider the tension between individual freedom and society's needs and how various anarchist thinkers, including Odo, Shevek, and Le Guin, resolve these. Three essays focus on the ambiguity of the novel's opening wall image. Tunick and Elliott agree that while some walls unnecessarily divide, others are necessary for individual freedom, while Everett L. Hamner focuses on the need for walls to be "both strong and permeable" in order to avoid the fundamentalism that threatens Anarres (219).

Ellen Rigby and Jennifer Rodgers examine Le Guin's "Temporal Politics," respectively comparing Shevek's temporal theory to Arendt's and reading utopia as "evolution" through Shevek's bildungsroman (181). The volume stresses *The Dispossessed*'s "Revolutionary Politics," as well as the open-ended nature of its utopian vision, as seen in a volume highlight, a contribution by Turkish scholar Bülent Somay, author of the seminal "Towards an Open-Ended Utopia." He teases out the novel's ambiguity toward utopia, rightly identifying Urras as both Paradise and Hell, asserting that "Le Guin is trying to place the utopian horizon not on Anarres but elsewhere" (239). Chris Ferns discusses a similar dialogic relationship in her depiction of Urras and Anarres, but also between the real and the fictional worlds in his contribution.

Claire P. Curtis offers a valuable response to twentieth-century critiques of "the idea of utopia itself" by Michael Oakeshott, Isaiah Berlin, and John Rawls (256), arguing that "[t]o read *The Dispossessed* is to encounter a utopia that is immune from the criticism of these political philosophers, a utopia that breaks new ground for thinking about the ideal" (256). Her analysis examines Oakeshott's criticism of rationalism in comparison to Anarres's current problems, Rawls's concern with teleology compared to Urrasti philosophy, and Berlin's pluralism in relation to Shevek's final understanding for the need for compromise.

While a number of essays reiterate familiar conclusions, each contributor approaches Le Guin's novel with a different theoretical apparatus. The volume signals *The Dispossessed*'s ability to sustain repeated and varied forms of analysis. Indeed, contributor Tony Burns (University of Nottingham) had so much to say about its "Science and Politics" that he subsequently penned what I believe to be the first book-length study of a single Le Guin novel: *Political Theory, Science Fiction, and Utopian Literature: Ursula K. Le Guin and "The Dispossessed"* (2008). The contributors to Davis and Stillman's volume almost unanimously interpret this novel as a literary utopia that expresses Le

Guin's radical, anarchist politics. In contrast, basing his argument on Le Guin's essays from the 1970s, Burns asserts that *The Dispossessed* is "a novel about utopianism in politics rather than a literary utopia" (11). He also maintains that while as a political activist Le Guin is an anarchist, as a novelist and in her attitude to science and ethics she is a conservative, modern essentialist, rather than a postmodern relativist thinker.

Although I seriously question Burns's conclusions about the literary genre of Le Guin's ambiguous utopia, I appreciate the new perspective she offers on the philosophical and political underpinnings of Le Guin's thought. Not only does he tease out its debt to Wells and Zamyatin, he outlines its relationship to Taoism, anarchism and a "center" Hegelian dialectics. Thoroughly documented, the study is at times somewhat tediously argued. This focus on intricately detailed readings of primary and secondary sources distracts Burns from current trends in theories of science fiction, the novel and utopia. He supports his unorthodox argument that science fiction, literary utopias, and "[l]iterary dystopias are *not*…novels" (34) with outdated definitions that focus on the primacy of character development and psychology in the novel and the exclusion of SF and utopia from it on that basis.

Both of these works target a scholarly audience familiar with *The Dispossessed*; I find Davis and Stillman's volume not only a better buy, with a paperback edition available, but also an easier read, presenting a variety of positions. Burns's detailed analyses and argumentative style, as well as his book's hefty price tag, suggest its acquisition for major research libraries; it should, however, be required reading for any Le Guin specialist.

Works Cited

Le Guin, Ursula K. *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia*. 1974. New York: Harper Collins/Eos, 2001.

Moylan, Tom. "Beyond Negation: The Critical Utopias of Ursula K. Le Guin and Samuel R. Delany." *Extrapolation* 21 (1980): 236–53.

———. *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination*. London: Methuen, 1986.

Somay, Bülent. "Towards an Open-Ended Utopia." *Science-Fiction Studies* 11 (1984): 25–38.

Suvin, Darko. "The SF Novel as Epic Narration." 1982. In *Positions and Presuppositions in SF,* 74–85. Kent: Kent State University Press, 1988.

The Intersection of Science and Faith

L. Dianne King

Gabriel McKee. *The Gospel According to Science Fiction: From the Twilight Zone to the Final Frontier.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007. Paperback, 291 pages, $16.95, ISBN 978-0-664-22901-6.

"Science fiction is a form of faith, even a form of mysticism, that seeks to help us understand not only who we are, but who we

will become." Gabriel McKee sets out to support this assertion by embarking on a wide-ranging survey of religious thought as addressed in science fiction. Defining science fiction as "a genre that takes current ideas, theories, and trends in the sciences—including both the 'hard' sciences such as physics and astronomy and the 'soft' sciences like psychology and sociology—and extrapolates from them new worlds that could grow from our own," he surveys novels, short stories, movies, television programs, and comic books. While acknowledging that a variety of faiths have been addressed through the genre, his purpose here is to deal primarily with themes from the Christian religion.

Each chapter addresses a broad theological theme and references various science fiction tales to explore their approach to the theme. He typically includes a reference from the Christian Bible or a Christian theologian, or gives an all too brief summary of general Christian thinking on the theme. This approach works better with some themes than others. McKee's formula works best in the chapter entitled "Inside Data's Brain: Mind, Self, and Soul." Beginning with St. Augustine and Descartes, he explores the question of what makes us human. With the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode "Measure of a Man" as his touchstone, he examines SF concepts including sentience, artificial intelligence, the uploading of human consciousness into computers, and disembodied beings. Through these concepts he wrestles with questions of whether the soul exists, and what qualities actually constitute humanity. He concludes with a quote from Philip K. Dick noting that as we explore the stars, we must also explore our inner nature. By seeking to understand the "spark of the divine" within, we are able to connect with what awaits us beyond this world.

The chapter entitled "Good News from the Vatican," addressing the future of religion in general and the church in particular, is markedly weaker, perhaps because of the relative paucity of SF literature which can be applied to this theme. McKee also faces a rather delicate task in this chapter. The literature he surveys, while generally supporting spirituality, tends to characterize religion as fascist, corrupt, and/or manipulative. The author takes pains to underscore that religion does not *have* to become such a negative entity, but that the potential for it to do so is present.

The most challenging of McKee's chapters is "In the Fullness of Time: Free Will and Divine Providence." If God lives outside time, knowing past, present and future all at once, what does that say about our ability to make choices? Or a divine blueprint for human history? Questions of theodicy (the problem of evil), free will, and divine purpose are raised amid SF stories of time travel, precognition, genetic determinism, and totalitarianism. One may recall Captain Janeway's recurrent quip in *Star Trek: Voyager* that temporal mechanics gave her a headache. When we, as temporal beings, wrestle with the notion of an all-powerful Entity that exists outside time, we may find ourselves similarly challenged.

Other chapters deal with "Gods of the Future" (is there a God? If so, what is God's nature?), creation—how the universe came to be as well as the human impulse to be creative, sin and evil, alien messiahs, faith vis-à-vis empirical knowledge, the afterlife, and what theologians sometimes term "The Last Days."

A curious omission in McKee's work is that there is no mention of *The X-Files.* Since the show dealt pervasively with questions of doubt and faith in both the traditional sense (Scully) and the paranormal (Mulder), one wonders how it never made its way into his discussion. Nonetheless, the author demonstrates a remarkable knowledge of the SF literature. The potential reader should note, however, that the book is full of spoilers for that literature.

McKee's treatment of the theological themes is a bit uneven. While each theme could merit its own book (and has), with some he addresses the theme rather sparsely. He also has a tendency to assume his reader is literate in traditional views of these themes, which may limit the understanding of readers who do not have a rather thorough church background. And occasionally he seems to find it difficult to straddle the fence between a conservative and a more progressive view of theology, one assumes in an effort to avoid offending either side.

Despite the noted shortcomings, McKee has produced a highly readable introduction to theological themes as addressed through science fiction. The individual reader may be spurred to a more thorough examination of theology. And used in a course or small group, the book could provide the impetus for lively and engaging discussions.
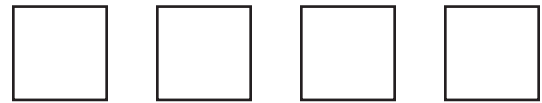
Fiction Reviews

Agent to the Stars

Dominick Grace

John Scalzi's latest novel is also his earliest. First published in a limited edition in 2005, *Agent to the Stars* is Scalzi's practice novel, written in 1997 to prove to himself he *could* write a novel. It was available for years only on his Web site as a shareware novel, but it has proved to have legs (though its aliens don't), as its hard cover publication indicated, and it is now available in a mass market edition, somewhat revised and updated. It's a solid first novel with definite merits and some interesting ideas, but it suffers from a few weaknesses, as well.

Agent to the Stars is a generally amusing first contact novel, with a heavy dose of Hollywood satire thrown in, along with a few meta and intertextual elements. Scalzi finds an entertaining use for the hoary cliché of aliens learning about human society by monitoring television and radio broadcasts. The Yherajk, a gelatinous (and odiferous—they communicate by smell) species, have learned about humans from media and therefore decide that the best way to introduce themselves to the world is to get an agent who can sell them appropriately. They begin with the head of a top agency, introducing themselves to him, taking him to the mother ship, and involving him in their breeding process, in which consciousnesses are melded to create a new unique identity. (This does not harm any entities involved in the process.)

Consequently, the main alien character is a kind of intellectual hybrid of human and alien (and later, dog and actress bimbo). Yes, the aliens are not only ugly alien blobs (the comparison to the "classic" film is one of the many intertextual moments) but also capable of entering, accessing, and even subsuming the consciousnesses of other creatures, though they are ethically opposed to doing so. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, one of the novel's central themes is the standard first contact issue of fear of the alien other, a point rendered none too subtly in the fact that one of the characters, too stupid to be believed actress Michelle Beck, is making a movie about alien overlords who possess the brains of human victims. The novel is on one level a self-conscious novel about first contact stories.

Scalzi manages to have it both ways—decidedly alien aliens who are nevertheless very much attuned to human frames of reference—so troubling questions of how creatures so physically and intellectually different from humans could possibly communicate easily with humans are swept aside, perhaps too effortlessly. Nevertheless, Scalzi mines much humor from the interplay of the alien and the familiar, especially in the various nods to other, mostly filmic, SF works. There are several laugh aloud moments and a generally light touch throughout the book, though Scalzi tends to go for the glib and the obvious in his dialogue (never a strength, really, in his work) and characterization. His protagonist, Thomas Stein, the agent assigned the daunting task of coming up with a "Trojan horse" to sneak the aliens past the knee-jerk fear response, alternates between cleverly outtalking his opponents and threatening them with violence (sledgehammer, baseball bat, golf club…) Actually, and amusingly, fortuitous events rather than his own acumen create the conditions that ultimately provide the Yherajk with their entrée into human society.

Comic SF is difficult to write successfully, and Scalzi manages to do moderately well, albeit without the sureness or hilarity of the classic of first contact comic novels, Fredric Brown's *Martians Go Home,* or of the work of other noted SF humorists (especially as pertains to aliens), such as Eric Frank Russell or Robert Sheckley. Nor does he match the satirical penetration of, for instance, *The Space Merchants.* Though there are some sharp moments, such as the reference to Heath Ledger's death, Scalzi tends to play it soft rather than hard, tending to the Horatian rather than the Juvenalian mode. Hollywood could easily be treated much more savagely, but even the too stupid to be believed bimbo actress is at heart really a nice person, and even the sleazy reporter is redeemed after a fashion. Light comedy rather than satire prevails, which might make the novel more palatable, but also makes it less penetrating or memorable.

The novel does have a good contemporary ambiance, and offers many in jokes for the SF aficionado in its intertextual references. Its self-consciousness is also amusing without being oppressive; anyone interested in assigning a book that addresses the tropes and clichés of first contact stories in a light and easy to read text (the novel is over 300 pages long, but it's a quick read) while also providing some interesting (if somewhat implausible) aliens and exploring some interesting intellectual hypotheticals (if someone is brain dead, is it okay to absorb her memories and subsume her body? Is the resultant creature still to some extent 'her'?) will find it a useful book. Its accessibility and clarity should be good for generating classroom discussion.

Ultimately, its answers are too easy (if any reader believes that humanity would accept the Yherajk with open arms as a result of the scenario Scalzi creates to solve that problem, I would be very surprised indeed), and its conformity to the expectations of comic form (right down to the protagonist's marriage at the end) too pat, for it to achieve greatness. It is an entertaining, light, unexceptional and unexceptionable novel.

A Three-in-one Roller Coaster

Joan Gordon

Joe Haldeman. *Marsbound.* New York: Ace, 2008. Hardcover, 304 pages, $24.95, ISBN 978-0441015955.

In preparation to write this review, I thought I'd just take another brief look at *Marsbound* but ended up rereading it; I couldn't help myself. Joe Haldeman knows how to write the sort of clear, lively prose that keeps you rolling along so quickly you barely have time to register that it's been masterfully constructed—the way you hope roller coasters are built. *Marsbound,* which promises to be the first volume of a trilogy, with *Starbound* half written, and *Earthbound* to follow, is itself three books in one: the first part is a coming-of-age story, the second a first-contact one, and the third a doomsday plot. All three are narrated convincingly by a young woman—she's almost eighteen in that first section and perhaps twenty-four by the end of the third. I wonder if we will be following her as she matures, the way we followed the woman narrator of the Worlds trilogy (1981–92). I hope so. This novel is not so obviously political as that earlier series was; instead it offers fascinatingly detailed speculation on space elevators, planetary colonization, and bioengineering, for example. But, as I shall try to make clear, this is not a shallow or trivial romp, as much fun as it is to read.

Carmen Dula is the very teen protagonist who describes her emigration with her family to a Mars colony via a carefully constructed (by both the fictional fabricators and Haldeman) Clarkeian space elevator. This adventure forms the first part of the novel and in the megatext of SF it is definitely speaking back not only to Clarke, but to Heinlein's young adult novels, though with more graphic sex, and to John M. Ford's *Growing Up Weightless* (1994). We learn the carefully extrapolated details of traveling to and setting up housekeeping on another planet, from weight limits to water conservation to getting on one another's nerves. While we get a feel for Carmen's character, bright and hardworking, but ready to push limits and buck authority, this is also very much about the technological speculations which Carmen, in her role as the reader's tour guide, carefully, but never tediously, describes. Except for the aforementioned sex scenes, this is a very old-fashioned SF with plenty of exposition.

Part II, the first contact novel, reflecting Carmen's gradual maturity and her exciting discovery, is less expository. Flouncing out of the Mars base after a run-in with the novel's antagonist, an officious and oddly hostile administrator named Dargo Solingen, Carmen is injured and then rescued by aliens. They too are colonists, not natives, and it is suggested that they are bioengineered. Acknowledging the impossibility, given what we now know about Mars, of our ever finding Martians, Haldeman imagines a more plausible situation—alien colonists who, like the protago-

nist's friend in Weinbaum's classic "Martian Odyssey," are fellow immigrants. Haldeman's description of the aliens is a skillful demonstration of how communication can take place across huge physiological and cultural differences; and the aliens, with their own gestures and viewpoints, are engagingly drawn.

In Part III, Haldeman allows Carmen to mature to adulthood; she learns to manage the continuingly hostile administrator, deepens her sexual relationship into something emotionally meaningful, and finds a vocation in serving as an ambassador between the humans and the aliens. But this is the doomsday plot, so here we learn that earlier hints about the aliens as bioengineered beings have dire implications, the plot thickens with satisfying tension, and there is a bang-up conclusion that has both fireworks and romance. Think *Independence Day* and *Armageddon,* but with better sex scenes.

Of course, I won't give away the conclusion, but Carmen's maturity in Part III means that her narration allows greater depth than in the first two sections. While Part I suggests how difficult it is to leave the life one has always known to emigrate to an alien clime, by Part III Carmen has gained the ability to look beyond her own desires to her relationships with her parents and her lover, and we begin to understand the emotional impact of space travel. While Part II suggests how we might imagine the alien other, Part III considers how the alien might imagine us: the lead alien, Red, admits "to being jealous of humans for having that level of complexity [sex and romance] in their daily lives" (212). While Part II helps us understand the aliens through analogy, in Part III, Carmen understands that this understanding "was partly our seeing them through a human-colored filter, interpreting their actions and statements in anthropomorphic ways" (215). While Carmen risks her life in Part II, in Part III, both Red and her lover demonstrate more thoughtful ways to think about life and death.

Thus, Haldeman demonstrates his ability to entertain us with lively, vivid, and inventive versions of traditional SF models, but then he raises the stakes and shows how those models can be enriched by the consideration of their emotional and philosophical implications. And we barely notice that he has done this because the suspense doesn't give us time to think. It all happens on a roller coaster running at the speed of plot.

When Diplomacy Fails

Rikk Mulligan

Eric Flint and Mike Resnick, eds. *When Diplomacy Fails: An Anthology of Military SF.* Deerfield: ISFiC Press, 2008. Hardcover, 288 pages, $30, ISBN 9780975915660.

While military SF has a history stretching back to the nineteenth century, the subgenre tends to appear on bookshelves in cycles, such as the period after the Vietnam conflict that debuted Drake's Hammer's Slammers, and the Reagan-era explosion of anthologies edited by Pournelle, Haldeman, and Greenberg. In the post-Soviet and post–Gulf War era, military SF seemed to shift more to alternate history, but in the first decade of the twenty-first century several new anthologies have been released against a backdrop of prolonged American military involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq. One such is *When Diplomacy Fails,*

which delivers nine stories selected by the editors to reveal the human side of warfare and highlight the physical and psychological cost to the fighters. The editors reinforce the role of these selections as social commentary—as working SF—because after briefly sketching the subgenre's historical development and listing its more popular authors and works, they end their preface with the admonishment: "Read, enjoy—and think."

Stephen Leigh's "Encounter" was originally published in 1979 and is possibly the most powerful story in the collection. Myrna, the last survivor of a family killed by Voll, tracks him down inside an impenetrable barrier after a war. Of course, both are veterans; Myrna is the last of a family unit of animatanks, and the cyborg Voll has been imprisoned by his fearful creators. Leigh subtly conveys loss and pain, as well as hints not all costs are obvious.

Harry Turtledove's "Black Tulip" is the most contemporary as it is set during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Published in 2001, it manages to skillfully depict both Soviet conscripts and Mujahidin fighters, as well as convey nuances of Islam and render the carnage of modern weapons. While his dragon is drawn from the fantastic and mythic, its symbolism adds a sharp contrast to the pains and deaths of unique characters. The questions and thoughts that linger tie all too clearly to contemporary conflict in Afghanistan.

Mike Resnick's alternate history, "The Burning Spear at Twilight," was first released in 2005 and is the story of Kenyatta's manipulation of Western media and public pressure to help free Kenya from British rule. This story is one of the stronger in the collection as it extends beyond personal costs to the cost of leaderships and the role of vision in conflict, beyond the immediacy of the tactics and technology that drive the majority of the stories.

David Weber's 54-page "In the Navy" and Eric Flint's 96-page novella, "Fanatic," make up the bulk of the collection; as such they have far more space to develop characters and in Flint's case more convoluted plots. Weber's take was first published in 2004 and is set within Eric Flint's "Ring of Fire" 1632 universe. This story richly details the world of Europe during the Thirty Years War with a pocket of 1998 West Virginia dumped into it and the political and technical problems surrounding the development of a nineteenth-century-era navy using the knowledge base of a teenage war gamer alongside a former U.S. naval officer and corporate CEO. For those familiar with the universe this story helps link the novels *1632* and *1633,* not surprisingly given the collaboration between Flint and Weber on the sequel.

Originally released in 2003, Flint's story is set in Weber's Honorverse and offers an alternative view—sympathetic—of the People's Republic of Haven. The main character is a commissioner (think Soviet commissar against the backdrop of the French Revolution's Committee of Public Safety) and is a tale of false faces, political fanaticism, and command during a time of revolts and coups.

The remaining four stories round out the collection in terms of themes and draw from other well-known examples of military SF. "A Ship Named Francis," by John Ringo and Victor Mitchell, is a darkish comedy set in the Honorverse with insights into the affects of prolonged stress and fatigue on a crew. David Drake's "The Day of Glory" is a Hammer's Slammers story of a battle after a local militia recruitment drive and the fates of those

recruits; given its 2006 publication this story can be read as a reflection of contemporary events in Iraq. Tanya Huff's "Not That Kind of a War" is set in her Confederation universe and offers a brief story of Sergeant Torin Kerr's attempts to manage a Lieutenant besotted with images of the romantic warrior during an emergency civilian evacuation operation. Gene Wolfe's 1975 story, "Straw," is a fantasy depicting the search of a small balloon-borne mercenary team looking for food and fuel. This story seems most out of place as the end only hints at possible costs at the end in a few, scant final details.

All of the writers are masters of their craft though some of these selections are not the best examples of the author's work or their specific universe. Some of these stories strongly represent "the cost" as a theme, though others do not quite have the space to do it as well as the others. Seven of these stories are quite short—ranging from 8 to 23 pages—while Weber's and Flint's alone take half the page count. Most of the stories are recent—printed after 2001—but two are from the 1970s; moreover, four come from recent Baen anthologies. Resnick's postimperialism, Huff's strong female enlisted officer, Flint's political inquisition, and Weber's take on technological innovation offer a range of themes within military SF for a middle school or popular culture undergraduate class. Unfortunately, the costs are not always well conveyed and better examples exist for courses and audiences of a more rigorous critical bent, especially given the cost of this hardback anthology.

FICTION MINIREVIEWS
Ender in Exile

Andrew Kelly

Orson Scott Card. *Ender in Exile.* New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 2008. Hardcover, 377 pages, $25.95, ISBN 978-0-7653-0496-4.

Orson Scott Card's *Ender in Exile* charts the travels and struggles of Andrew "Ender" Wiggin in the wake of his victory over hostile aliens in Card's *Ender's Game.* The novel takes place and also expands and revises the closing chapters of *Ender's Game* as well as elaborating the time between *Ender's Game* and *Speaker for the Dead.* Political realities on Earth force Ender into exile as governor to a colony where he is concerned with exploration of the planet and political crisis. Ender's relationships figure heavily in the plot, while seemingly unrelated chapters intersect only at the books somewhat hasty conclusion. While some elements of space opera and colonization narratives figure in the novel, the real focus is almost solely on Ender's characterological development. The backseat that plot takes and the uneven pacing give much space over to epistolary passage or dialogues on philosophical and psychological issues of guilt, punishment and culpability. Most activity in the novel is either political maneuvering or letter writing. Card elaborates Ender's relationships with those closest to him, illuminating familial concerns prevalent throughout Card's fiction. Much time in long epistolary passages that carry sentimental weight, adding facets to characters that were not stated as explicitly before. *Ender in Exile* serves as a sometimes awkward insertion between Card's

most highly regarded works and to foreground Card's thematic focus without any truly significant additions to the series.

Regenesis

Edward Carmien

C. J. Cherryh. *Regenesis.* New York: DAW Books, 2009. Hardcover, 592 pages, $25.95. ISBN 978-0756405304.

In this long-awaited sequel to the award-winning *Cyteen,* Cherryh returns to the dysutopian Union culture of her Company Wars setting. Of central concern is Ariane Emory 2, the physical and intellectual clone of Emory 1, a figure of Benjamin Franklin–esque importance in the history of human clone breeding and mind-tape-dispensing Union. As is somewhat too customary in later Cherryh novels there is a political struggle at hand, and the barely mature Emory 2 steps up to maintain social order. Cherryh fans will enjoy, as always, the deep psychological focus on Emory 2′s struggle to power (along with associated psychological torments of her hangers-on). Those hoping for a novel of equivalent sweeping power to *Cyteen* will be left adrift in the resolution of surmountable mental issues. The villain is a paper tiger, the plot is thin, but Emory 2 does succeed in maturing into a kinder, gentler genius than her forebear, and Cherryh does reveal some answers to the mysteries of novels past, including references to *40,000 in Gehenna.* In addition, she sets the stage for future politicking, as figures swept off the stage late in *Cyteen* gestate in the clone tanks. Readers fond of her Foreigner series tropes—the privileged, hypercapable few surrounded by black-clad support staff pledged to maintain an aristocratic world order—may enjoy this all-human take on the idea. *Cyteen,* however, remains state of the art when it comes to addressing issues of cloning and its social implications.

The Unincorporated Man

Bill Dynes

Dani Kollin and Eytan Kollin. *The Unincorporated Man.* New York: Tor, 2009. Cloth, 480 pages, $25.95, ISBN 978-0765318992.

Justin Cord, a billionaire who has discovered the secret of suspended animation, awakens after three hundred years to a society in which every person is "incorporated," with 1,000 shares of personal stock available for purchase to the highest bidder. Repelled by an economic system that smacks to him of slavery, Cord refuses to incorporate, and runs afoul of the interplanetary corporate giant GCI. Seeing Cord's principled stand as a threat to civilization itself, GCIs Hektor Sambianco vows to force Cord to sell shares of himself, and the cat-and-mouse game leaps from boardrooms to courtrooms and across the solar system. The novel has an engaging retro tone, complete with flying cars, virtual reality, and morphing furniture. Even the characterization recalls Golden Age simplicity; Cord takes the place of the defiant, isolated scientist, complete with a beautiful yet unavailable love interest, quirky companions, and a coldly manipulative villain.

That tone, however, contributes to an ambiguity that plagues the novel, which can never quite decide if it actually *likes* the future. Cord eschews most of the modern amenities his wealth could buy, surrounding himself instead with reminiscences of his own time, including even newspapers on actual paper. For all Cord's determination to resist incorporation, refusing also to buy shares of other people, most of the society Cord challenges is perfectly content with the status quo. The Kollin brothers spend little time showing us those evils that Cord appears to take for granted. The novel is an entertaining diversion, promising more than it finally delivers.
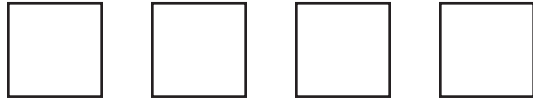
Media Reviews

Synecdoche, New York [film]

Alfred E. Guy Jr.

Synecdoche, New York. Writer-director, Charlie Kaufman. Perf. Philip Seymour Hoffman, Catherine Keener. Sony Pictures Classics. December 2008.

On the night we saw *Synecdoche, New York,* when my wife and I left the theater, we encountered a rainfall so slight it was little more than a mist. Combined with the bright nighttime lights of New York's Columbus Circle, an eerie and diffuse illumination was produced, a glow that seemed to come from everywhere at once—a gorgeous light without shadow, but which also left us feeling lost and disoriented.

In its simultaneous joy and dread of our instinct for self-scrutiny, *Synecdoche,* directed by Charlie Kaufman, produces a similarly confusing glow, making you feel both deeper and denser, wiser but much less certain. Indeed, one of the last images of the movie is of the hero wandering around a New York landscape wreathed in smoke. Having spent nearly forty years (spanning most of the movie) in search of a complete, complex vision of the meaning of his life, he stops in the mist to lay his head on someone's shoulder and receive simple human comfort. It's a testament to Kaufman's achievement that I needed a similar solace after just watching his movie. As New Yorkers, we usually start discussing our impressions while the credits still roll, but my wife and I held hands and stood quietly for at least 15 minutes outside the theater.

Synecdoche, New York is the first movie directed by Kaufman, who also wrote it. Kaufman is the screenwriter for some of the best movies of the twenty-first century, including *Adaptation, Being John Malkovich,* and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind.* In *Synecdoche,* he tells the story of a theater director named Caden Cotard who, given a Macarthur grant, spends the rest of his life building a simulacrum of New York in which to produce a play about his life (a play he considers calling "Simulacrum"). Increasingly, the actors he's hired become

frustrated that the work is always in development and never gets performed. But every time they make progress in capturing his reality, Cotard realizes both that his life has continued to change and—more profoundly—that this very progress must now be incorporated into the model. Thus, for instance, after hiring an actor named Sammy to portray himself, Cotard realizes he needs another actor to play Sammy, etc.

Two things make this text of interest to SF critics. (1) Over the course of the film, the representation of being is increasingly nonrealistic: time dilates and expands; psychological factors manifest as physical ailments or environmental conditions; the absurdly metaphoric mixes with the painstakingly quotidian—and no one seems to notice. Such formal experimentation with representing psychological and social reality is firmly part of the SF tradition of Philip José Farmer and Roger Zelazny. (2) There are several significant slippages between the real and the metaphoric, as when a troubled character buys a house that's literally on fire and succumbs to smoke inhalation twenty years later. Such crossings have obvious parallels in much of Philip K. Dick's work, especially with how slippages during *The Man in the High Castle* shed light on both the alternate American history and its erstwhile original.

Most other reviews read the movie as condemning Cotard's self-reflexiveness, arguing that Kaufman urges us to seize life and not just think about it. It's true that Cotard never sustains a loving relationship in the terms we're used to from the movies—his wife leaves him; he waits thirty years before beginning an affair with Hazel, another potential love interest; his daughter dies having withheld her forgiveness. And in that time Cotard seems increasingly consumed with staging his life in the theater project, so that he spends the very day after Hazel dies writing their last moments together into the play, exclaiming, "It was the happiest day of my life, and I'll be able to live it forever." Having delayed, he then immediately repackages and repurposes—another form of distancing himself from feeling. Taken together, these failings suggest that Cotard is to be learned from rather than emulated. Besides, what you feel through the last hour of the movie is an aching sadness. By the logic of most American movies, this suggests we should reject the path being trod.

But there's just too much beauty for me to accept that Cotard's life is in vain. His anguish is too exquisite to serve simply as an object lesson. In my reading, Kaufman recognizes that even experience sharply felt must always linger longer in memory than it does in real time. As such, Cotard's obsession with processing his existence is different in degree—but not in kind—from the experience of every single human life. Kaufman's focus on this quality—which extends a conversation that runs through his earlier movies—is the third reason that SF critics should care about *Synecdoche.* (3) A whole wedge of SF literature explores the importance of self-monitoring as a component of consciousness, including *Neuromancer, Blood Music,* Frank Herbert's *Destination Void,* Ted Chiang's "Story of Your Life," and Ken Liu's "Algorithms for Love." These and many other stories frequently acknowledge that some distancing is a necessary component of self, even if the protagonists may seek fuller immersion in the body or in the now. *Synecdoche* goes further than most, arguing that there's a quality of human presence that can only be made in reflection—indeed, that only obsessive regard can produce intense being. And as much as it wrings you out, the movie also

produces a feeling of solidarity that verges on acceptance or grace. Indeed, as my wife and I waited, another couple stood several feet away. After a while, one of them sighed so deeply it seemed almost a gasp for air. "Isn't it?" I replied quietly.

Fringe [TV show]

Andrew Kelly

Fringe: Season 1. Prod. J. J. Abrams. Perf. Anna Torv, Joshua Jackson, John Noble, Lance Reddick. Fox, 2008.

The television show *Fringe,* which began airing in the United States on Fox last fall, follows the investigations of FBI agent Olivia Dunham into strange events, correlated into an ambiguous grouping called "The Pattern." Aiding in her search for correlations is the mildly and amusingly insane Dr. Walter Bishop and his reluctant, skeptical son Peter. Each episode of the show works on a nearly unbroken formula, where an initially normal event is suddenly transmuted via some technology or agency into an often destructive extranormal phenomena which then must be investigated. The series' pilot, for instance, opens on rattled passengers of a jetliner suffering turbulence focusing on a man apparently suffering from airsickness. His distress becomes severe and suddenly he is out of his seat, struggling with some malady. The whole of the plane quickly succumbs to the same distress and the scene closes on some big-budget face melting. After these events are unveiled, the rest of the episode is devoted to rooting out the cause and the perpetrators behind them, with the aim of stopping or understanding their impetus. We're given to understand that there are powerful and shadowy figures at work and each of the main characters eventually comes to have a personal as well as general stake in discovering these causal forces.

From science fiction's early days on television, most vividly in Rod Serling's *Twilight Zone,* there has been a focus on telling strange and ambiguous stories draped in the tropes and themes of the genre. *Fringe* has in it some part of this tradition though it has its most direct ancestor in the Chris Carter's classic *The X-Files.* To review *Fringe* without considering *The X-Files* would be like watching the development of the motorcycle without taking into consideration the bicycle; both have a similar niche but one is faster paced and more driven version of the other. There is, in fact, so much in common with *The X-Files* that one could dismiss *Fringe* as a lame imitator. The two series, airing on the same network, have nearly identical premises and feature some similar dynamics between two of its main characters. *Fringe*'s appeal, then, comes from where it expands on *The X-Files* format. It takes cues from its cocreator J. J. Abrams's other show, *Lost,* in a focus on long intricate plot-lines in a way that *The X-Files* only skirted. Fringe also benefits from advances in visual effects. For example, place names are overlaid in three-dimensional letters in a sort of nod toward a HUD or augmented reality. A large force in the show is also the multi-national science and technology firm Massive Dynamic, which seems to often have a hand in most all of the team's cases and a role at least equal of that of the federal government. It seems clear that this company plays some major, though for now ambiguous, role in "The Pattern."

There is no Scully here to doubt whether The Pattern exists. It is always given as fact that events correlate some, and this belief is one of the few left unquestioned. *Fringe* also expands the role of the traditional "mad scientist" coming to terms with his work's consequences. Dr. Bishop has a half-remembered history of work for the government, one that always connects him to the cases and leave him partly responsible. Bishop has spent years sequestered in a mental institution, given drugs, and he now lacks many common social skills and fills the shows with non sequiturs of either little or tremendous consequence in equal measure. Often the cases deal with things that are given a scientific grounding, a possibility for an explanation. Those these scientific explanations rarely fail, they are usually complicated or undermined.

Given their similarities and their separation by a number of years and a number of major events in both American and world history, comparing the concerns and focuses of *The X-Files* and *Fringe* in light of their positions to either side of the opening of the 21st century, aspects like Massive Dynamics role in "The Pattern" reflect contemporary anxieties, while concerns over science leveraged unethically may reflect ongoing concerns about Terrorism. *Fringe* can also as a work dealing constantly with future shock; Dr. Bishop constantly reminds his son that he must be open to possibilities outside his current understanding, that things are out there that are not yet understood. One could use the work in conjunction with texts by Futurists or others hoping to detect a crisis before it arrives in the awareness of the general public. *Fringe* is not the strongest genre television writing of late, nor is it the richest or most engaging. On the whole, it's fun and interesting enough to be worth the time it takes to watch it. The show has a humor and whimsy not found in more concerted efforts in the genre, which in weaker episodes carries the show, mostly by way of John Noble's reprisal of the insane father figure after his portrayal of Denethor in *The Lord of the Rings. Fringe* may yet prove to be a better show than it has so far. I'll be watching to see if, as may well be intended, it can fill for the hollow place left by *The X-Files.*

City of Ember [film]

Ritch Calvin

City of Ember. Dir. Gil Kenan. Perf. Harry Treadway, Saoirse Ronan, Tim Robbins, Bill Murray. Playtone, 2008.

The 2008 film, *City of Ember,* is based on the children's book (ages 10–14) *The City of Ember* by Jeanne DuPrau. *City of Ember* was published in 2003, and since then, DuPrau has written three more volumes of the Books of Ember: *The People of Sparks* (2004), *The Prophet of Yonwood* (2007), and *The Diamond of Darkhold* (2008). As is often the case, however, the movie makes significant changes in the transformation from page to screen.

The movie centers upon a city constructed underground by the Builders. According to the voiceover in the opening sequence, "on the day the world ended," the Builders determine to build and populate an underground city that will last two hundred years. The city of Ember represents the only hope for mankind to survive. According to the Trivia section on imdb.

com, the word "ember" in Hungarian signifies both "man" and "human"; so, the underground city is the City of Mankind. The Builders also decide that they will not tell the people who go underground about the impending death of mankind, in order to "spare them sorrow." The Builders place instructions and one half of the key necessary to leave the city inside a metal box. The box will be handed down from mayor to mayor, and it is designed to open automatically after two hundred years have elapsed. But, of course, the plan goes awry; the box is "lost" and the citizens of Ember remain underground beyond their appointed years. The film opens 240 years after Ember was built, and everything is falling apart. The pipes are leaking, the food is running out, and the generator, the only source of power and light in the underground city, is failing more and more frequently.

The narrative center of the film is a young girl and boy, Lina Mayfleet and Doon Harrow. In a ritual reminiscent of Lois Lowry's *The Giver* (DuPrau admits that she admires Lowry's work), the children have reached the age when they are given their job assignments. Doon is assigned to work in the Pipeworks, and Lina becomes a messenger. Their assignments are strategic, as Doon's gives him access to the machinery and the underground tunnels of the city, while Lina's gives her access to the entire city as she delivers messages. When Lina delivers a message to the mayor, she notices the portraits of the past mayors, and recognizes the boxes that they each hold under their arms. From that, she knows that the box in her apartment is significant.

Doon's father is a tinkerer, and Doon generally finds him ineffectual and useless. But one day he hears his father's voice on an answering machine tape, and he understands that his father had been a part of the same conspiracy to escape Ember that killed Lina's father. The young girl and boy, with the occasional help from allies such as the greenhouse keeper, Clary (Marianne Jean-Baptiste), and a nearly comatose pipe worker, Sul (Martin Landau), they manage to foil the corrupt mayor, outrun the giant mole, decipher the decaying text on the sheet of instructions, and escape the City of Ember.

Visually, the film is striking in its obsolescent, decaying beauty. Even in the limited space of an underground city, Ember is filled with towering edifices, gigantic generators, and intricate machines that seem to serve no purpose. The set and costume design invoke the aesthetic style of director Terry Gilliam. The citizens of Ember are dressed in rags like the characters in *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (1988). The "emergency control room" and the escape mechanism that leads back to the surface invokes the absurd time machine device in *Twelve Monkeys* (1995). The pile-up of debris and collections of yarn and the cobbled mechanical devices invoke *Brazil* (1985). While some critics have argued that the visual effect is bleak, gray, and flat, I would argue that that doesn't necessarily detract from the film. In fact, it underscores the dire conditions of Ember. The set design strongly complements the narrative theme.

Both critics' and viewers' responses to the film have been mixed. Part of the criticism stems from the film's adaptation of a novel and the choices the film makes. In the novel, the central premise is, arguably, that the Builders deliberately chose to leave the citizens of Ember ignorant of their past and of the "sorrow" taking place on the surface. To insure their ignorance, they populate the city with older people and babies. Once the

older generation has died off, the citizens of Ember will have no collective memory, at all. Ignorance and the desire for knowledge are central to the book: the citizens of Ember create their own library as a repository of knowledge, Doon catalogs all the animals and insects that he captures, Clary ponders the nature of life in a seed. Through her efforts of reassemble to set of instructions left by the Builders, Lina determines what they are much sooner than in the movie.

In the film, much of the focus on knowledge is gone. Doon does have a book that he consults, but his compulsion for cataloging and learning is missing. Instead, the central premise is, arguably, that the adults are ineffectual or corrupt, and that individuals who are young and idealistic, those who refuse to accept the status quo, those who refuse to accept that a better life might exist, can and will prevail. Instead of a quest for the truth or for knowledge, the film becomes an battle and a race to get out of Ember.

The book and film fit within the postapocalyptic subgenre, and both could be taught in a class on this subgenre. *City of Ember,* with its focus on ignorance and knowledge, might pair well with Andre Norton's *Star Man's Son* (1952). Walter Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz,* and some of its derivatives, suggest a reemergence of a religious order. While DuPrau's book at least hints at this through the cult of the Believers, that element is largely missing from the film. The 2000s have also seen a surge in postapocalyptic films, including *28 Days Later* (2002), *The Day after Tomorrow* (2004), *Children of Men* (2006), *I Am Legend* (2007), *Cloverfield* (2008), and *Wall-E* (2008). Like *Wall-E,* despite the failings of humans to learn from their excesses, *City of Ember* offers a glimmer of hope at the end of a long exile from the face of the Earth.

The film is, indeed, filled with logical holes—though the book contains many of these gaps, as well. We never know how or why the world has ended. We do not know how the Builders were able to construct the city of Ember. We do not know how they managed to preserve pineapple in tin cans that would last for 240 years. We do not understand why the escape route should be as convoluted and unlikely as it is, except that it is consistent with everything else in the film. If a viewer focuses on these narrative and logical gaps, then s/he might well remain unconvinced. If the viewer focuses on the absence of scientific extrapolation, on the lack of social context or development, or on the scant character development, the film does fall flat. If, however, the viewer focuses upon the narrative themes, if that viewer considers the necessity of books, knowledge, and collective memory, if that viewer focuses on the parental role of government and its responsibility to protect humanity, if that viewer ponders the importance of dreams and hope, if one accepts that human beings and their hope cannot be contained, even within a self-contained city, then the film's central premise is a compelling one. If Ember is the City of Mankind, if it is mankind's last hope, then how will human nature respond and prevail?

Works Cited

"City of Ember." *Internet Movie Database.* 2008. 8 Jan. 2009 http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0970411/.

DuPrau, Jeanne. *The City of Ember.* New York: Yearling, 2003.

"Jeanne DuPrau: Frequently Asked Questions." *Jeanne DuPrau.* 9 Jan. 2009 http://www.jeanneduprau.com/faq.shtml.

Pushing Daisies [TV show]

James H. Thrall

Pushing Daisies: Season One. Creator: Bryan Fuller. Perf. Lee
Pace, Anna Friel, Chi McBride, Kristin Chenoweth, Field
Cate, Ellen Greene, Swoosie Kurtz. DVD. Warner Home
Video, 2008., $29.98.

Fans of the endearing television series *Pushing Daisies*
must wish the life-giving finger of lead character Ned (Lee
Pace) could resurrect the show as easily as it resurrects murder
victims. Canceled as the second season headed into its final
episodes, the series offers an imaginative mixture of tongue-in-
cheek detective noir and romance that earned its first season a
dozen Emmy nominations and three wins. Based on the fantasti-
cal premise that Ned, owner and pie chef of The Pie Hole res-
taurant, can bring the dead to life with a touch, *Pushing Daisies*
manages to make death and the frustrations of unconsummated
love simultaneously poignant and funny. Indeed, the series
presents its own distinctive take on the eternal intertwining of
love and death by ratcheting up the significance of a simple act
of touch to the difference between living and dying.

Discovering as a young boy that he has the inexplicable gift
to confer life, Ned also learns—tragically—that the gift comes
with certain rules. Once returned to life, a person (or plant or
animal—Ned first resurrects his dog Digby) will die perma-
nently if touched by Ned a second time. But unless that second
touch does occur, and within 60 seconds, someone or something
else in close proximity will die. Young Ned saves his mother
by touching her after her death from a burst blood vessel, but in
the process kills the father of his best friend Charlotte "Chuck"
Charles (Anna Friel). He ends up losing his mother to boot—
and learns the full ramifications of what a touch entails—when
she subsequently kisses him goodnight, and so touches him for
the fatal second time. Separated by the deaths of their respec-
tive parents, Ned and Chuck meet again and renew their child-
hood love as adults after Chuck is murdered and Ned resurrects
her…and keeps her resurrected. Although living and working
together (in the first season they even share an apartment), Ned
and Chuck enact a dicey dance of physical avoidance that makes
sexual tension the show's central theme. The innocence of their
first childhood kiss thus provides one bookend balancing the
kiss (or any other touch) that must never take place between
them as adults.

The extremely careful courtship of Ned and Chuck is set
within a network of friendships with private eye Emerson Cod
(Chi McBride) and Pie Hole waitress Olive Snook (Kristin
Chenoweth). Partners in solving crime, Emerson and Ned, joined
by Chuck, use the sixty-second window of life Ned can provide
murder victims to learn clues about how they were murdered.
At first a problematic outsider, frustrated by her own unrequited
love for Ned, Olive is drawn increasingly into the inner circle as
confidant and collaborator, though just how much to incorporate
her remains a continuing plot complication. Chuck's return to
life must also be kept a secret from the two aunts, Vivian Charles
(Ellen Greene) and Lily Charles (Swoosie Kurtz), who raised
her (and who, in Lily's case, turns out to be Chuck's mother).
Ubiquitous, finally, though not physically present, is a narrator
(Jim Dale) who explains, contextualizes, and keeps the audience
oriented through foreshadowing hints and rehearsals of previous
events.

The continuous narration is a key element in constructing
a coherent fantasy world to encompass the possibilities and
limitations of Ned's more-than-natural power. "The facts were
these…," the narrator regularly intones in laying out the specific
circumstances of each episode, while bringing the audience up to
speed on the exact expenditures of individuals' lifetimes (young
Ned is introduced in the series' opening words, for example, as
"nine years, twenty-seven weeks, six days, and three minutes
old"). Combined with the show's visual presentation of saturated
colors and expressive camera angling, the distinctive personality
of the narration evokes comic book tropes of dramatic storytell-
ing. Bird's-eye shots down on action, unnatural zooms in or out,
interspersions of slow motion, and extreme close-ups mimic
the striking diversity of framing made possible by comic book
panels. In a further borrowing from animated arts, narrated acts
of imagination are often mirrored in Claymation. Creator Bryan
Fuller collaborated with graphic artist Mike Mignola, creator
of *Hellboy,* in the animated film *The Amazing Screw-on Head*
(2006), and it seems no accident that the official *Pushing Daisies*
Web site expands on the televised episodes in comic book for-
mat. The series' final resolution, if it comes at all, may, in fact,
be provided through comic books.

The evocation of a decidedly sweet air of fantasy, however,
goes beyond just hinting at the appearance of childhood's il-
lustrated texts: even memories of what has been lost or recovered
seem super-saturated with nostalgia, so that Ned's mother ap-
pears as a Betty Crocker Mom in a glowing Betty Crocker kitch-
en. The series' opening shot sets a similar tone as young Ned and
Digby—a boy and his dog—romp through an impossibly verdant
field of white and yellow daisies. With a possible nod to the
quirky sensibility of David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* (1986), however,
the shot follows Lynch in first rising up through the subterranean
realm of the daisies' roots, as though signaling Fuller's own
quirky sensibility in creating a sunny comedy about death (one
episode is even entitled "The Fun in Funeral"). The series draws
as well on the clever wordplay of hard-boiled detective novels
crossed with a touch of Joe Friday, though again with its own
cheery twist. Witty, often fast-paced and dead-pan, characters'
dialogue makes games of word repetition and inversion, creating
a verbal tone that is light rather than cynical. "I was being self-
ish," Ned says in explaining why he kept Chuck alive. "I'd love
to tell myself I was being unselfish, but I know deep down in my
primal sweet spot I was being unselfish for selfish reasons."

Ultimately, however, the series is about death, and though
the lightness of tone ensures that the elements of comedy and
romance take center stage, each episode revolves around events
of people dying and/or coming back to life. This focus might in-
vite academic interest in the cultural significance of an apparent
fascination with death, being dead, and communicating with the
dead prevalent in recent television offerings. *Pushing Daisies*'
premise builds in a way on Fuller's own earlier series *Dead Like
Me* (2003–2004), with its protagonist who serves as a "grim
reaper" collecting souls following her own death. Other com-
parisons might be drawn to *Ghost Whisperer, Medium,* and *Six
Feet Under*. In a sense, the "rules" of Ned's gift recapitulate the
first law of thermodynamics that energy cannot be created or de-

stroyed, by suggesting there is something like a finite amount of life force or energy that must be taken from one creature if it is to be given to another. Ned's life-giving (or taking) touch is even accompanied by a spark of electricity. This is a concept explored in other, grimmer settings, such as in HBO's *Carnivale* where the character Ben Hawkins (Nick Stahl) possesses a similar gift for transferring life energy. *Roswell*'s alien Max (Jason Behr) also heals at the expense of at least his personal energy, collapsing, for example, after curing a hospital ward full of seriously sick children (*A Roswell Christmas Carol*).

In something of an inversion from most of these other shows, however, death in *Pushing Daisies* is presented primarily as a physical rather than spiritual state, with the resurrected dead coming back to consciousness as though waking from an oblivious sleep but otherwise not seeming to have continued existence as, say, ghosts or spirits. Despite the clear identification of Ned's family as Christian and Chuck's as Jewish, religious questions of afterlife are not explored. The elimination of "bad" people (a nefarious funeral home director dies, for example, so that Chuck can live) is seen as regrettable but justifiable. The potential cost of losing someone "good" to "permanent" death, on the other hand, is kept real by the inhibited desires of Ned and Chuck for each other. For the most part, however, death occurs in exaggerated formats that fit the show's cartoonish tint. Victims investigated by the erstwhile detectives tend to be crisped in boiling oil, for example, and, when resurrected, are charmed that they have an extra minute of life rather than tempted to be ghoulish. By contrast, it is conceivable that the somewhat more macabre depiction of Chuck's resurrected father may have contributed to the drop in ratings in the second season. Returned to life after long years of burial, and, like Chuck, kept alive, he is shown wrapped in bandages to cover his decomposed skin, giving the unsettling impression that Chuck is hugging the Invisible Man.

Attention to the series might also be prompted by interest in the career of Bryan Fuller, perhaps in connection with Star Trek studies. After contributing scripts to *Deep Space Nine,* and then working as staff writer and eventually coproducer of *Star Trek: Voyager,* Fuller described the episodic limitations of the Star Trek franchise as ultimately confining, according to a quote at the Internet Movie Database. *Dead Like Me* and the even shorter lived, but also critically acclaimed, *Wonderfalls* (2004), provided outlets for longer story arcs, as well as opportunities for considering characters a little less extraordinarily accomplished than starship officers. A similar interest in the responses of more ordinary individuals to fantastic circumstances infused Fuller's work on the first season of *Heroes* (2006–2007), a project the Hollywood Insider Blog reported he would return to with *Pushing Daisies'* demise.

Just why ratings for *Pushing Daisies* declined toward the end of the first season and fell off even more precipitously in the second is largely a matter of guesswork. The interruption of the writers' strike seems one likely contributor, though fan Web sites also speculate that the fault lies with the ratings systems itself in failing to account for increased accessing of shows through the internet. Whatever the reason, old fans should have a few more visits with their friends at the Pie Hole, while new fans will have a chance to make their acquaintance, when the final three episodes get aired in spring or summer 2009.

Works Cited

"Biography for Bryan Fuller." Internet Movie Database. 3 Jan. 2009. http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0298188/bio.

Rice, Lynette. "'Heroes': Bryan Fuller's Return Would Be Welcome." *Hollywood Insider Blog.* 4 Dec. 2008. 4 Jan. 2009. http://hollywoodinsider.ew.com/2008/12/bryan-fuller.html. Entertainment Weekly.com.

Max Payne: Film Adaptation and Video Games [film]

Steven D. Berman

Max Payne. Dir. John Moore. Perf. Mark Wahlberg, Mila Kunis, Beau Bridges, Ludacris, Olga Kurylenko. Abandon Entertainment, 2008.

Max Payne is an adequate film with a predictable plot. Based on the video game of the same name, the plot also incorporates elements of Norse mythology, the use of an hallucinogenic drug that creates a powerful yet ruthless soldier, and a noir setting that reiterates the pain that Max has endured.

Max Payne (Mark Wahlberg) has two central goals: to understand why his wife and infant child were murdered and then to avenge their deaths. In the beginning of the film, Max, a police officer, is working in the cold cases department diligently seeking clues to help him solve his family's murder. After the murder of Natasha Sax (Olga Kurylenko), who Max meets in a bar, he comes to team up with her sister Olga Sax (Mila Kunis), who helps him find his family's murderers. A suspect in the murder of Natasha, Max is investigated by Lt. Bravura (Chris "Ludicris" Bridges), who also predictably comes to understand Max's plight and support him in his endeavor. The one ironic element in the plot is that Max is actually a friend to the man behind the murders and most viewers will figure this out less than half way through the film. One has to wonder then if the plot really needed to be all that unique. After all, shouldn't the viewers who have played the video game know how the plot ends? The real question should focus on adaptation. How effectively has the film been adapted from the video game?

Adaptation is a rather tricky endeavor for screenwriters. When adapting a novel for the silver screen, the screenwriter must wrestle with a central tenet of film-making: the film should not run more than two hours. One reason why *The Lord of the Rings* films were successful was because this two hour expectation was violated. Each film was at least three hours long. Violating this two hour rule in film-making is rare; thus, novels that exceed 100 pages must be cut, yet somehow the screenplay writer must still capture the essence of the narrative, its characters, and their psychology, and the director has to be sure that the other aspects of filmmaking—cinematography, editing, set design, acting, etc.—render the novel honestly.

Novellas and short novels are most amenable to a screenplay. Stephen King's novella *Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption* is an excellent example of a novella that was successfully translated into a film—*The Shawshank Redemption*. To adapt a novel successfully, however, the screenplay writer must cut a considerable portion of the novel and allow the film to

center around one character's growth and/or around one theme. Indeed, entire sections of the plot, especially for lengthy novels, and perhaps even some characters may be omitted. If the film simply presents as many events from the novel as possible, the characters and the themes of the novel will come off as being topical while the plot just goes through the motions. It's best if the screenplay writer selects events from the novel that bear out one significant theme from the novel.

It is important to understand that the viewer can never expect the film to be the novel. This is one of the most difficult concepts for a film teacher to convey to his or her students. If the viewer goes to the movie with this expectation, he or she will always be disappointed. The novel and the film are two unique art forms that have narrative in common. For a student to find an adaptation successful, the teacher must let the student see the importance of focus and condensation in the screenplay. Students can also read a novel and then watch the film adaptation. Discussions about what was cut, what was added, and whether or not the film captured the essence of the novel can be quite interesting. Of course, the film director may still want to make the story his own, but that's another review.

The question in this review is how does a screenplay writer adapt a video game to film? Adapting a film from a video game is a rather recent art form. *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* (2001), *Resident Evil* (2002) and its sequels, and *Hitman* (2007) all have unsuccessful film adaptations. The screenplay for *Max Payne* was written by a new screenwriter, Beau Thorne, who, along with the director, John Moore, seem to have wanted a film that somehow is also the video game; however, these are two unique art forms with only graphics and narrative in common. Thorne and Moore seem to forget that the viewing film audience is not going to be playing the game. In a video game, actors are used as models for the graphic characters. These graphic characters are nothing like the real actors that we see in the film. What's interesting and effective in a video game may not be interesting and effective in a film. Thorne wrote a weak story that is all too familiar and predictable, and Moore seems to have directed his actors to take on the vacuous nature of the graphic characters in a video game. Thus, we have a poor film adaptation of a video game.

What is interesting and effective, however, is the dark look of the film, the character's (i.e., the viewer's) ascension through different levels typical of a video game, the point of view, and the visual recreation of bullet-time, a unique and popular graphic in the Max Payne video game.

Although at times the film seems to be too dark, the overall noir look of *Max Payne* does recall the dark look of the video game. The feeling of moving up to a different level after each victory is also conveyed in the film. As Max gets closer to finding out who killed his family, he goes up to different levels in a building. As a cop working cold cases in the beginning, he is located in the basement. By the end of the film when he finally confronts the person responsible for the murder of his family, Max is on the roof. Another trait of the Max Payne video game captured in the film is the use of the third-person shooter. The shooting scenes are viewed by the player-shooter from a distance. In the film, objective shots are used during battle scenes, capturing a third-person view of each battle. Finally, the third-person point of view allows for the bullet-time graphic effect. The Max Payne video game is known for its use of bullet-time,

wherein the action is slowed down allowing players to watch the bullets move slowly toward their intended target and then relish the moment when the bullet strikes Max's intended target. The best example of this effect in the film is when Max intuits a pursuer who is about to shoot at him from behind and above. Max puts his gun above his head and shoots backward. Then, everything slows down as we watch the bullets: First, the pursuer's bullet misses Max who has deliberately fallen backward, and then we follow Max's bullet straight into the pursuer—killing him. Quite satisfying for the viewer, especially one who loves video games.

It is in these scenes that the film and the video game come together. Perhaps the next filmmaker to adapt a film from a video game can use these successful aspects of *Max Payne* as a starting point. For a film adaptation to be successful, however, it must also have an engaging plot with irony, well-developed characters, good acting, and interesting ideas while being true to the original. *Max Payne* lacked these essentials of good filmmaking and as a result, it did not work as a film adaptation. After all, a film is not a video game.

Torchwood, series 1 and 2 [TV show]

Catherine Coker

Torchwood: The Complete First Season. BBC Warner. 2008.
Torchwood: The Complete Second Season. BBC Warner. 2008.
    Perf. John Barrowman, Eve Myles.

The BBC import of *Torchwood* is the first of the revitalized *Doctor Who* spin-offs, the other being *The Sarah Jane Chronicles. Doctor Who* being a traditional family program in the United Kingdom, the spin-offs build further out into the entrenched fan base; *Sarah Jane* is written for the small ones of the household while *Torchwood* is more for mature audiences only. To describe the latter in conceptual terms would be to describe *Sex in the City* meets *The X-Files,* with all of the elements of the ridiculous that statement brings to mind present and accounted for. Fans of Joss Whedon's work will be delighted to know that Russell T. Davies, creator and writer for the series, is a huge fan of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*—a love that often reveals itself both implicitly through the genre-bending format of the show but more explicitly as well (more on that later).

Captain Jack Harkness (Barrowman), first introduced in the first 2005 series of *Doctor Who,* will initially confound those who found his lighthearted, omnisexual time agent character endearing in the earlier program. When last seen, he was being resurrected by Rose Tyler thousands of years in the future; his presence in twenty-first century Cardiff, let alone his leadership of an organization also previously seen to be morally ambiguous, raises questions for both the neophyte and the long-term viewer.

"Torchwood: outside the government, beyond the police. Fighting for the future on behalf of the human race. The twenty-first century is when everything changes—and Torchwood is ready," Harkness intones dramatically at the beginning of each episode. And if that sounds like a fine start for a space opera, the first series quickly devolves into a soap opera, and only hesi-

tantly returns to momentous, hard science fiction toward the end of series 2. Harkness leads a small, dysfunctional band of secret government agents who must protect the world from the aliens and otherworldly detritus that routinely fall through the intradimensional space-time rift that is located within the environs of the Welsh capital.

Gwen Cooper (Myles) is the newest member of the team and is the audience's identification—it's her job to ask exposition questions of her teammates and be amazed while fellow members Ianto Jones, Owen Harper, and Toshiko Sato gamely go about their business. Their nemeses/problems of the week range from the innocent (people displaced variously from their appropriate time, such as the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries), to the macabre (tourists butchered a la *Hostel*), to the bizarre (a vampiric alien who removes one's life force via orgasms). When not saving the world (or sometimes while saving the world) the main characters hop in and out of each others' beds with varying degrees of melodrama.

Overall, the show is entertaining, though not as much as it could be in the shaky first series. By the second, it has grown into itself and the writers clearly feel more focused within the overarching plots. At the same time the show restates itself as part of the larger *Doctor Who* universe, with both Jack Harkness and Martha Jones swapping programs for short stints. Without discussing plot points too much, suffice to say that whereas such "write-ins" often felt forced when the *Star Trek* franchises did the same thing, here they feel natural—perhaps because it makes more sense for characters to repeatedly run into each other within the United Kingdom than within the Federation of Planets.

In addition to being a television megatext, to borrow Adam Roberts's term, it is also making some telling points about the genre. Though the soap operatic aspects can be wearisome, they do leave more room for character development and exploration than the average science fiction television program. Given the brouhahas that erupted when the *Star Trek* collective repeatedly attempted (and I am squelching the impulse to put air quotes around that word) to discuss sexuality, it is refreshing and even a bit of a relief to have main characters that are gay, bisexual, or bicurious—and aren't punished for it in any fashion. In fact, one of the lovely traits of the modern *Doctor Who* universe is its complete acceptance of nontraditional relationships. If *Star Trek* introduced the idea of Infinite Diversity in Infinite Combinations, then the concept actually bears fruit through the work of Davies and Whedon.

Series 2 of *Torchwood* opens with Harkness's return from his second stint on *Doctor Who.* In "Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang," we are introduced to a figure from his fifty-first-century past, Captain John Hart, played joyfully by *Buffy* alum James Marsters. *Buffy* fans will be delighted to find that Marsters was seemingly told to channel his other great character, Spike, into his performance of Captain John, which he pulls off amazingly. Dialogue reveals that Hart and Harkness were caught in a time warp for some five years, in which they became a de facto married couple, though they argue over who was the wife. "Oh but I was a good wife!" Captain John cheeses, and with those words a thousand slash fics were born. Later Captain John sends a hologram message to Captain Jack: "Quickly, Obi-Wan, you're my only hope!" he falsettos in what may be the best intergenre reference of all time.

The series 2 finale, "Exit Wounds," and the follow-through of the *Doctor Who* fourth series finale "The Stolen Earth" and "Journey's End," leave *Torchwood* ready for a reset. The *Who* episodes feature a megacrossover of all three of Davies's series, which was something the plots were building toward that viewers will realize only after the fact. As such, much future discussion of *Torchwood* will probably rely as much on the whole universe as on the show itself.

For those unimpressed with this prospect, Captain Jack's words to Gwen in "Everything Changes" will apply: "That's so Welsh. I show you something fantastic, and you find fault."

Hancock [film]

Ritch Calvin

Hancock. Dir. Peter Berg. Perf. Will Smith, Charlize Theron, Jason Bateman. Sony Pictures, November 2008. $28.96.

I waited to watch the Will Smith action-hero film *Hancock* until it was released on DVD. I'll admit that my expectations for the film were not very high, and I would have to say that I was not disappointed. The film is filled with big-name actors, high-priced special effects; the media campaign leading up to the film's theatrical release was extensive. To be sure, the film is enjoyable. The performances are good if uninspired. The plot is time-worn if filled with logical inconsistencies. A little suspension of disbelief goes a long way here. Furthermore, the film is not, at its core, a down-on-his-luck-superhero-who-transforms-himself story—as billed in the promos—so much as a good old-fashioned love story.

John Hancock (Will Smith) is a superhero who is apathetic and a drunk. When he rouses himself to actually fight crime and save people, he causes more damage than anything else. His reputation is such that everyone, from talking heads to children on the street, calls him "an asshole." When Hancock intervenes in a highway chase scene, he wrecks police cars, demolishes highway signs, damages the freeway, and drops the fleeing vehicle and its occupants on top of a building spire. It's the last straw for a disenchanted public, and an arrest warrant is issued.

In the meantime, an idealistic-but-down-on-his-luck PR man, Ray Embrey (Jason Bateman), hopes to change the world by convincing corporations to give their products away. For their effort, they would be entitled to place the "All Heart" logo on their product. The corporations are not exactly lining up, and Ray tells his wife, Mary Embrey (Charlize Theron), "It's a nonstarter." Driving home, Ray finds himself trapped on the tracks at a railroad crossing, and Hancock swoops in to rescue him, complete with the customary havoc and destruction of property. When the crowd heckles Hancock, Ray sees a new PR opportunity, and he takes on Hancock as his new project. He schools Hancock on how to behave in public to minimize damage and maximize appreciation, and he convinces Hancock to turn himself in so that the crime rate will rise and the public will clamor for Hancock's return.

All of this works according to Ray's plan; Hancock stops a bank robbery, rescues a trapped police officer, and puts away the bad guys, all with little damage. Hancock and Ray are now the toast of the town. The film makes an abrupt turn, however, when

Hancock attempts to kiss Mary, and we immediately discover that Mary also has superpowers. The second act of the film reveals the origins of Hancock-the-superhero and the nature of Hancock and Mary's relationship. As Mary reveals, Hancock and Mary are both gods, angels, or superheroes. They were created together and have lived for thousands of years. However, they are the last two remaining gods. The two paired gods are drawn to each other (shades of *Symposium,* or of "You complete me"), and when they are together, they become mortal so that they can fall in love, age, and die. All the others have paired off and passed away. Over time, Mary and Hancock have been together and become vulnerable and nearly died. Each time, though, they have separated.

They last time they were together was in 1931 in Miami. One night, a gang of thugs smashed in Hancock's skull. When he awoke, he could remember nothing, including Mary. She took the opportunity to flee so that he could regain his superpowers in her absence. He emerges from the hospital restored, but with no recollection of his origins. The only key he has to his past is two theater tickets for a performance of *Frankenstein.* As he left the hospital, he was told to "put your John Hancock" on the line, and he obliged. Now, fate has drawn them together again, and as a consequence, Hancock begins to lose his powers. As he stops a robbery in a liquor store, he is shot and wounded. In the meantime, the bank robber he put away earlier has escaped and intends to finish Hancock. This sets the stage for the final confrontation in the hospital. The thugs shoot Mary, and she flatlines on the table; Hancock knows he must leave in order for her to survive. The narrative has come full circle, and love has redeemed everyone.

One of the interesting things about the film is the allusions. The film makes a number of references to *Superman.* For example, when Hancock swoops into action in his new costume, the soundtrack references the *Superman* theme. More pointedly, Superman has a Fortress of Solitude to which he can escape and collect his thoughts. Hancock has a similar retreat, though his is a ramshackle trailer atop an isolated mountain, complete with a drum kit in the front yard. *Hancock* also draws on the *Frankenstein* myth. When the ticket initially appears, it serves as a red herring. The glimpse of the word "Frankenstein" inside a tin can leads the viewer to believe that Hancock was the result of a scientific experiment gone awry. Not only does Hancock have the theater ticket from the original movie, he also berates Mary for allowing him to think that he was the only one of his kind in the world, a fact that tortures him. In fact, the gods had created them in pairs so that they would never be lonely and always be complete. When he discovers that he is not alone, he longs for that connection and reacts angrily to her rejection.

The film has some appeal as a teaching tool. Given its cast and FX budget, students would be drawn into the film. While the film is not, at heart, a Romantic reevaluation of the hero as commoner, it is a retelling and updating of the Prometheus and Frankenstein myths. His loneliness and isolation drive Hancock to despair; his difference and abilities drive him away from humanity. He is redeemed by the idea of love, of companionship, and, made whole once again, he fulfills his obligations to his charges.

The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951 and 2008) [film]

Barnett Segar

The Day the Earth Stood Still. Dir. Robert Wise. Perf. Michael Rennie, Patricia Neal, Hugh Marlowe, Sam Jaffe. Twentieth Century-Fox. 1951.
The Day the Earth Stood Still. Dir. Scott Derrickson. Perf. Keanu Reeves, Jennifer Connelly, Kathy Bates, Jaden Smith, John Cleese. 3 Arts Entertainment. 2008.

One title—two messages clearly defines the divergent paths that the two *The Day the Earth Stood Stil*l movies followed. There is little to compare between the 1951 version of *The Day the Earth Stood Still* and the 2008 remake. There are some similarities with vague attempts by the new version at copying the original, but that is where the similarities end. The current film has much more action and violence in order to meet the demands of today's audience and lacked continuity and substance. The original version is a thinking person's movie illustrating the need for peace in a nuclear age and the ramifications if we failed as a species to achieve it. The second version immediately identifies humans as a failed species slated for extermination while preserving all other species on Earth. The message from Klaatu in the 1951 film is stop war while the message delivered by Klaatu from the 2008 version is to save the Earth from humans.

War and violence seem to dominate our lives as a species. A caller on National Public Radio put it quite succinctly, "The current wars have little effect on us. Congress should reinstate the draft. This would engage everyone in war." Maybe it would be better if this was reversed. If the president of the United States and Congress agreed to war as the only option, then the president and 50% of Congress would go to the front lines with our military for the duration of the campaign. This would probably end war. It is important to note that war today is different from the world wars of yesterday. During World Wars I and II, everyone was affected by war. Food, gas and other items were rationed. Women moved into factory work to help supply troops with weapons and equipment. Children were asked to forgo Christmas and buy bonds to support the war effort. No one was immune.

This was the public attitude that generated the first movie which was intended to demonstrate the need for peace on this planet. Klaatu allowed Earthlings the choice at the end to decide for themselves whether or not there could be a peaceful coexistence among all nations and people. If the nuclear proliferation continued and was perceived as a threat to other alien civilizations, then the decision would be made for us. Our planet Earth would no longer exist. The lack of direct involvement in war explains the dichotomy between the two versions of the movie that has the second Klaatu not as demonstrably interested in peace. If war has little or no effect on an individual, then it is not real or vivid in the individual's life.

In addition to his disinterest in peace, the 2008 Klaatu is much less compassionate. It was decided that the human species would be destroyed. Earth would be repopulated with all other Earth species that had been removed from both land and water and protected to bring back to the planet. Strangely, with

little dialogue and interaction on a personal level, Klaatu has an epiphany and decides at the last moment to negate the destructive force that would wipe out the human race. The 1951 film cleverly uses dialogue and interaction between Klaatu and Bobby to build both continuity and understanding for both the audience and Klaatu. As Klaatu gains knowledge about the human race, the audience learns about his civilization and the commonalities that we all shared. This was screenwriting at its finest, presenting a clear message and engaging the audience.

Unfortunately, members of the twenty-first century audience were the recipients of an undeveloped, poorly written and contrived screen play. Was this undeveloped screen play in the twenty-first century an indication of our own evolutionary status? Have we now morphed into an action-oriented and violent species that no longer wants to think? Were the two screen writers of their respective times trying to tell us that the human species has run its course and that it may be time for a new specie or species to take over? Maybe it is time to take these two movies seriously, but not for a Klaatu coming to aid or destroy us. There probably won't be a Klaatu arriving to deliver an ultimatum. On the other hand, the Earth may be planning retribution and decide to rid herself of the pestilence known as the human species; but before she does, do yourself a favor and go see the original.
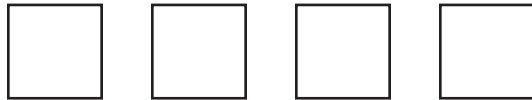
News

Calls for Papers

Compiled by Sha LaBare

Call for Papers—book
Title: Anthony Burgess, Science Fiction Writer.
Topic: Despite plentiful discussion of *A Clockwork Orange*, there has been no full-scale appraisal of Burgess as a writer of SF. Topics include but are not limited to Burgess's projections of Shakespeare into the future, Burgess and Orwell, theory of SF in *The End of the World News*, and literature reviews on the critical reception of *A Clockwork Orange*—how SF is it?
Contact: Rob Spence (spencro AT edgehill.ac.uk) or Anthony Levings (anthony AT gylphi.co.uk)
URL: http://cfp.english.upenn.edu/archive/Collections/3455.html

Call for Papers—book
Title: 2012: Reflections on a Mark in Time
Topic: This edited collection brings together for the first time a range of scholarly analyses on the 2012 phenomenon grounded in various disciplines including religious studies, anthropology, Mayan studies, cultural studies and the social sciences. How much of the 2012 phenomenon is based on the historical record, and how much is contemporary fiction? This collection aims to reveal to readers the landscape of the modern apoca-

lyptic imagination, the economics of the spiritual marketplace, the commodification of countercultural values, and the cult of celebrity.
Due date: March 1, 2009. Abstract (200 words) and CV. Subject line: 2012.
Contact: Joseph.Gelfer AT arts.monash.edu.au
URL: http://cfp.english.upenn.edu/archive/Religion/0433.html

Call for Papers—conference
Title: Negotiating Land: New Readings
Conference date: April 17–18, 2009
Site: Uptown Campus, SUNY Albany
Topic: SUNY Albany graduate student conference devoted to interrogations of dominant and alternative geographies—planetary, technological, literary. Topics include but are not limited to terrestriality and the nonhuman, cosmopolitanism/planetarity, virtual and/or technological landscapes, and constructs of time and terrestrial time.
Due date: March 1, 2009. Abstracts (250 words).
Contact: egsoalbany AT yahoo.com, subject header: 2009 conference
URL: http://www.albany.edu/english/egso.shtml

Call for Papers—conference
Title: Mythcon XL: Sailing the Seas of Imagination
Conference date: July 17–20, 2009
Site: UCLA DeNeve Conference Center, Los Angeles, CA.
Topic: Seaborne imagery is important to much mythopoeic fantasy, especially in the motif of sailing to unknown lands. Of special interest are examinations of all aspects of the creative process in the Inklings' works, and in particular, the concept of artistic community. Papers dealing with the work of the guests of honor, Diana Pavlac Glyer and James A Owen, on young adult fantasy and science fiction, on artists and writers in community, and in any other aspect of the conference theme are especially encouraged.
Due date: April 15, 2009. Abstracts (250 words).
Contact: Sherwood Smith Sherwood AT sff.net. Put "MYTHCON 40" in subject header
URL: http://www.mythsoc.org/mythcon40.html

Call for Papers—conference
Title: SCMLA—Literature and Psychology Session
Conference date: October 29–31
Site: Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Topic: In keeping with this year's theme of "Continuity and Displacements," we're seeking papers that explore psychological continuity within a text. Texts that explore displacement, trauma studies, and anxiety will be given preference, but submissions on any number of topics are highly encouraged.
Due date: March 27, 2009. Abstracts (100–200 words).
Contact: rfields AT siu.edu
URL: http://cfp.english.upenn.edu/archive/Medieval/0676.html

Call for Papers—conference
Title: David Mitchell Conference 2009
Conference date: September 3–4, 2009
Site: University of St. Andrews, Scotland

Topic: This conference aims to bring those scholars working on David Mitchell's writing together in intellectual dialogue and exchange. This will consolidate and advance the critical work currently underway on this contemporary writer, leading to the first edited collection of essays on his work. The organizers welcome papers on any topic related to David Mitchell's writing.

Due date: March 1, 2009. Abstracts (300 words).

Contact: mitchell.conference AT glyphi.co.uk

URL: http://www.gylphi.co.uk/mitchell/

Call for Papers—conference

Title: Understanding Sustainability: Perspectives from the Humanities

Conference date: May 14–16, 2009

Site: Portland State University, Portland, Oregon

Topic: This inaugural national conference seeks to promote critical reflection on the cultures, histories, values, and imaginations at stake in "sustainability." In particular, this conference aims to provide a venue for conversations between scholars, designers, city planners, artists and activists interested in sustainability.

Due date: March 1, 2009. Proposals/abstracts (250 words).

Contact: Publichumanities AT pdx.edu. Subject line: "Understanding Sustainability"

URL: http://cfp.english.upenn.edu/archive/Cultural-Historical/3677.html

Call for Papers—conference

Title: Adapting Children's Texts—SAMLA Children's Literature Discussion Panel 2009

Conference date: November 6–8, 2009

Site: Atlanta, Georgia

Topic: As adapted texts saturate children's culture, this panel seeks scholarship on the various ways of approaching adapted texts in Children's and Adolescent Literature other than questions of fidelity to an original. Whether it involves print to screen, or television to picture book, we seek submissions that examine a wide range of adaptation topics such as adaptation across culture, textual infidelities in adaptation, and adaptation across media.

Due date: April 15, 2009. One-page abstracts.

Contact: Cathlena Martin (camartin AT samford.edu)

URL: http://cfp.english.upenn.edu/archive/Children/0260.html

Call for Papers—conference

Title: 2009 Academic Conference on Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy

Conference date: June 6, 2009

Site: Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Topic: We invite proposals for papers in any area of Canadian science fiction and fantasy, including studies of individual works and authors, comparative studies, and studies that place works in their literary and/or cultural contexts. Papers may be about Canadian works in any medium: literature, film, graphic novels, comic books, etc.

Due date: April 1, 2009, with 2-page proposals

Contact: Allan Weiss (aweiss AT yorku.ca)

Call for Papers—journal

Title: *Neo-Victorian Studies*

Topic: Steampunk, Science, and (Neo)Victorian Technologies. *Neo-Victorian Studies* invites papers and/or abstracts for a 2009 special issue on neo-Victorianism's engagement with science and new/old technologies, especially as articulated through the genre of steampunk. This special issue will explore why particular scientific and technological developments are revisited at particular historical moments and trace steampunk's importance to neo-Victorianism, as well as its wider cultural implications.

Due date: June 1, 2009. Articles and/or creative pieces of 6,000–8,000 words.

Contact: Rachel A. Bowser (rachel.bowser AT gmail.com) or Brian Croxall (b.croxall AT gmail.com)

URL: http://www.neovictorianstudies.com/.

Call for Papers—journal

Title: *New Ray Bradbury Review*

Topic: This yearly journal is devoted to the study of the impact of Ray Bradbury's writings on American culture. Although the journal will consider submissions on any topic related to Bradbury, in 2010 a special issue is planned on *Fahrenheit 451*.

Submission guidelines: Proposed articles should be submitted electronically in MLA format at least 1 year in advance.

Contact: William F. Touponce (wtouponc AT iupui.edu)

URL: http://www.iupui.edu/~crbs/

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 industried, 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. 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

Science Fiction Research Association

www.sfra.org

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

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

SFRA Executive Committee

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

Vice President
Ritch Calvin
16A Erland Rd.
Stony Brook, NY 11790-1114
rcalvink@ic.sunysb.edu

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

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

Immediate Past President
Adam Frisch
343 Lakeshore Dr.
McCook Lake, SD 57049-4002
adam.frisch@briarcliff.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 seamail; $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.