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FEMPSEC announces its 4.2 section on Speculating Jewish Women, containing critical articles on women characters in Jewish sf stories, Jewish women artists reflecting upon Jewish identity and issues relating to Jewish heritage from the seventies to the present; contemporary Jewish women's speculative fiction and poetry from Canada, Israel and the US; reviews of literature, criticism and music. FMI see femspec.org/.

The shortlist for the 2005 Arthur C. Clarke Award: River of Gods by Ian McDonald; Iron Council by China Miéville; Cloud Atlas by David Mitchell; Market Forces by Richard Morgan; The Time Traveler's Wife by Audrey Niffenegger; The System of the World by Neal Stephenson. The winner will be announced in a ceremony at the Science Museum.

The Huygens space probe safely landed on Titan on January 14, and began transmitting images of the moon, Saturn's largest and the only moon in the solar system with an atmosphere.

SFRA BUSINESS

Editor’s Message

Christine Mains

To some extent, my editor's message for this issue echoes what I’ve said in recent issues: We really, really need contributors to get their reviews completed and submitted in a more timely fashion. This issue is running a bit later than usual, partly because the deadline was quickly approaching, one of the editors informed me that he had NO reviews to send me at all. Eeek. Thankfully, there was a fairly prompt response to his pleas, and as you can see we managed to put together a good issue, but I hate that stressed-out, last-minute approach, and I hate the fact that we're running a little late this time around. So please, don't offer to write a review if you know your schedule's going to be a bear.

On a happier note, I’m very pleased that we have some extra content, beyond the usual reviews, for this issue. Thomas Morrissey's review of Pamela Sargent's The Shore of Women, recently reissued by BenBella Books, goes beyond a review of the text to examine the sociohistorical context of the gendered utopias and dystopias of the 1980s. And Margaret McBride has been kind enough to share with us her notes and plans for a lecture on Ursula Le Guin’s The Lathe of Heaven, a contribution to the “Approaches to Teaching...” series. We would welcome further such contributions.

President’s Message

Dave Mead

The elected officers - Peter Brigg, Bruce Rockwood, Warren Rochelle, Mack Hassler, and I - met in Cleveland in mid-January to discuss what SFRA will do in the next few years. Mack and Sue Hassler were very gracious hosts for the meeting. There were a number of items on our agenda, none of desperate urgency, thank goodness.

The Association is in sound financial shape now, thanks mainly to economies in producing the SFRA Review brought about by our Review Editors over the last few years. We decided to use some of our savings to help keep FEMSPEC going, donating $500 this year and promising another $500 in 2006. We also set aside a fund (in addition to the Scholar Support program, which offers SFRA memberships to worthy but hard-pressed scholars in the field) to help graduate students and faculty who want to present papers but need some help with travel costs to attend and participate in the annual meeting in Las Vegas. Applications for travel grants may be sent to me at Dave.Mead@mail.tamucc.edu.

We accepted an offer from Oscar De Los Santos and Tom Morrissey to host the 2006 annual meeting of SFRA in White Plains/Tarrytown, New York, near NYC. The meeting will be held at the Marriott Hotel, June 22-25, 2006. We have also accepted a proposal from Farah Mendlesohn and Edward James to hold the 2008 annual meeting in Ireland (somewhere near Dublin). We all agreed that we’d like to have a meeting in Oregon or Washington (Seattle) in 2007, a region we’ve not been to yet. Would anyone living out thataway be willing to host the meeting? Please let me know.

One big issue for SFRA is the need to build our membership. We need every member's help in finding and recruiting new members. To this end, we have just had a new membership brochure designed and a first run of 2000 copies printed. Our intention is to distribute copies of the brochure at meetings and conferences where we might find likely recruits. If you plan to attend a meeting...
Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting
Warren Rochelle

Call to Order: The Business Meeting of the SFRA Executive Committee was called to order at 9:15 a.m., Eastern Standard Time, 15 January 2005, at the Airport Comfort Inn, in Cleveland, Ohio, a few hours after the Huygens space probe landed on Titan. The mission was a joint effort among NASA, the European Space Agency, and the Italian space agency. Present: Peter Brigg, Dave Mead, Bruce Rockwood, Mack Hassler, and Warren Rochelle.

Since this was the first meeting of the new 2005-2006 Executive Committee, Dave reviewed the roles of the various officers, as found in the Association’s by-laws. He noted membership recruitment as the special task of the Vice President and this was followed by a discussion of renewal activities. The term limitations of the officers were discussed as well. It was noted the Past President is the "election czar." Each officer noted their past activities.

SFRA AWARDS AND COMMITTEES
Peter Brigg reported on organizing juries for the various SFRA awards. Peter reviewed the President’s responsibility to set up juries and recruit jury members. He noted that all juries are in place and that the juries’ memberships have been published. One award has already been given: the best graduate paper award. Peter noted that to serve on an award jury is to accept a three-year job. Peter and David reviewed each award and its description. The Committee took special note of the need for each jury to be fair and impartial.

ANNUAL MEETINGS
Upcoming meetings were discussed. For 2005, at the Imperial Palace Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada, Dave announced all was under way for the upcoming meeting. Everyone needs to stay at the Imperial Palace to keep the conference rate, which is a good deal. Programming was discussed. Ursula K. Le Guin’s attendance as guest of honor is expected to be a special drawing card. Bruce inquired about advertising the conference in SF Weekly. For 2006, an East Coast site is preferred for this conference, in late June. Oscar de los Santos and Tom Morrissey are working on this conference. They are considering locating the conference in the suburban NYC area, such as White Plains, NY. For 2007: Ideas for this conference are needed. Dave said his dream was to have it “way west,” maybe in Oregon or in Washington State. Bruce suggested Vancouver as a possibility. If not in the Pacific Northwest, the Midwest was suggested, with Chicago as a possible site again. Dave will pursue a West Coast conference site, such as the Pacific Northwest or possibly in California. For 2008, a meeting hosted by Farah Mendlesohn and would be willing to put some of our new literature out, please contact me; I will send you a bundle for distribution.

We have a wonderful new web site. Please take a look at the new www.sfra.org. Sam McDonald, Stacie Hanes, and Elizabeth Monier-Williams have designed a very attractive, informative site. Thanks, team.

Thanks also to Chrissie Mans, Jan Bogstad, Phil Snyder and Ed McKnight for their ongoing fine work in producing the SFRA Review.

That’s all I can think of for now. Except for a plea — that you too will take an active role in keeping SFRA healthy and growing. Please help the organization by serving on our various committees, running for office, attending the annual meetings, and producing exciting new scholarship about science fiction and fantasy literature and film.

SFRA BUSINESS

Nominees for the Lambda Award for Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender Writing in science fiction/fantasy/horror: Firelands, by Michael Jensen; Shadow of the Night: Queer Tales of the Uncanny and Unusual, edited by Greg Herren; The Ordinary, by Jim Grimsley; The Wizard of Isis, by Jean Stewart; With Her Body, by Nicola Griffith.

Nominees for the 2004 Philip K. Dick Award, recognizing works originally published in paperback and to be presented by the Philadelphia SF Society at Norwescon on Friday, March 25 at the Doubletree Seattle Airport Hotel, SeaTac, Washington: The Coyote Kings of the Space-Age Bachelor Pad, by Minister Faust; Stable Strategies and Others, by Eileen Gunn; Life, by Gwyneth Jones; Apocalypse Array, by Lyda Morehouse; Air, by Geoff Ryman; City of Pearl, by Karen Traviss; Banner of Souls, by Liz Williams.

The winner of the 2004 Graduate Paper Award for best paper presented by a grad student at the annual SFRA Conference is Melissa Colleen Stevenson.

The preliminary ballot for the Nebula Awards have been announced. The membership of SFWA will vote on these and decrease each category to five items. The Nebula juries may then add up to one additional item per category. The Nebulas will be awarded during the Nebula Weekend in Chicago from April 28-May 1. Novels: Paladin of Souls, Lois McMaster Bujold; Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom, Cory Doctorow; Omega, Jack McDevitt; Perfect Circle, Sean Stewart; Conquistador, S.M. Stirling; The Knight, Gene Wolfe. Novellas: Walk in Silence, Catherine Asaro; Off on a Starship, Perfect Circle, Sean Stewart; Conquistador, S.M. Stirling; The Knight, Gene Wolfe. Novellas: Walk in Silence, Catherine Asaro; Off on a Starship, Perfect Circle, Sean Stewart; Conquistador, S.M. Stirling; The Knight, Gene Wolfe.
The discovery of a meteorite on Mars by the Rover Opportunity has led to a variety of new lines of inquiries for astronomers. The specimen, named Heat Shield Rock, would be the first meteorite discovered on an extraterrestrial body. Its presence may lead to new information about Martian surface processes.

Amazing Stories will be going on hiatus following the 608th issue in February 2005.

The Locus Awards will be returning to Westercon in 2005, to be held in Calgary, Alberta Canada.

The Aurora Awards were presented at Boréal on Saturday October 30: Best Long-Form Work in English: Blind Lake, by Robert Charles Wilson. Best Short-Form Work in English: "Scream Angel," by Douglas Smith. Best Work in English (Other): Julie E. Czerneda, editing Space Inc.

Edward James in Dublin, Ireland seems pretty definite at this time.

Various ways to increase conference attendance was discussed. Everyone was reminded that membership is not required to participate and/or attend. Dave reviewed the general history of how SFRA conferences have been run in the past. Traditionally, a member is found to run the show and be responsible for any losses. $1000 is provided by SFRA as seed money. It was noted that a conference checklist and guidelines were needed. Peter suggested a discounted “first conference” fee. He noted that the list of conference attendees was different from the membership and could be used for recruitment. There is a “collected wisdom” document on the running of conferences. It was noted that SFRA is committed to subsidizing grad students so they can attend.

MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT AND MAINTENANCE:

There was considerable discussion of what is being done and what could be done to recruit new members, and to maintain the membership. Warren explained what the Secretary has traditionally done: the renewal letter in November and the 2nd reminder letter, which has usually gone out in March. Dave requested that this letter go out at the end of February. It was also suggested that in the 2nd letter there could be a note or PS asking if the individual member belonged to other organizations that were, in some way, SF-related. If so, would the individual member be willing to be recruited for SFRA? Dave said he would send out a listserv to those who had not yet renewed in mid-January and that this reminder would also go on the website. Bruce suggested that after March Emails, individualized as much as possible, could be sent to those who had still not renewed. He also suggested that there could be an ad exchange between the SFRA Review and Utopian Studies, Extrapolation, the IAFA journal, and the New York Review of Science Fiction. Dave suggested that recruitment could be done at the regional MLAs, as many have science fiction and fantasy literature discussion circles. Bruce suggested the membership could be asked that, if individuals belong to other organizations, would individuals be willing to pass out brochures at conferences. Peter suggested that we should contact contributors to the SF/ fantasy academic journals who are not SFRA members. These non-members could then be invited to join. There was a general discussion of honorary and free memberships for award winners and the editors of the Review. Peter noted that we contact personally those we know on the non-renewal list. Bruce noted that the website should have information about financial support available for those who need such assistance to attend the conference. He also thought the website should have more links to other SF organizations and that here again was an opportunity to have an exchange ad. He thought that we should invite children’s SF writers and teachers to future meetings. Are more panels on TV and media and SF a good idea at SFRA? Warren suggested some recruitment could be done at library organizations. Peter said the brochure should be available at the Merrill Collection in Toronto. Would a librarians’ panel at SFRA be of interest? Bruce notes his connections to legal organizations could be useful. We discussed possible guest authors.

MONEY ISSUES: BUDGETS, DUES/INCOME

Dave, as past Treasurer, said that the organization is in good shape financially. He noted the Committee has discretionary funds for providing financial support for those who are going to present at SFRA and need assistance. $2000 is the current amount. If more is needed, it can be requested from the Executive Committee (EC). Dave noted that the scholarship support fund has been very useful. He also noted that people can be nominated for support or can self-nominate for conference support. Membership support has usually been for foreign scholars and graduate students. Should unemployed be a part of the
lowered dues category, which has been just for students? It was felt the category did not need to be changed and that those who are unemployed could ask for scholarship assistance.

Bills for the journals are about $10,000 annually. In addition, The SFRA Review costs about around $1000 per issue. Bruce suggested again that SFRA could sell CD’s of speeches and readings and T-shirts. Mack noted that doing so would require a marketing officer. Dave said that this—the CD’s and the T-shirts—should be a suggestion for the conference organizer, but there would be an interest in T-shirts. Even so, he noted that as every guest needed a “minder,” adding T-shirts on top of this was adding a lot of work. Bruce thought graduate students or a grad student rep could do this.

Peter asked why SFRA is holding $40,000 in savings at the present. Are we collecting too much? Should dues be lowered? Bruce noted the need to recruit younger members to keep the organization afloat, especially as the older “core” members are close to retiring, and that maybe lower dues would help. Bruce suggested we use the extra money to endow public education to promote science fiction and good scientific thinking.

Mack stated that in six months, at Vegas, we would have a better sense of our financial status. Peter felt we could lower our dues, say by $5 for 2006 for students, thus subsidizing our future. We decided to revisit the dues issue at the annual meeting in June. Peter inquired about testing PayPal. Dave said it worked and using PayPal was recommended for folks who do not have US dollar checking accounts or cash.

SFRA’S TAX STATUS
Currently SFRA’s tax status is c(7); it should be c(3). The question is: why aren’t we a c(3)?—a tax-exempt organization? Bruce is going to check this out with a colleague.

OLD SFRA PAPERS: WHAT DO WE DO WITH THEM?
Dave said that papers of SFRA—an organizational archive—are in the library of the University of Kansas at Lawrence. It is not known if there is a complete run of the SFRA Review there.

PUBLICATIONS: SFRA REVIEW, WEB PAGES, AND FEMSPEC
The EC received a report from Christine Mains, Editor of the SFRA Review. It is on schedule and still has some trouble in getting enough material for articles or features beyond the reviews. [The EC wondered if this is because it is not peer-reviewed?] Some pedagogical pieces are received, such as “On the Art of Teaching . . .” Jan has expressed concerns about the tax status; it would be easier not peer-reviewed?

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The EC left some topics for consideration later: Marketing conference shirts and mugs; should the individual marketing be done by the conference host, if at all? Should we develop a recruiting package? Recruiting is the Vice President’s job. Could 15 extra Reviews be printed for such a package? Should there be a

Best Long-Form Work in French:

The 29th Annual Jack Williamson Lectureship will be held at Eastern New Mexico University on March 3, 2005. The topic of this year’s lecture will be Posthumanity Evolving with guest lecturers Walter Jon Williams and Gregory Benford. The convener will be Connie Willis.

Recent and Forthcoming Titles:
Drew, Bernard A. 100 Most Popular Genre Fiction Authors. Libraries Unlimited, April 2005.

APPRAOCHES TO TEACHING

Le Guin's The Lathe of Heaven
Margaret McBride

Ursula K. LeGuin's The Lathe of Heaven
(notes and handouts from a talk by Margaret McBride)

The Lathe of Heaven by Ursula K. LeGuin was chosen by the library staff of the city of Eugene, Oregon for its 2004 Readin' in the Rain celebration (don't ask me why they thought leaving off the 'g' would enhance the activity). I was asked to prepare a public lecture and questions for reading groups for the introductory activities a month before Ursula's reading, the showing of the PBS film of the novel, and other activities at the library. I asked the SFRA listserv for question suggestions and Christine Mains suggested I send the material for the newsletter. Although the library later got permission from the publisher to print out its reading group questions so I did not have to make up questions for the whole book, I nonetheless gave out a handout with some questions that were not on the publisher's list (Part I below). The handout also included some quotations from other works by LeGuin that I thought might spark discussion for The Lathe of Heaven. With the help of Nina K. Hoffman, Molly Gloss (whose Jump Off Creek was chosen for 2005 Readin' in the Rain), Leslie What and other Oregonians, I made a list of science fiction and fantasy authors who live or have lived in Oregon. I wonder how many other states could match Oregon's 60 plus (see Part I). I welcome any additions or corrections (mcbride@darkwing.uoregon.edu).

Part II is a slightly modified version of the notes I used for my introductory talk. It is not as formal as previous study guides published in SFRA Review but it may give some ideas for others who wish to teach The Lathe of Heaven.

Part I—Handouts for the Audience.
Science Fiction and Fantasy Authors Who Live or Have Lived in Oregon 2004 Compiled by Margaret McBride, University of Oregon (with "a little help from my friends"—thanks).

CfPs:

WHAT: Academic Track
WHO: Interaction/Glasgow Worldcon
WHEN: 4-8 August, 2005.
WHERE: Glasgow, Scotland
TOPICS: It is traditional to host an academic strand within the Worldcon. This year, the academic track is sponsored by the Science Fiction Foundation and will have its own home base. We are looking for: Papers, Panel Discussion ideas, Presentations of other kinds (suggest and we’ll talk about it), and Poster displays. All of the preceding are welcome on both the theme and any other topic which grabs your interest. Theme: The Matter(s) of Britain. Papers on sf, fantasy and horror are all welcomed. All media (including music, art, gaming, etc.) are welcomed. Arguments about founding myths, competing political discourses, alternative world narratives, regional conflicts, and views of Britain offered by British and non-British sf and fantasy writers are all welcome. Arthurian romance, fantasy and science fiction is expected to form one thread, but the overarching theme is to consider what other, competing ideas of the Matter of Britain might be.

SUBMISSIONS: Proposals for short papers no more than 15 minutes to <academic-prog@interaction.worldcon.org.uk> DEADLINE: March 31st 2005.

WHAT: George MacDonald Centenary Conference
WHEN: July 23rd, 2005
WHERE: International Centre for Research in Primary English and Children’s Literature at University College Worcester, Worcester, UK.
TOPICS: Keynote speakers include...
Part II—Notes for the Introductory Lecture

I assumed significant portions of the audience were not science fiction readers and had not yet read The Lathe of Heaven so my goal was to help them become more active readers of science fiction and not give away too much of The Lathe of Heaven. I focused on four elements: History/definition of Science Fiction, How to read SF more actively, Ursula LeGuin's life, and Things to pay attention to in the novel.

HISTORY/DEFINITIONS OF SCIENCE FICTION

Why does history or how we define SF matter?

Some people's negative views come from its connection to pulp fiction origins—not Tarrnito's Pulp Fiction but the cheap magazines of the 20s and 30s—and from SF's relationship to movies/tv especially B films of the 50s...not particularly rigorous in scientific applications

A. SF also has another connection, Frankenstein precursor of SF—common theme of unintended consequences of science/technology, extrapolation from science of the time, with new technology having potential of affecting large portion of population. Also utopian/dystopian, satire like Gulliver's Travels, authors such as Verne and Wells with some Poe, Hawthorne, and Fantasy/Gothic horror influences. SF can be seen as part of fantasy genre.

B. 1926 Hugo Gernsback: Amazing Stories to get young men involved in science through exciting adventures; cheap pay not much skill in writing so literature elements secondary, characters often stereotyped with a less informed character (often female) to whom the hero could explain the science/new planet to at the same time as the reader could get the info—data dump, quickly evolved into less concern for the validity of the science with aliens becoming bug-eyed monsters who would carry off the scantily clad woman or anthropomorphized in problematic ways

C. John Campbell, editor & writer late 30s-60s, encouraged more emphasis on humanity, social problems as well as better writing and more accurate science

D. 70's New Wave—less optimistic—humans not superior—and more experimental writing techniques, Harlan Ellison's Dangerous Visions: freer in sexual content, dealing more directly with contemporary social problems and Feminism—thought experiments. To imagine a future quite different—examine assumptions about oppressive gender system (push to limits), look at archetypes behind cultural assumptions, revisionist myth-making, female utopias, etc.

E. Definitions—several pages of different definitions in my class packet so not as simple as one might think; different splits into hard, soft, cyberpunk, etc.

1) Literature concerned with impact of scientific theory, knowledge, and advancement—Asimov OR 2) Literature which cases willing suspension of dis-
belief with atmosphere of credibility as opposed to fantasy which doesn’t give rational explanation. (examples: faster than light travel, ansible, beam me up Scotty, instant translation, time travel, ESP elements) but needs a kind of intellectual coherence and plausibility. Elements: future, past though time travel or alternate history, extrapolation from today’s problems, other planets/aliens, catastrophes, what if X changed. Today we expect stylistic competence and intellectual thoughtfulness with our sense of wonder.

Campbell: stories that could be published in a magazine of the future without explanation (we don’t do details of plane, slang zap/microwave). Givens of the new world enter the story as normal detail: The doorknob opened a blue eye and looked at him—1946 Henry Kuttner Intent—shake readers out of normal patterns, challenge cultural orientations. Reader has to think beyond the words—Delany’s idea that metaphors/symbols can be taken literally. He turned on his left side.

“I am an old man now and I can still see Helen as Dave unpacked her” Lester Del Rey “Helen O’Loy”

“Martel was angry. He did not even adjust his blood away from anger.” Cordwainer Smith “Scanners Live in Vain” & “I myself went into the hospital and came out French.” “Alpha Ralph’er Boulevard

Le Guin calls SF thought experiments, a pack of lies to tell the truth using symbol/metaphor/new realm to say something/raise questions in a way that couldn’t be done in realistic mundane novel. SF attempts to help us interpret ourselves, in order to make conceptual frames more visible.

HOW TO READ SCIENCE FICTION (genre conventions—Thurber story about mystery reader reading Macbeth)

1. Requires more active reader—must interpret clues—in medias res—delayed coding so sometimes we get partial impressions. Question is how important—sometimes just to let us know we’re not in Kansas anymore Toto. Reader must be able to cope with the defamiliarization or estrangement effect—Miller’s fallout shelter.

2. Must know something of science or at least be able to accept brief set ups about scientific premises (Le Guin does very smoothly and the scientists’ names, techniques in Lathe are genuine—from what I’ve read)

3. Can require more of writer—accuracy in idea, setting, science

4. What makes the work SF—what are the novums; how important; how believable—social and cultural as well as science/tech—What are the effects of these differences?

What purposes are the SF elements serving? Could the same ideas be conveyed in a non-SF way?

5. Ask what is being extrapolated from; what comments are being made on today’s world?

6. Didactic elements—bother some readers

Taking these extra steps is worth doing—ability to put reader into new frames of reference-literature of outside Toftter’s Future Shock idea

Sense of wonder/reader participating in

IT’S FUN! “SF is the most flexible, adaptable, broad-range, imaginative, crazy form prose fiction has ever attained” Language Of Night p. 234

URSULA K. LE GUIN—here are a few points of interest:

Biography elements—parents were anthropologists/authors Theodora and Alfred Kroeber Lish in Two Worlds—literature of outsider; attended Radcliffe and Columbia; married Charles LeGuin teacher of history; in Portland since 1959 Oregon—interest in environment & “Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” is Salem backwards. First fantasy publication 1961; first SF 63
Interest in Languages: studied French, recently translated Argentine author Angelica Gorodischer's Kalpa Imperial from Spanish, using various translations reinterpreted Lao Tzu (interest in taoism—mutual interdependence of opposites, of being centered with nature, of a doctrine of inaction—to go is to return . . . ongoing synthesis. True journey is return in The Dispossessed, Odonion revolution). Philosophical/humanities seem to get more play over technology in her books.

Variety: children's pictures books, fantasy Earthsea trilogy, SF, contemporary mundane fiction, historical fantasy, New Yorker short stories, parable—“She Unnames Them,” “Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas,” Changing Planes, critical essays, book about writing SF & fantasy, poetry, translations, editing—Norton Book of Science Fiction, dance/opera, does workshops & conferences, humor/wit—the king was pregnant; responds to young scholars Awards: Horn Bk award, Newberry, Hugos, Nebulas, Nat'l Book Award, Tiptree Award (I discussed briefly its background and importance in science fiction).

RECURRING THEMES AND THINGS I ESPECIALLY LIKE
Environmental issues
Gender—both in fiction and non—“Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction” 86 I particularly like her willingness, even courage to come back to a previous book/theme “Is Gender Necessary” 76 Is Gender Necessary Redux 87 Left Hand of Darkness non-gendered: has new sections when re-issued: Tehanu, The Other Wind, Tales from Earthsea/ even The Dispossessed is called an ambiguous utopia
Age—Tehanu is a grandmother, “Space Crone” aliens learn from a person as example of the race, she'd choose an older woman who had children, grandchildren, had worked and “accepted/acted the human condition of change” “Day Before the Revolution” in Wind's 12 Quarters
Myth—actually came up with the myths, legends of non-gendered people of incredibly cold world, the archaeology of the future in Always Coming Home—story telling and poetry (Stone Telling), Native America. Coyote stories in “Buffalo Gals Won't You Come Out Tonight”

Style: scenes that stay with me—the wall image and scene of young child looking at dust motes in sunlight from The Dispossessed, Genly Ai trying to understand the ungendered people of Winter, the fan with 2 images that combine in Tehanu, the caverns and labyrinth in Tombs of Atuan, after Eve unnames the animals/aspects of nature to get rid of the separations: “My words now must be as slow, as new, as single, as tentative as the steps I took going down the path away from the house, between the dark-branched, tall dancers motionless against the winter shining.”

THE LATHE OF HEAVEN
Film by PBS 1979 recently released on video. LeGuin finds the aliens stiff & mechanical but an interesting version. Recent cable—romance bothered me, but interesting bits with Mannie the janitor/friend becoming a Greek chorus figure & the fun with the changes in the doctor's receptionist. Three Main Characters: George Orr, Dr. Haber, Heather Lalache

Some aspects that might require careful reading: 1) Style: in medias res, dreamlike—reader is as disoriented as George—you might think he's drunk but you're reading science fiction so possibility that the floors becoming walls and the doors without keys have literal component (I suggest you reread first couple of pages after you finish the whole book). Satiric elements, colloquial with fragments and conversation, stream of consciousness—dreams, subjective with changes in point of view. Wit/fun—turn gray to get rid of racism, dream the aliens off the moon—so they show up on Earth, close description of items in alien's store, including Beetles' “with a little help from my friends.” Metaphors of jelly fish and other sea images—recur in Orr's last dream & George is called jelly fish. Recurring
missions to the journal, and will be considered for publication.

**SUBMISSIONS:** MSWord to Michelle Reid <michelle@surguy.net>
**DEADLINE:** May 31 2005.

**WHAT:** ‘Borderlands of Science and Literature’
**WHO:** Science and Literature Panel at 2005 MLA convention
**WHEN:** Nov 10-13, 2005
**WHERE:** Milwaukee, Wisconsin

**TOPICS:** This panel calls for papers which examine the interaction of scientific and literary imagination in literature that is informed by the intersection of science, technology, mathematics, literature and culture. Some topics might address literature that lies in the borderlands between: Science and literature/culture; Literary movements (example: Romanticism/Modernism/Postmodernism/etc); Genre (example: novel/poetry/fantasy/realism/nonfiction/etc); Gender/sexuality as informed by science/technology; Any other papers dealing with boundary crossing as related to science and literature.

**SUBMISSIONS:** abstracts as Word attachment to <engelt@leeds.ac.uk>
**DEADLINE:** March 15

**WHAT:** “The Superhero Revised in Comic Books, Film, and Television”
**WHO:** 2005 Midwest Popular Culture Association / Midwest American Culture Association Conference
**WHEN:** October 14-16
**WHERE:** St. Louis, MO

**TOPICS:** From the time of their advent in the comic books of the 1930’s, superheroes have been a distinctive part of the American experience. Some critics have suggested that the enduring presence of superheroes in comic books, film, and television grows from the desire to retain the classic heroic archetypes.

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**NONFICTION REVIEW**

**A Sense of Wonder**

Janice M. Bogstad


I want to be clear on this. I was inclined to be favorable to this book because Delany has been one of my favorite writers as well as a favorite critic for most of my adult life. And this book features some of his less generically-classifiable fiction which has been the locus of discussion, dispute, dismissal and delight for a couple (at least) of generations of readers. I can now report that the work was not a disappointment.

In Jeffrey Allen Tucker, Assistant Professor of English at the University of Rochester, Delany may also have found a truly worthy critic for these works, which include *Dhalgren* (mixed-genre, self-reflexive), the *Return to Neveryon* Series (high fantasy and science fiction including: *Tales of Neveryon, Neveryona, Flight From Neveryon, Return to Neveryon*), *The Motion of Light on Water* (Autobiography, in a style characteristic to Delany), *Atlantis: Model 1924* and *The Mad Man* (futuristic fiction, gay pornography, philosophy?).

Tucker's style, too, is unusual and also very effective. His interest is in explorations of race found in Delany's works (among other themes), and Delany's interrogation of the sometimes-popular theoretical stance of identity politics. He demonstrates both Delany's interrogation and use of identity politics and his ultimate rejection of that personal position as a fixed perspective from which to view, and what is more important, to change the world. His second approach is to follow Delany's use of paraliterature as gay activism, and particularly, as gay AIDS activism. So within this critical work you will find analyses of Delany's more recent fiction, autobiography and criticism, but also much information about the nature of race, gayness, and AIDS in the modern world. For example, in Chapter 6, ‘A Revolution from Within,’ Tucker includes facts from a range of health and inter-

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use of eggs.

2) The science and comments on today (psychology, biochemistry, socialized medicine, environment/over population) Haber's use of nonsense words late in book

Use of quotations for each chapter, other allusions such as to *1984* George Orwell. The ways she lets you know changes after each dream—overly and subtly make comments on today: “when protests were legal,” “his family had the regular three-room flat when he was a teen but lucky enough to have private bathroom,” Haber's hair is cut conservatively—shoulder length.

3) Character development—contrast with each other, commenting on use of power. Heather: “Only those who have denied their being yeam to play God”. Haber makes judgments in 10 sec., has no close relationships, doesn't like to waste time on the means, treats Orr like an object, feels no reason to learn something if it's not useful, sees no need to mention inconclusive results. Readers can take notes to do personality summaries for the other two main characters.

4) Underlying philosophic question—when do we act/when do be with the world—how find a balance/a center (which Haber is said not to have—just layers that can continue to be peeled). My own take: Orr does act—says no to Haber, pulls plug when Haber is dreaming. He talks about the difficulty of the simple act and the alien says “you have lived well.”
Others have suggested that superheroes are extremely malleable commodities that easily reflect and reinforce culture. This panel will explore the changes made to the superhero in general and particular throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. Possible topics include: Iconic superheroes; Well-known comic book heroes such as Spiderman and the Hulk and not such well-known comic book heroes such as Blade and the League of Extraordinary Gentlemen; Radically revised superheroes such as Frank Miller's Dark Knight or Grant Morrison's New X-Men; Outsider heroes such as Batman, Daredevil, and Elektra; Alternative continuity versions of superheroes from titles such as Marvel's What If? and series such as DC's "Elseworlds"; Anti-heroic superbeings such as Alan Moore's Watchmen and Warren Ellis' The Authority; Relatively ordinary people living in superheroic worlds as in Kurt Busiek's Marvels or Brian Michael Bendis' Alias and offering metanarratives on the meaning of superheroes.

SUBMISSIONS: 300-word proposal to Terrence Wandtke <twandtke@judsoncollege.edu>, within the body of the e-mail or Word attachment. DEADLINE: April 30, 2005

WHAT: Science Fiction and Fantasy Section

WHO: South Central Modern Language Association

WHEN: 27-29 October 2005

WHERE: Warwick Hotel in downtown Houston TX.

TOPICS: The theme for the conference, in "Space City," is "Literary Space(s)." The theme for the Science Fiction and Fantasy Section is based on that: "Literary Times(s) and national organizations on the state of AIDS and its relationship to race and class in the U.S. and the world as contextualization for a fascinating, if sometimes too ambitious, critique of The Mad Man.

Additionally, the bibliography is a rich on its own, with a critical panoply to be envied by any Delany or SF criticism, race and identity theory or Feminist enthusiast.

While Tucker has chosen, in this reworking of his dissertation from Princeton University, to focus on the above-mentioned works, it is clear that he's very familiar with other Delany, such as Stars in My Pocket, Nova, Trouble on Triton, etc. and with other autobiographical and critical works. Some may find the melding of factual and politically-charged information not to their liking. Most, I think, will recognize that Tucker has tapped into a main root in Delany's work as a whole. In my humble opinion, anyone who tries to work on Delany, or on the more exciting aspects of modern science fiction's potential to engage with the world, will want to read this book.

NONFICTION REVIEW

**The Gernsback Days**

Neil Barron


Born in Luxembourg in 1884, Hugo Gernsback immigrated to the US in 1904 and founded and edited several electronic hobbyist magazines. In 1926 he founded and edited *Amazing Stories*, the first all-SF magazine, was soon forced into bankruptcy and later founded several other SF pulps. Historians of SF recognize the importance of Gernsback but differ sharply on his influence. The dominant view is that he was a disaster, untalented as both an editor and writer of SF, who imposed a crippling philosophy on the early development of SF. Ashley thinks more highly of Gernsback, and over two decades wrote this detailed study (250 of the book's 499 pages). His research provides much detail not previously revealed or placed in context. Lowndes (1916-98), an early pulp magazine editor, provides 132 pages of numbing summaries of the dreary fiction in Gernsback's magazines, 1926-36. Most of the remaining pages list issue-by-issue contents of SF in Gernsback magazines published 1908-36. Gernsback has been the subject of many articles and books (the selected bibliography runs 8 pages), including Westfahl's favorable *The Mechanics of Wonder* (1998). But the final judgment is likely to be that of Bleiler in *Science-Fiction: The Gernsback Years*, who concludes: "In general, apart from an occasional story, one must look back at the authors of 1926-1936 mostly as predecessors, rather than as authors to be read today apart from historical reasons."

NONFICTION REVIEW

**Ghouls, Gimmicks, and Gold**

Rebecca Janicker


The aim of this text is to place American horror films of the 1950s and 1960s within the broader context of production and marketing, as well as examin-
...their relation to the wider industry, both national and international, during those decades. It does so by providing evaluative accounts of a range of technologies prevalent in the industry at the time, as well as describing typical plots, motifs and directorial styles, drawing on a wide array of examples and illustrating them with black and movie stills, advertisements and cinema posters. Brimming with plot synopses and including an appendix 'Feature Film Packages in Television Syndication 1955-1968', this text serves as a reference guide as well as a critical work.

The chapter topics include the updating of the cinema of attractions with the introduction of technology such as 3-D and Psycho-Rama, Hammer horror productions, Poe adaptations and art house cinema, concluding with a nod to the blending of classic low-budget horror themes with big production values and advanced special effects in contemporary Hollywood (226).

The introductory chapter looks at the explosion in 3-D movies between 1952 and 1954, noting the tendency to decry such productions as "tedious linking scenes in between 'gimmick shots' of ... hurled objects" (17). Heffernan uses House of Wax (1953) and Creature from the Black Lagoon (1954) as exemplars of the many changes taking place in the production and marketing of genre film. Chapters 2, 4 and 5 explore specific productions, including Terence Fisher's Hammer production Curse of Frankenstein (1957), Roger Corman's Pit and the Pendulum (1961) and Michael Powell's English-made art film Peeping Tom (1960).

Of particular interest is Chapter 3, which addresses concerns in the 1950s about subliminal advertising and, as a corollary, further fears about the ability of filmmakers and other agents of the mass media to wield the power of subliminal suggestion in their products. Anxiety abounded concerning the "seemingly hypnotic powers that advertisers wielded over the public" (74), and Heffernan cites Vance Packard's seminal 1957 work The Hidden Persuaders as an example of the public's increasing awareness of the dangers of the media. The feeling was that it might have been possible for studios and cinemas to manipulate audiences without their knowledge or consent, exploiting their emotions, behavior and finances for financial gain. A surge of interest in 'depth psychology' and in the subconscious thus had potentially horrific implications for audiences of the era, as well as for characters in horror films that they watched, such as My World Dies Screaming (1958), in which the protagonist is forced to confront nightmarish repressed memories that turn out to be actual events from her past (73). The role of the subliminal is thus shown by Heffernan to have impacted hugely upon the popular psyche of the 1950s and 1960s, whether on or off the screen.

Chapters 6 and 7 focus on wider trends and changes in film marketing and consumption, dealing with the growing phenomena of global marketing and television syndication respectively. Major studios began to realise that selling the more upscale, bigger budget pictures to overseas audiences, as well as to domestic, was required in order to make them profitable. Combined with the noted success of certain foreign productions with American movie-goers, this trend contributed to increased internationalisation of the movie market. Heffernan notes "Finally, by 1960 all of the major studios had established lucrative corporation deals with studios in Great Britain or Europe" (136). The author gives a detailed account of the technologies used to bring low-budget film productions to the small screen, explaining how certain developments, such as UHF television stations, played a part in the increased demand for feature productions and syndicated programs in the 1960s.

Chapter 8 shows how the horror films of the late 1960s reflected "what had become a highly fragmented consuming public during a time of bewildering social change" (181). Cases here include Rosemary's Baby (1968), in which Heffernan notes that the eponymous Rosemary is an independent, educated, modern woman who...
Science Fiction: Traditions: “Retro” Aesthetics: Philosophy and Literature; Science Fiction and Feminism; Social Ethics and Politics. This is an open call for papers from all disciplines. We welcome panel/workshop proposals on specific themes, as well.

SUBMISSIONS: abstracts (not more than 500 words), reading time of not more than 30 minutes, to Prof. Michael Berman, Philosophy Department, Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada L2S 3A1, or <mberman@brocku.ca>

DEADLINE: April 15, 2005

WHAT: Science Fiction(s): A Study Day on Science Fiction Film, Television, Literature and New Media

WHEN: 19 August 2005
WHERE: University of Nottingham, UK

TOPICS: While popular representations of science fiction have been granted a certain degree of academic legitimacy in recent years, this study day represents an attempt to rethink the frameworks in which the study of science fiction has been defined generically by industries, audiences and texts. The Science Fiction(s) event seeks to redress the balance in order to examine the cross over of sf spectacularity, and the intermediality of sf’s intersection with television, literature and new media. This one day forum for debate is intended to facilitate an interrogation of the cultural value of these peripheral and multidisciplinary engagements with science fiction(s), seeking to examine how sf space has transmuted into divergent media. Our intention is to look specifically at the extensive cross over potentials that emerge between sf manifestations such as television, literature, DVD and video, as well as gaming and internet communities.

Overall, this text achieves its goals in giving a detailed account of major changes, and reasons for them, in horror films and the American film industry during the 1950s and 1960s. At times the book appears to lean heavily upon explanations, facts and figures pertaining specifically to technology, and thus might benefit from more in-depth textual analysis.

NONFICTION REVIEW

Liquid Metal

Jeff D’Anastasio


The editor’s book here is “the very first extended collection of previously published essays on science fiction film and, to a lesser extent, television” (x). Perhaps this is the very first anthology of already-published essays on science fiction films and TV shows, although there are numerous other anthologies specializing in the topic. Regardless of which book is the very first, my overall judgment of Liquid Metal is positive. If academic essays about science fiction movies interest you, then you likely have already found this collection. But for a broader audience, particularly in regards to suitability as a required text for a college course, I have two qualifications. One concern is the design of the book, and the second relates to, for lack of a better word, marketing.

Design: This book is crammed with information. Thirty essays are presented in eight subsections, including such critics as Vivian Sobchack (three essays), Susan Sontag, Scott Bukatman, John Tulloch, and Peter Hutchings among others. The subsections feature film utopias, disasters, time travel, and cyborgs. There is great value for money to be had here given the affordability of the paperback version, yet this density comes at the expense of readability. Each essay is presented in a two-column format featuring a microscopic font.

I grant that this observation amounts to lamenting style over substance. I do not intend to fault the substance of Liquid Metal, but there is something about the look of the text that suggests a slog. Perhaps I am imagining students’ reactions too vividly; however, in contrast to the essays, editor Sean Redmond’s contextual summaries at the start of each subsection are printed in a clear, regular-sized font that makes these pages seem like a breath of fresh air. Redmond’s insights about the essays and the science fiction genre as a whole are consistent, clear, and useful.

Marketing: Rather than being “The” Science Fiction Film reader of the subtitle, the book is “A” reader whose main purview is films from the 1950s-1980s, with Jurassic Park (1993) and The Lost World (1997) among a handful of 1990s films that receive any mention. Will Brooker adds a 2003 preface to his 1997 Star Wars essay, and Kurt Lancaster’s 2001 critique of Babylon 5 fan fiction starts to end the book somewhat contemporarily—although why a final section on 1950s invasion films concludes an otherwise nearly chronological organization is distracting despite the editor’s “case study” explanation.

What my dateline quibbling amounts to is that if you are interested in
Blade Runner (1982), Alien (1979), Aliens (1986), and The Terminator (1984), then you will find numerous essays with at least one of these movies as the centerpiece. Anyone assuming that a 2004 Science Fiction Film Reader would include thorough coverage of the most recent Star Wars films, The Matrix and sequels, Spider-Man, or any Star Trek movies or TV series beyond those with the 1960s cast, will be disappointed. Remarking the book’s focus and subtitle to encompass films through 1994 or 1995 would help potential readers and course adapters a great deal. Nonetheless, there is plenty here for anyone with an interest in science fiction film history and criticism, and my lament about the lack of coverage for the past ten years could be easily remedied with a Liquid Metal 2.

NONFICTION REVIEW

**I Am Alive and You Are Dead**

*Neil Barron*


The SF writer about whom more has been written than any other, with the possible exception of Ursula Le Guin, is Philip K. Dick. He and a twin sister were born prematurely in 1928, and her immediate death haunted Dick’s entire life. Only two of his five marriages lasted longer than a year. Only one of his realistic novels was published during his lifetime; most of the others appeared after his death in 1982. Several of his stories have been filmed, of which the best and best known was *Blade Runner*, based very loosely on *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), and the subject of many essays and several books. Dick was prolific, with more than fifty novels and 118 short stories published in a five-volume set. His anguish, recurrent psychological problems (including a lifetime addition to amphetamines) and frequent paranoia were transmuted into his fiction. Perhaps his most intense concern was metaphysical, distinguishing between the real and the ersatz (this theme is prominent in *Blade Runner*). Whether you would learn this basic information from Emmanuel Carrere’s *I Am Alive and You Are Dead: A Journey into the Mind of Philip K. Dick* is doubtful. The author, a novelist and screenplay writer, has talked to people who knew Dick and has read about him, but his account is not that of a biographer or even a literary critic, but more of a usually sympathetic observer. Most readers, possibly excluding Dick fans, will find this a bore and unenlightening, in spite of Dick’s importance to SF. Much better for almost anyone else is Lawrence Sutin’s *Divine Invasion: The Life of Philip K. Dick* (1989), which is documented, critically balanced and has an index, features lacking in this tiresome account.

NONFICTION REVIEW

**The Evolution of the Weird Tale**

*Neil Barron*


S.T. Joshi is one of the major critics of weird/supernatural/horror fiction, especially of the works of H.P. Lovecraft (1890-1937), who’s attracted a cult following. Joshi’s latest book is *The Evolution of the Weird Tale* (Hippocampus Press, Box
developments in SF that have been shaping science and, more broadly, culture. Scientific areas of comparison and speculation in which discussions are most sought are as follows: medicine, biology, nanotechnology, social engineering, information science, virtual reality, space travel and terraforming, ecology and population biology, linguistics and alien communication. The conference will have four sections, organized around the following areas of investigation. The Astounding Age: The Past, Present and Future of Hard SF; From Analog to Digital and Sometimes Back Again; The SF World and Its Tomorrows: Remembrance of Things To Come; Future Histories and Alternate Histories; The Frankenstein Century: The Age of Biology.

SUBMISSIONS: Proposals for 20 minute papers to Robert Heath <heath@citrus.ucr.edu> or George Slusser <george.slusser@ucr.edu>. DEADLINE: March 1, 2005

WHAT: Science Fiction and Fantasy Discussion Circle
WHO: SAMLA
WHEN: November 4-6.
WHERE: Atlanta, GA

TOPICS: In speculating on and envisioning alternative pasts, presents, and futures, science fiction and fantasy invite a readership interested not simply in escape but in critical, visionary engagements with the “real” world, specifically with a status quo that favors a particular social, sexual, economic, religious, and environmental order. Papers are invited that explore the tendencies of SF and fantasy to subvert dominant paradigms by critiquing the hegemonic order and/or proposing alternatives to the socio-political norm. Possible paper topics include Ursula K. Le Guin’s exploration of gender roles in The Left Hand of Darkness, and Kristeva concerning issues surrounding the uncanny, religion, literature and archetypes, are also examined in some detail here. Overall, the author establishes where the study will take the reader, namely to an examination of how supernatural fiction must be experienced by the audience as a real and meaningful experience in order to challenge them to make reflections about the events and characters to which they become exposed.

The next chapter takes “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” as its focal point, examining the way in which the numinous provokes a quest for the self in an early text. The focus here is on the Mariner’s decidedly individualised journey from traditional religion to a greater insight into the cosmic and divine (83), with an ensuing duty to communicate this knowledge to others. Chapter 3 moves forward to classic vampire text Dracula, where McDonald uses the works of religious historian Mircea Eliade, amongst others, in her exploration of the novel’s

NONFICTION REVIEW

The Vampire as Numinous Experience

Rebecca Janicker


This text is a fascinating exploration of encounters between spiritual beings and events within a literary context, using the enduring figure of the vampire in its various guises in poetry and fiction. The author draws on detailed case studies of both classic and contemporary texts to build up a picture of the unique function of the vampiric figure within the realm of the supernatural. Key themes include the importance of the individualistic nature of this quest and the implications for wider society.

Chapter 1 sets the tone for the book by providing an overview of established works on the numinous and using these to develop definitions of crucial concepts. Here, McDonald expands on Rudolf Otto’s ideas about Gothic literature being a quest for the numinous, Tzvetan Todorov’s insights into the nature of the uncanny and Devendra P. Varma’s observations about humanity’s enduring need to experience the infinite (19). The psychoanalytic theories of Freud, Jung and Kristeva concerning issues surrounding the uncanny, religion, literature and archetypes, are also examined in some detail here. Overall, the author establishes where the study will take the reader, namely to an examination of how supernatural fiction must be experienced by the audience as a real and meaningful experience in order to challenge them to make reflections about the events and characters to which they become exposed (25).

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The final case-study chapter provides an in-depth analysis of late-twentieth-century vampires, using Anne Rice’s Vampire Chronicles and focusing particularly on the development of her key vampiric character, Lestat de Lioncourt. Here, McDonald uses texts such as Christopher Lasch’s “Culture of Narcissism” and Ernest Becker’s “The Denial of Death” to bring to the fore issues within the psyche of 1960s and 1970s America, such as a growing distrust for institutions and concomitant spiritual isolation, as well as the innate fear of death experienced by wider humanity (129).

These ideas are used to posit that subjects of the numinous experience occupy an ambiguous position between life and death, thus enabling them to satisfy their instincts with a search for moral meaning and salvation whilst struggling to hold back the threat of their own demise (133). McDonald notes Rice’s own observation that vampires are a useful metaphor for the human condition, immortals in human form that can explore issues of a moral and spiritual nature (134), with the potential for good or for evil. Essentially, it is argued that Lestat’s upbringing prepares him for his encounter with the numinous. He searches for meaning by combining his own aesthetic of ‘goodness’ with the aesthetic of ‘love’ engendered by his spiritual experience of ‘joining’ with his vampire maker, Magnus (146). A personal solution thus ensues for this vampiric protagonist, but not one that will satisfy him forever. This leads him to seek out others of his kind so that he may develop his ideas about how vampires should live. Lestat evolves morally during the course of his adventures, ultimately concluding that his own experience is all that truly exists (167).

In concluding her work, McDonald unites her first two case-studies and contrasts them with the last by noting that their “sin lies in forgetting our sacred connection with the world… in Anne Rice’s vampire novels the sin lies in being forgotten” (171). The character of Lestat thus provides a vehicle for raising fundamental questions about how our individual human lives relate to the wider scope of life. It would have perhaps strengthened McDonald’s arguments about this progression of human spiritual development even further if she had been able to link early twentieth-century texts with these later novels by addressing vampiric roles (or the lack thereof) in the intervening years. The book finishes with the observation that new centuries and new millennia form a numinous threshold that works to raise anxiety (169), and that writers have used the supernatural mode to address these fears. Furthermore, it is likely that they will continue to do so, as people in the twenty-first century seek out “a new spirituality to serve as a guide for the new century” (180). Overall, this book would be of great interest to scholars of Gothic and uncanny fiction, integrating hallmark theories on the subject with McDonald’s fresh approach to classic and modern texts.

NONFICTION REVIEW

The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy
Christine Cornell


This book is another offering in Open Court’s Popular Culture and Philosophy series edited by William Irwin. Like others in the series, including The Matrix and Philosophy (2002) and Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Philosophy (2003), this
Anti-science not as not-science, but as science’s Other. Anti-science as an argument at the stasis of definition. Anti-science as the pharmakon of science. The anti-science concept may name (among others) scientific fraud, species of creationism, global warming skepticism, science policy under the Bush administration, complementary/alternative medicine, and science studies itself.

SUBMISSIONS: title, abstract, and brief bio to <d.kellogg@neu.edu>
DEADLINE: 1 March 2005

WHAT: WisCon 29
WHEN: May 27-30, 2005
WHERE: Concourse Hotel in downtown Madison, Wisconsin.
TOPICS: We invite papers and presentations on science fiction and fantasy, with an emphasis on issues of feminism, gender, race, and class. We especially welcome papers on the work of this year’s guests of honour, Robin McKinley and Gwyneth Jones.
SUBMISSIONS: proposals of 50-100 words via email to Joan Haran at <joanharan@btinternet.com>
DEADLINE: 28 February 2005
INFORMATION: <http://www.sf3.org/wiscon/>

WHAT: The Witching Hour: A Harry Potter Symposium presented by HP Education Fanon, Inc.
WHEN: Oct 6-10, 2005
WHERE: Salem, MA
TOPICS: Keynote Speakers: Henry Jenkins, John Cech Special Guests: Marleen Barr, Vicky Dann, Eliza T. Dresang, Tamora Pierce, Nancy Farmer, Charles de Lint, Ellen Datlow, Holly Black, Charles N. Brown. The Witching Hour is an interdisciplinary symposium designed to allow scholars and adult enthusiasts of the Harry Potter series to gather and share research. The conference programming book aims to make philosophical ideas accessible to a general audience through an examination of ideas in works of popular culture. Gregory Bassham, Chair of Philosophy at King’s College, Pennsylvania, and Eric Bronson, Head of Philosophy and History at Berkeley College, New York City, have assembled sixteen original essays primarily by those in philosophy with two by writers from English.

The essays are arranged around five broad topics: the Ring, the quest for happiness, good and evil, time and mortality, and finally, ends and endings. The organization is at times a bit arbitrary; for instance, there is inevitably overlap between discussions of the Ring and the theme of good and evil in Tolkien’s work. A reader might also wish for greater breadth among the topics; for instance, given the prominence of war in The Lord of the Rings there is surprisingly little attention in this collection to ethical or philosophical issues connected to the conduct of war. After the essays, the book includes six pages of proverbial quotations titled “The Wisdom of the Philosophers” beginning with Lao-tzu and ending with Camus. It is not clear what purpose this serves, since it is not referred to in the essays. Much more useful is the index which includes references to philosophers, works, and ideas.

The strongest essays in the collection are those concerned with ethical issues. In “Sam and Frodo’s Excellent Adventure,” J. Lenore Wright, drawing on the work of Martha Nussbaum, observes that “in portraying characters whose actions mimic the lived experiences of human beings, literature offers us a lens into the philosophical dimension of human action—ethical, aesthetic, and ontological” (193). Eric Katz’s essay, “The Rings of Tolkien and Plato” is a good example of the careful consideration of the ethical considerations of The Lord of the Rings which some of the essays offer. Katz develops a comparison between Plato’s story of Gyges in the Republic and Tolkien’s text. In comparing Gyges with Boromir, he argues that Tolkien unlike Plato shows us the inner process of corruption as well as the resulting actions. At the same time, through Sam and Galadriel, Tolkien suggests resistance is far from futile. This emphasis on free will is another common theme in many of the essays. Two fine essays by Scott A. Davidson and Aeon J. Skoble pick up the theme of free will in their discussions of the nature of evil and in the development of virtue and vice respectively.

The essays in the collection consider The Lord of the Rings in light of philosophical thinkers ranging from Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine, to Kant, Mill, and Nietzsche. The connections seem more strained, however, as the essays move into the existentialists. Eric Bronson’s essay on existentialists and the elves, for instance, ignores Tolkien’s own Christianity, making some of the conclusions unpersuasive. Many of the essays do make good use of Tolkien’s other works, especially The Silmarillion and On Fairy Stories. There are also references to Peter Jackson’s film version, but there are no systematic comparisons with the text.

A general reader will find much to think about in this book, but it would also be useful for students of Tolkien with little philosophical background who might like some idea of where to begin. I would also recommend some of the essays for use in undergraduate teaching because they are accessible and well written.

NONFICTION REVIEW

H.G. Wells: Traversing Time
Neil Barron


If anyone could be appropriately tagged “the father of science fiction,” it would be H.G. Wells (1866-1946); Wagar is one of many critics who argue this
Another candidate, Jules Verne (1828-1905) is sometimes suggested, but—perhaps because he was trained as a lawyer, unlike Wells, who had considerable science training—his many *voyages extraordinaires* rarely go beyond the knowledge of his day. While his tales are energetic, they are intellectually cautious. When he wrote of a moon voyage, he included more ballistics than most readers cared to know (and they were wrong as well). Wells, in spite of his scientific training, was content to substitute “the ingenious use of scientific patter” to gain credibility for his stories, or scientific romances as he reluctantly called them (the term science fiction did not become common until the 1930s). Verne was annoyed that Wells would use an obvious impossibility (Cavorite, which was impervious to gravitation) as the propulsive force for his moon ship.

Wagar says he was greatly influenced by Wells as a boy in the early 1930s. He wrote his 1956 doctoral thesis on Wells, published in 1961 as *H.G. Wells and the World State* and wrote other books about Wells in subsequent years, including this new one, *H.G. Wells: Traversing Time* (Wesleyan UP, 2004, $34.95). Wagar’s emphasis here is on Wells’s penchant for setting present day concerns (many of which are today’s major problems) “within a framework of evolutionary time,” to quote another Wells critic. Wagar’s first chapter provides an overview of Wells’s life and major works, not only the scientific romances but his other fiction, journalism and essays as well. Later chapters flesh out this summary. Just enough background detail is provided to orient the interested lay reader, while the notes, bibliography and index will serve the scholar. Perhaps the best endorsement of the importance of Wells came from a short but acute 1941 essay by George Orwell (1903-50), “Wells, Hitler and the World State,” which Wagar doesn’t cite: “Thinking people who were born about the beginning of this century are in some sense Wells’s own creation . . . I doubt whether anyone who was writing books between 1900 and 1920, at any rate in the English language, influenced the young so much. The minds of all of us, and therefore the physical world, would be perceptibly different if Wells had never existed . . . here was this wonderful man who could tell you about the inhabitants of the planets and the bottom of the sea, and who knew that the future was not going to be what respectable people imagined . . .”

If your library lacks either one of the two best biographies of Wells, David C. Smith’s *H.G. Wells: Desperately Mortal* (1986) or Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie’s *H.G. Wells: A Biography* (1973; rev. 1987 as *The Life of H.G. Wells: The Time Traveller*), you should consider Wagar’s balanced study, an excellent example of intellectual history rather than of literary criticism or straight biography. But first you should own or acquire copies of *Seven Science Fiction Novels of H.G. Wells* in the bargain-priced Dover omnibus reprint and *The Complete Short Stories of H.G. Wells*, ed. by John Hammond (Dent, 1998; Trafalgar Square, US distributor).

**NONFICTION REVIEW**

**The Horror Reader’s Advisory**

Neil Barron


Becky Siegel Spatford and Tammy Hennigh Clausen are readers’ advisory librarians at the Berwyn PL, west of Chicago. Their *The Horror Reader’s Advisory: the Librarian’s Guide to Vampires, Killer Tomatoes, and Haunted Houses* is a chatty, cliché-filled introduction for fellow librarians. A short potted history begins the 161 page book, whose list of horror authors, Gothic to contemporary, include most of the...
major figures as well as many decidedly minor talents. The next chapter provides tips on matching horror fiction to widely varying readers, who are not, they emphasize, mostly teenage boys. A set of 22 books, all pre-Stephen King's *Carrie* (1974), are designated “classics” and briefly described. The following ten chapters focus on subgenres such as ghosts, were animals, serial killers, witches and demons, splatterpunk, etc. Final chapters discuss collection development (weeding little-used materials as well as acquiring new books), marketing the horror's materials, and sources of more information, print and online. One source they praise is Anthony Fonseca and June Pulliam's *Hooked on Horror* (Libraries Unlimited, 1999; 2d ed, 2003). It's a good guide for librarians but not as good as they argue. Although horror is only one of the genres explored by Joyce G. Sanicks in *The Readers' Advisory Guide to Genre Fiction* (ALA, 2001), its scope and balance make it the preferred choice if only one such guide is needed.

NONFICTION REVIEW

**In the Zone**

Ed McKnight


If you spend every New Year's Day watching the *Twilight Zone* marathon on the Sci-Fi Channel, eagerly awaiting the episode where William Shatner sees the gremlin or Burgess Meredith breaks his glasses, but refusing to take a break even for the one about the jetliner and the dinosaurs . . .

If you watch the Simpsons' “Tree House of Horror” every Halloween just so you can be the first person in the room to shout out the name of the *Twilight Zone* episode they're parodying this year (even if your pre-teen children are the only other ones in the room) . . .

If you're an English professor and you like to use the *Twilight Zone* episode about the man (or is he the devil?) locked up in an eastern European monastery to teach your composition and argument students about logos, ethos and pathos . . .

In short, if you're me, then this series of original *Twilight Zone* scripts from Gauntlet Press is for you. Each volume contains nine scripts by one of the two most influential writers behind the show's development, series creator Rod Serling and regular contributor Charles Beaumont. Every script is followed by an extensive and enlightening commentary by the editor, providing not only background information about the episode's production, but astute critical observations as well. These volumes include such classics as Serling's “Walking Distance” and “Eye of the Beholder”, Beaumont's “The Howling Man”, and the final draft of his script for the unproduced episode “Gentlemen, Be Seated”.

A more casual viewer than myself might ask “why bother reading the scripts when you can just watch the show?” The scholarly value of the original scripts is obvious to anyone interested in studying the creative process that led to the finished episodes, but I have to admit that what I like most about these books are the extra features, such as a facsimile of a memo from the CBS Department of Standards and Practices requesting that the phrases “going back to the womb” and “Oh, My God!” be deleted from a script. All three volumes feature a number of black-and-white production photos, and while the most extensive selection of them is in the first volume of Serling's scripts, my favorite is one from the Beaumont collection featuring the devil from “The Howling Man,” in full costume and makeup, lighting a cigarette for the screenwriter.

A third volume of Serling's scripts is scheduled for publication, and I hope to someday see a collection of Richard Matheson's *Twilight Zone* scripts as well. (Gauntlet Press is planning to publish at least two volumes of Matheson's non-*Twilight Zone* scripts, including the Steven Spielberg-directed teleplay *Duel*.) The most irritating aspect of these books is that, while the title pages and commentaries reflect continuous pagination, the scripts themselves include only the internal page
numbers of the original scripts, with no running titles, making it necessary to flip back to the beginning to know which script you’re reading. Of course, that’s because these are the original scripts. That’s more than adequate compensation for a little page flipping.

**NONFICTION REVIEW**

**Stepping Through the Stargate**

Christine Mains


In 1994, the film *Stargate*, written and directed by Dean Devlin and Roland Emmerich (who have also given the world *Independence Day* (1996) and *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), appeared in movie theaters. Although the second half of the film was your basic ‘good old American military heroes rescue oppressed masses,’ the first half focused on the discovery of and investigation into an alien piece of technology, discovered by archaeologists at Giza in 1928 and turned over to the United States Air Force, which eventually, with the help of Devlin and Emmerich’s archetypal glasses-wearing geeky scientist, is revealed to be a portal between worlds, a stable and controllable wormhole. A few years later, the premise was expanded into a weekly television series, starring Richard Dean Anderson and Michael Shanks as the wise-cracking Air Force hero and the geeky genius; the show almost immediately developed a cult following, and is currently heading into its ninth season, with a spin-off series already underway.

So far, the show hasn’t garnered the kind of critical attention from academics that *Star Trek*, *Babylon 5*, and *X-Files* have managed. That may be partly because the show’s creative staff tends to the conservative and uncontroversial, rarely developing the potential of the show’s mythology and fictional universe. Still, it’s demonstrated its staying power and an incredible fan following, and scholarly analysis isn’t lacking, just a tad delayed; the recently released *American Television* (2004) contains articles on the show, and a critical anthology devoted entirely to the *Stargate* phenomenon is currently in the works. In the meantime, *Stargate* fans interested in digging more deeply into the characters, narratives, and themes of the show have had to turn to less scholarly sources, such as the fun (and completely unauthorized) volume of essays put together by BenBella Books of Dallas, TX.

Editors P. N. Elrod and Roxanne Conrad, both SF authors and enthusiastic fans, have gathered a diverse collection of thoughts and analyses written by other SF authors, medical professionals, an astrophysicist, a philosopher, an archaeologist, an astronaut, an actor who plays a favorite recurring character on the show, a special effects wizard, and a female Colonel in the United States Air Force. The topics range from an exploration into the wacky love lives of the four main characters (with the show’s hero, surprisingly, getting less action than the stoic alien sidekick) to a discussion of scientific technobabble (when the show gets it right and very wrong), from an archetypal analysis of the characters’ functions in the mythic storyline to a scientific explanation of alien mind control as exemplified by the parasitic lifeform that is the show’s major villain. This approach does lead to inconsistency in quality and style, but it does guarantee something of interest for every fan.

Some of the highlights: Bill Fawcett, co-creator of The Fleet series of military SF novels and a designer of computer games, examines the capabilities of the Jaffa staff weapon from the viewpoint of an Air Force researcher writing a classified Top Secret document. He concludes that the superheated plasma blast of the weapon possesses the unusual property of being able “to differentiate between a credited SG member and other, more expendable characters, only wounding said credited members even when fired at the closest range” (4). David Gerrold compares *Stargate to Star Trek*, noting that the chief difference between the two shows, in his opinion, is that while *Star Trek* takes itself too seriously, “*Stargate SG-1* has a sly sense of self-mockery” and technology grounded in the everyday rather than the fabulous (16-17). SF author Catherine Asaro and astrophysicist John K. Cannizzo team up to explain, in clear and understandable prose, the physics that would make possible the kind of wormhole travel portrayed on the show, with reference to the work of Michael Morris and Kip Thorne as well as to quantum mechanics and the properties of exotic matter. In “I Think his Name is Homer,” Susan Sizemore speculates on the possibility that the reason the show is so popular and its fans so devoted might be its use of pop culture references, which ground the show in the viewer’s familiar world; her title refers to one of the frequent references to *The Simpsons* that sprinkle the dialogue of the characters, along with references to *The Wizard of Oz* and *Star Wars*. And, given that one of the primary characters is a kick-ass Air Force officer and brilliant scientific mind who just happens to be a gorgeous blonde, I enjoyed the reminiscences of Col. Gina McGuinness about her own experiences as a woman in this man’s army.
I'm not even going to pretend that the articles in this volume are suitable research sources for scholars or teachers of science fiction television, although there are insightful comments and useful bits of information scattered throughout. But it does serve its purpose, which is to provide a voice for the many fans, from all backgrounds, who find something valuable and satisfying about the show, who have made it an anomaly in the world of series television, a show that is gaining, rather than losing fans as it grows older, that has demonstrated an appeal around the world. Stargate SG-1 is a show that deserves more critical attention than it's been receiving, and while we wait for that attention from more scholarly sources, Stepping Through the Stargate is a fun and interesting way to fill the gap.

FICTION REVIEW

The World as it Shall Be

Edward Carmien


It is 1846 and on the Continent (which one? Is there any possible answer at this time other than Europe?) Emile Souvestre publishes The World as it Shall Be, a dystopic view of the year 3000 as shown to the amazed eyes of travelers through time who have slept away the centuries between Souvestre's time and the “now” of the story. Billed in this Wesleyan UP edition as the first “future dystopia in modern European literature” it is also one of the first if not the first illustrated texts of its kind.

Reading fiction in translation can often be an awkward experience, akin to wearing one’s shoes on the wrong feet or to brushing one’s teeth with the hand unused to such exercise. The translator here, Margaret Clark, appears to have done a good job, and the only bar to enjoyment on the basis of language is the fact this is a text more than 150 years old and hence a bit old-fashioned.

This is the story of Maurice and Marthe, two young people pictured on page one in a window “dreaming about the future of the human race.” They meet a fantastic figure who enables their dream to become reality by putting them into a state of hibernation that resembles death. They are briefly a sensation in the French tabloids of the day before being forgotten until the year 3000, when they awaken to a future that gives the impression of being a time of great progress.

That impression wears away as the pair tour the future world, which has its capital in Tahiti and a travelogue of interesting characters and places for the time-travelers to observe and comment upon. To a contemporary reader the journey is rough and crude, but a thrilling tale told using the most modern of narrative conveniences is not the tale one picks this book up to read. Like later utopian and dystopian novels the point here is a review of the sensibilities of the time and culture of the author.

That many of the comments Souvestre makes still apply today is reason enough alone for those who work in the field of science fiction literature to become familiar with this text—serious readers outside of the academy might also appreciate giving this text a look. Rather than work through the text, I instead collect a number of noteworthy quotes that seem appropriate to our contemporary society.

Speaking of the workings of the justice system in the guise of instructing new lawyers in their craft: “Was it a case in forensic medicine? One must speak of the inexactitude of the sciences. Was it a case of vindicating a thief? He must be portrayed as a victim of the police. Was it a case of saving the hide of a murderer? He must be presented as having been overcome by a fit of madness.”

As regards healthcare, in particular the cost of medical services: “‘We give this name,’ replied the Doctor, ‘to the economies made at the expense of the patients. Let the soup be a little less rich—we have a bonus; and the bread not quite so white, another bonus; if the wine is mixed with water, yet another bonus! We have perfected this method in order to make a bit out of the housekeeping money that provides for ten thousand meals. In this way institutions grow rich, and bursars earn gratitude and extra money. One can say that, in principle, a well-run hospital is one where the patients are uncomfortable enough to ensure that the institution makes some money out of them.’”

And if Atwood’s Oryx and Crake wasn’t scary enough for you, consider animal husbandry of the year 3000: “Again, the species preserved there had been very much improved through a program of crossbreeding that had changed their characteristic forms. They were no longer creatures governed by a law of proportion and harmony, but living things modified to give greater profits to the butchery business. Bulls, bred to put on a great deal of weight, had lost their bones; cows were no more than
animated machines that turned grass into milk; pigs were no more than masses of flesh, growing larger before one's very eyes."

And finally, in a clear forecast of the postmodern, these words upon the couple's observing a lecture describing the France in which they had lived prior to sleeping through time to the year 3000: "From now on we will know what constitutes a scientific investigation of history,' said Maurice, 'and what we should think of established truths. I now understand why these truths change in each century. History is a tangle of threads that each scholar unwinds and weaves into his own interpretation. The thread is always the same, but the material and the pattern vary according to the workman."

These remarkable examples point out the extrapolative power that Souvestre expressed in The World as it Shall Be. Each represents a logical extrapolation based on current events of his time. Legal battles worthy of media attention echo Souvestre's neat digest of approaches to courtroom defenses, his scathing statement about the medical industry will seem familiar to anyone who has been caught up in its clutches, today's animal husbandry practices aren't quite as extreme as Souvestre describes but surely we're well on our way with turkeys that can't walk and well-dosed cattle herds… and most tellingly of all, perhaps, Souvestre expresses the very core of the postmodern sensibility when he notes how the nature of the worker changes the pattern of the scholarly output.

This text is certainly not for the everyday, casual reader of fantastic fiction. It is not quite as enjoyable as Verne, being more polemic and less devoted to adventure and narrative. Even Swift seems a bit more readable, to mention an author who wrote in a similar vein as Souvestre. I highly recommend this text, and Wesleyan's early classics of science fiction series in general, for serious readers, scholars, and libraries.

**FICTION REVIEW**

**So Long Been Dreaming**

Joan Gordon


As Walter Mosley predicted about five years ago, there has been a boom in science fiction by African-American writers, with the success of Sheree R. Thomas's two *Dark Matter* anthologies forming ample evidence and opportunity. This anthology is a different, yet harmonious, project. It includes speculative fiction by authors of color from farther afield, from the postcolonial world, and their work directly addresses issues of postcoloniality. While the quality of the stories varies, the themes of the stories and the importance of the project are very strong.

A brief introduction by Hopkinson and a brief conclusion by Mehan surround nineteen stories in five sections: "The Body," "Future Earth," "Allegory," "Encounters with the Alien," and "Re-imagining the Past." The sections reflect a problem in the organization of the book—they do not form a coherent organization, since they are not parallel or complementary in subject. Having edited a couple of anthologies myself, I suspect that the lack of coherence has to do with the unpredictable nature of collecting original works from various hands. I do wonder, however, if there might have been some more coherent way to organize the stories.

And then I wonder whether the sorting of stories into tidy categories parallels the sorting of sentient beings into tidy categories, an urge that has resulted in many of the wrongs associated with colonialism. I wonder also the extent to which my own status as a white American means that I am judging this book and its contents as a colonialist myself. For instance, are the stones I like the most the ones that most reflect my understanding of the world; or, am I judging according to repressive, or at least different, standards based on my upbringing? If I am wondering all of these things, then the anthology has been successful in at least one way—it has provoked the reader to destabilize her relationship to issues of race and ethnicity. Let's face it, I'm still going to judge this anthology, but with the caveats alluded to above.

For me, then, the most successful story in the anthology was Vandana Singh's "Delhi." Admittedly, I was in Delhi six months ago and found it incredibly vibrant, and so I was happy to return to that city, past, present, and future, in this story. It takes place in a near-future Delhi in which the subways are running (they are being built at present) but the protagonist can see, briefly and hazily, past and future inhabitants of the city, and, rarely, can interact with them. That, by the way, is how I felt as a tourist in Delhi—past, present, and future existing simultaneously, as when I would see women in saris riding in auto-rickshaws powered by low-emission alternative fuels zipping by too fast even to take a picture. The protagonist, Aseem, in a moment of suicidal despair, is led to a computer service that is programmed to give him a reason to live. The computer, the city...
of Delhi, Aseem's raison d'être, and the story's speculations—each "transcends thesis and antithesis" (88). Each is "like a beehive. Many bits and parts, none is by itself intelligent. Combine together, and you have something that can think" (86). The resulting story is wonderfully vivid, humane, and thoughtful.

In fact, the section from which this story came, "Future Earth," was the most successful for me. Eden Robinson's "Terminal Avenue," about a native people in a dystopic future Vancouver, movingly illustrates a yearning for one's own normalcy, impossible to recapture except through pain. Nnedi Okarafor-Mbachu's "When Scarabs Multiply" is a complex allegory about progress and fundamentalisms. Tamai Kobayashi's "Panopte's Eye" manages to illustrate Foucault's model for discipline and punishment with strong characterization and a moving story about friendship.

Many of the stories explore the difficulties and ambiguities of change. "Refugees," by Celu Amberstone, and "Lingua Franca" by Carole McDonnell, both in "Encounters with the Alien," are from the perspective of people resisting change, and in both the protagonists seem to have attitudes as insensitive as the attitudes of the people bringing change. While the reader is sympathetic with the protagonist of "Lingua Franca" when she says, "Others accepted us; they saw our gifts, not our lack" (214), we are also aware that she cannot see the potential gifts in other ways. This is the predicament for the native of any site when an intruder comes, the conservative and resistant danger of home that Levinas warns us of. It is both the tragedy of the aboriginal person whose way of life is destroyed, and the frustration and anger of the status quo when immigrants with new ideas and customs move in.

While I found the style of some stories clumsy, often with unwieldy expository lumps, and while I found some stories overtaken by their ideologies, the collection as a whole seems invaluable for the questions it raises and the ideas it explores. These stories question "binaries of native/alien, technologist/pastoralist, colonizer/colonized," as Mehan says in the conclusion. They engage in the dialogue about colonialism and its effects that Hopkinson calls for in the anthology's introduction. The sum of this book is greater than its weaker parts and worthy of its strongest.

FICTION REVIEW

**Diamond Dogs, Turquoise Days**

Bill Dynes


Alistair Reynolds has been garnering significant popular and scholarly praise for his sweeping space opera series that began with *Revelation Space* and has recently concluded — apparently, at least — with *Absolution Gap*. *Diamond Dogs, Turquoise Days* brings together two much shorter novellas set in the same richly imagined universe. Both novellas have been published previously by PS Publishing and Golden Gryphon Press, respectively, and together by Gollancz in Great Britain. This Ace edition is their first US printing. Fans of Reynolds' novels will enjoy these much briefer visits to that universe; those who have been intrigued by reviews of his work but frightened off by the size of his novels will find these stories engaging introductions.

*Diamond Dogs* tells the story of Richard Swift, an expert in non-human intelligences. He's reacquainted with old friend Roland Childe, who has found his own dark tower on a distant planet dubbed Golgotha. The tower, which he calls the Blood Spire, tests its visitors with increasingly challenging puzzles, and it deals harshly with those who cannot pass its tests; the dismembered corpses of scores of visitors lie strewn about its periphery. Childe is gathering a team to probe the Spire's secrets, and Swift cannot pass up the challenge. As the tower's tests become increasingly difficult and the penalties for error more severe, Swift, Childe, and their companions are forced to undergo increasingly radical changes, both in mind and body, if they hope to progress.

*Turquoise Days* depends a bit more heavily upon a familiarity with the universe of *Revelation Space*. Naqi Okpik is a young woman whose research among the Pattern Jugglers is interrupted by the arrival of a lighthugger whose passengers may have sinister motives. The legacy of an unknown past culture, Pattern Jugglers are "a mindless biological archiving system, a museum without a curator" (141). The Pattern Jugglers record the minds of those who swim among them, and sometime do more than merely make copies. Naqi and her sister Mina study the growth and organization of this strange entity, making a frightening and tragic discovery just as the news of the interstellar visitors arrives. Whether or not Naqi fully understands just what they've found recorded within the Jugglers' matrix may determine the fate of the Pattern Jugglers on Turquoise, and of
the human colonizers there as well.

Living on an isolated planet, the people of Turquoise await the arrival of the Ultra’s interstellar lighthugger with a mix of anxiety and anticipation. Watching the crowd that has assembled for the embassy, Naqi is intrigued by the behavior of the children. She observes that “[at] that age everything was both magical and mundane, and she supposed that the children were no more nor less excited by the prospect of the coming visitors than they were by the promised fireworks display” (168). That combination of the magical and mundane is central to Reynolds’ successful noir space opera style, blending political intrigue with mind-bending technologies well beyond the cutting edge of known physics. As Naqi works to understand how the biology of the Pattern Jugglers permits them to record and store the consciousness of those whom they touch, she’s led inevitably to a closer consideration of how human lives intertwine: how we connect with those who are closest to us, and what we lose when they’re gone. Richard Swift faces similar questions when he discovers that one of the members of the team Childe is gathering for his exploration of the Blood Spire is Swift’s former wife, Celestine, whose parting with him was so painful that he had his memories of her artificially suppressed.

Some losses are accidental or inevitable; Diamond Dogs is more interested in the losses and changes that its characters accept willingly. In order to meet the increasingly arcane challenges and vicious punishments of the tower, Swift, Childe, and their companions employ the services of Dr. Trintignant, a gifted cyberneticist whose reputation for experimenting on subjects without their approval has led to disgrace and isolation. Trintignant’s ability to regrow severed limbs or replace them with wholly artificial upgrades, to infuse the mind with nanobots capable of boosting one’s mathematical skills, or transplanting the conscious self altogether, makes him extremely useful to the mission. When Trintignant comes to regard his work less as a medical service and more as art, however, Swift’s situation becomes a bit more complicated.

Diamond Dogs could perhaps have benefited from tighter plotting, but Turquoise Days gathers urgency and drama while never losing track of the relationships that give it its heart. Perhaps more importantly, Reynolds’ trademark vision and daring inventiveness are in clear evidence in both tales. Reynolds’ central ideas here — the interconnectedness of human life and the changes we endure … sometimes seek … in pursuit of understanding — will be familiar to those who already know him through his longer novels, and should engage and reward new readers.

**FICTION REVIEW**

**Prince of Christler-Coke**

Jeff King


Neal Barrett, Jr’s *Prince of Christler-Coke* is, as often happens with Barrett’s work, somewhat difficult to categorize. Let’s start with “good story” as a category then move to “satire,” “humor,” “magical realism,” and maybe even “science fiction fairy tale” (if such a compartmentalization exists).

One description leapt immediately to mind after getting only a little way into this short novel — “post-apocalyptic *Gulliver’s Travels*.” Barrett’s satire is sometimes scathing, sometimes a gentle thumb of the nose, and sometimes a rapier thrust plunged into the heart of government or religion or racism or corporate greed. But it is unequivocal that Barrett, like Swift, does not suffer fools gladly. Swift said his chief aim was to “vex the world”; readers of *Christler-Coke* will recognize that Barrett revels in doing the same.

In this novel (part of which appeared earlier in different form within *Slightly Off Center*, a Barrett short story collection), the United States exists as primarily a right-coast/left-coast dichotomy with a pathetic, dangerous, destitute no-man’s land separating the two. American society has devolved after a nuclear apocalypse into rule by corporate states, and protagonist Asel Iacola, the Prince of Christler-Coke, lives the life of a pampered-silly corporate aristocrat, replete with servants to feed and scratch him and generally insulate him from labor of any kind. The primary occupation to which he will ascend is conniving to prevent incursions into Christler-Coke territory by other family corporations. Barrett effectively taps a rich vein when he skewers corporate America, satirizing with a statement by Asel’s nemesis what Enron executives all too clearly demonstrated: “Greed is the creed.”

The story opens at Asel’s wedding, where his marriage will cement a deal to ensure Christler-Coke’s continued
ascendancy while short-circuiting the scheming of Disney-Dow. DD’s Machiavellian finesse, however, outdoes CC’s, and Asel finds himself in an Oklahoma prison populated by other fallen corporate prissies. He is befriended there by Sylvan McCree, a former corporate puff and a black man, something of which Asel has seen little. The friendship offers Barrett multiple chances to fling barbs at the institution of racism.

The pair suffer a series of encounters as they escape from the prison, escape from a band of vigilante human rust buckets (humans with varying parts of their anatomy replaced as needed by whatever mechanical contraptions can be scrounged), escape from a band of starved-into-insanity cannibals living in potholes in the deserts of mid-America no-man’s-land, escape from pulchritudinous nuns (nones) who have tricked them into drug-induced slavery as gardeners, then go their separate ways only to reunite for the final showdown with the evil Disney-Dow. Along the way, Asel learns something about being human, experiencing love, and viewing other humans through a lens other than corporate entitlement. He also learns a lot about himself.

This is a coming-of-age story of a corporate dilettante who ultimately learns to view the other 99% of humanity as human and not as “afterthought.” Barrett has spun a tale in which one human (Asel) gains enough wisdom to understand that humans born under circumstances different from his own are not other. In the midst of this, however, the point is made that not everyone will take on such a magnanimous view of the world, and that there will always be those who want an other to exist in order to grant to themselves supremacy and the spoils that, in their own minds, should logically follow. Moving from such a viewpoint to one in which the former other is understood as human is what forms the backbone of Barrett’s narrative.

Christler-Coke is similar in some ways to Twain’s A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court – both are written by humorists-satirists who toy with SF tropes as part of their storytelling. Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels also fits this mold. Indeed, Paul Alkon, author of The Origins of Futuristic Fiction and Science Fiction Before 1900, names the imaginary voyage, utopia/anti-utopia, and satire on society as common elements distinguishing the forerunners of SF. Barrett continues that tradition. Perhaps a fruitful line of inquiry would be to search for the parallels among Swift, Twain, and Barrett as fantasy humorists who, in some of their work, create science fictional settings to satirize human institutions and the human condition.

Barrett says that humor is his favorite way to tell a story. He is good at it and demonstrates the requisite skill in the use of language that such writers must possess, having fun with spellings, synecdoches, and neologisms, but doing so with a purpose – to set a tone about the vacuous existence to which American institutions have devolved. He has been masterful in his use of the language in much of his work, and this novel succeeds at that level. Readers will go through an adjustment period at the start of the book but will quickly fall into the rhythm of the language and the unique approach to the satire it evokes.

Barrett has done other post-apocalypse Americas (e.g., Through Darkest America and Dawn’s Uncertain Light, though these were decidedly not humorist works) and other protagonist self-discovery narratives (like The Hereafter Gang, which Barrett has called his best work). Off-center characters and slightly bent viewpoints are Barrett’s stock in trade, whether here with Asel in Christler-Coke or in his Wiley Moss mysteries like Skinny Annie Blues or his delightful short story tellings like Deviations with lead character Jake who shares some similarities with Hereafter’s protagonist. Though perhaps a cop-out when positioning any Barrett piece within his body of work, it is nonetheless true that Barrett’s eclecticism makes it hard to sub-categorize individual works within his output.

Cautionary tales abound in SF. A successful humorist’s treatment, however, is far less common. The sublime and the ridiculous magically co-exist within Prince of Christler-Coke in a weird symbiosis that prompts the reader to consider how we all might avoid the dark side that may lie in our futures and on the other side of Neal Barrett, Jr’s. wit.

FICTION REVIEW

**Flights: Extreme Visions of Fantasy**

Janice M. Bogstad


In a total of 29 unique stories, this collection carries the reader from the inside of an alligator (Reed’s ‘Perpetua’) to remote villages in Egypt (Attanasio’s ‘Demons Hide their Faces’) and through the more prosaic mysterious woods of high fantasy (McKillip’s ‘Out of the Woods.’) Virtually all written by well-established and talented authors, these stories provide an impressive feast of themes, writing styles and types of fantasy literature. In some cases, like that of Asaro, Powers, Oates,
Niven, Attanasio, Disch, Card, to name a few, the authors are also well known for their science fiction as well as fantasy. It's hard to pick a favorite among the stories although some will stick in the mind longer than others, I suspect. For example Janny Wurts’ play on royal success stories, ‘Blood, Oak, Iron,’ delights for its heroic action, in this case on the part of an outcast son, Findlaire, who comes back only to ensure worthy succession not to take the dying king's place himself. Lansdale’s ‘Bill the Little Steam Shovel,’ is told in the idiom of a children's story but from the perspective of pieces of earth-moving equipment that have desires and dreams of little interest to a child. P.D. Cacek’s ‘The Following’ creates a new form of possession that incorporates the Internet into lively ghosts' efforts. Another favorite, Elizabeth A. Lynn’s ‘The Silver Dragon,’ chronicles the generations of dragon-kin as they both become aware of and use their unique talents, across vast stretches of time, in favor of human and dragon alike. And I can't resist mentioning Charles de Lint's 'Riding Shotgun', which will make any sibling think twice before they interfere with brothers or sisters of whom they disapprove. As should be clear by this point, Sarrantonio's selections stretch the conventions of fantasy and, in many cases, reveal unexpected talents of the authors. Others represented include Silverberg, Feist, Powers, Gaiman, McKiernan, Hand, Turtledove, Modesitt, Hoffman, Barrett, Morrell, Schneider, Ford, Bisson, Wolf, and Sarrantonio himself who contributes a chilling little piece about children abandoned in a sort of limbo by parents who couldn't be bothered, thus engaging one of childhood's recurrent nightmares. Because each story is so well-crafted, this is a book to be savored bit by bit.

FICTION REVIEW

**Natural History**

Philip Snyder


Justina Robson belongs to that frustrating cadre of SF writers whose work garners immediate hosannas in the U.K., then seems to take forever to cross the Atlantic. Bravo to Bantam, then for bringing Robson's *Natural History* to U.S. shores as a handsome trade paperback. Here is a novel to hold its own with the groundbreaking work of Ken MacLeod, Alastair Reynolds, and Paul McAuley (whose own novels have often followed similar publishing trajectories). This latest addition to the steadily growing shelf of New Space Opera is very smart, exuberantly ambitious, and immensely fun. If in some respects it still shows more signs of potential than of finished achievement, it is nevertheless potential of a very high order.

In Robson's distant future, humanity has diverged into the Forged and the Unevolved. The Forged are posthumans who have modified themselves to go into space, matching their form to predetermined functions with the aid of genetic engineering, unions with machines, and a host of hybridizing technologies (not all of them entirely successful). The Unevolved are “natural” humans – “Monkeys,” in the parlance of the Forged who resent their continuing political power – and a civil war is brewing across the solar system as various factions of the Forged seek to break away from the constraints of their/our evolutionary past. The conflict is brought to a boiling point with the discovery of a chunk of Stuff, a substance than can function as a drive, a wormhole, a jump gate, a teleporter – as almost anything, it turns out, that its user decides is needed. Voyager Lonestar Isol, who discovers the substance in a near-lethal brush with asteroidal debris, is a Forged who has chosen to be embodied as a spacecraft with incredible sensory and cognitive augmentations. She (for Isol is indeed a “she,” gendered in mind if not in body) is described by another character as “nothing more than a desire to travel and meet new people fused onto a psychopathic preference for no company at all.” Soon she is partnered with Zephyr Duquesne, an Unevolved cultural archaeologist, who is tasked with the mission of traveling to the home planet of the mysterious Stuff to learn its origins and significance.

The scale is huge, the characters colorful, and the neat ideas just keep on coming. For seekers after spectacle, *Natural History* offers instantaneous space travel, scheming generals, exploding pirates, a breathtaking spin through the wonky physics of 11-dimensional reality, and human minds that can access, within femtoseconds, billions of databased papers on the lyrics of Don McLean's “American Pie,” to note just a few of the novel's choice entertainments. And although there are no true “aliens” on view – the producers of the Stuff are implied, but never actually encountered face to face – the humans we meet are variously reptilian, insectoid, corporeal presences, projected avatars, enhanced, defective, born, made, and multiple combinations of the above. It's an absolute delight to lose oneself in the sparkle and pop of the book, the sheer fun of hitching a ride on Robson's unflagging imagination.

But even as we revel in the book's Cordwainer Smith characters and Jack Vance settings and Iain Banks cleverness and
M. John Harrison grittiness, we are enjoying only the bright surface of Natural History. In the depths beneath, Robson mines vein after vein of material for thought and speculation: To what extent are “natural” humans the prisoners of generational memory, forever at the mercy of the heritage embedded in our back-brains? How far may a personality be deformed by radical change in the body through which that personality is expressed? More ambitiously still, Robson teases out the political consequences, as well as the psychological, of posthuman possibility. Equally intriguing are the complex images which connect the novel’s surface with its depths. Some of Robson’s inventions take a familiar vehicle on a brilliant spin, as in Voyager Isol’s reinscription of the Ship Who Sang as a tormented psychopath; others are daringly original, and in the richly allusive and conceptually challenging Shinjuku Library sequence. Art, politics, philosophy, and psychology join physics, biology, and cybernetics as invitations to urgent questions.

If there is a downside to all this ambition, it is that Robson has designed a somewhat bigger novel than the book will actually hold. Reluctant to burden the reader with lengthy infodumps, she conveys some of her information in a shorthand that is not always adequate. When one of her principal characters is introduced as a creature who was “once a Roc, Handslicer class,” it takes a good many more pages before most readers have sufficient information to unpack the half dozen concepts which make sense of that description. Yes, we eventually get it; and yes, getting there can be part of the fun. But it’s hard to shake the feeling, at times, that Robson has a much, much more complete knowledge of Natural History’s conceptual underpinnings than the reader is ever allowed to possess. Does the book need a Dune-like glossary to fill in the gaps? Or is Natural History perhaps a 325-page version of a 500-page novel that lost too much weight in the process of revision?

But if Robson’s reach exceeds her grasp, it’s not by much, and her reach is decidedly impressive. Author now of three novels, she is edging ever closer to star status. Both Silver Screen (1999) and Mappa Mundi (2001) were shortlisted for the Arthur C. Clarke Award; Natural History was shortlisted for the British Science Fiction Award and was the runner-up for the John W. Campbell Memorial Award. Her next novel, on whichever side of the Atlantic it is published first, is sure to be anticipated with great pleasure.

FICTION REVIEW

Secret Life
Nicholas Laudadio


The brilliant little fictions that inhabit the covers of Jeff VanderMeer’s collection Secret Life press desperately at their own borders, eager to creep into other narrative spaces like the fleshy and insidious flowering vine around which the book’s title story is constructed. These tales, which span a multitude of styles and genres (as well as the entirety of VanderMeer’s career), are quick to drop precipitously into sharp footnotes, to rewrite personal and imagined histories, and to daub detail into the corners of the author’s previous (and, presumably, future) works. But despite all these stylistic and thematic leaps and bounds, VanderMeer has managed to create a coherent document that maintains throughout an urgency and clarity remarkable for such a relatively new author.

As a collection, Secret Life further highlights an intense annotative impulse deep at the heart of VanderMeer’s work—plainly exhibited here by the author’s desire to end each story in the collection with a brief authorial gloss. But these annotations only intimate a sharp desire to keep porous the narrative boundaries in the texts themselves, resulting in a series of beautiful interstitial spaces—from the 13th century to the 110th, from Florida to Cambodia to VanderMeer’s own Ambergris—that stubbornly remain both biographical and bibliographical.

Stories such as “Festival of the Freshwater Squid,” which manages to balance a vaguely Ambergrisian tale with VanderMeer’s very recognizable Florida; “Ghost Dancing with Manco Tupac” and “Flight is For Those Who Have Not Yet Crossed Over,” which gently layer postcolonial critique with lived experience and imagined narratives; and “Greensleeves” and “Secret Life,” which palimpsestically write the fantastical over the text of the mundane, form the true heart of the collection. These stories (and many others, such as “The Compass of His Bones,” “The General Who is Dead,” and “The Emperor’s Reply”) demonstrate a wonderful new vision for fantastic fiction, one that revels in the slipperiness of the narrative constraints.

In addition to these (mostly) “stand alone” stories, a relatively small but significant portion of the collection returns to the environs of VanderMeer’s novel Veniss Underground (“The Sea, Mendeho, and Moonlight,” “Balzac’s War,” “A Heart for Lucretia” among others) and the Ambergris stories from his World Fantasy Award winning collection Cities of Saints and
Madmen (most notably “Exhibit H: Torn Pages Discovered in the Vest Pocket of an Unidentified Tourist” and “Learning to Leave the Flesh”). Those who come to this collection looking to these stories as extensions of VanderMeer’s earlier works should be pleasantly surprised.

At first glance, Secret Life suggests China Mieville’s cramped and sweating industrial vision but with a far greater sense of isolation and expansiveness of environment that one might find in John Crowley or Gene Wolfe’s fiction. VanderMeer’s characters are lost in and locked out of the worlds that they can hardly identify—it seems that the stories themselves have far more freedom of movement than do the characters that occupy them. It is in this way that, in addition to Borges, the fantastical experiments of the Oulipians—that seminal French experimental collective whose members include such luminaries as Georges Perec, Raymond Queneau, Italo Calvino and Harry Mathews—quietly serves as a useful model for reading VanderMeer’s prose.

One senses underlying structures and concerns that, while not immediately necessary to the demands of the surface narrative, beg to be unearthed and examined. The tales exhibit an architectural clarity, a fascination with things underneath that move slowly and insistently, often against the wishes of those that must occupy these spaces. The title story speaks of an office building that teems with Kafkaesque grotesqueries and surface banality, yet in the walls a flowering vine grows and destroys and overrides the little narratives that feed and nurture it. As an entirety, Secret Life intimates a hidden force in not only the individual narratives of the collection, but also in VanderMeer’s skill as a fiction writer. What we’re left with here feels like the sturdy bits of a remarkable mythology being built piece by piece from momentous, if often innocuous, moments.

REVIEW ESSAY

The Shore of Women

Thomas J. Morrissey


After a hiatus of at least fifteen years, Pam Sargent’s The Shore of Women is back in print. Originally published by Crown in 1986, Shore is a most unusual and bittersweet love story set in a post-nuclear holocaust world in which women live in fortified enclaves and men subsist in the wild, exiled from polite society for the crimes of their fathers. Like Spartan moms of old, mothers of the same-sex citadels send their boys off to grow up in the company of men, in this case Stone Age men. The boys’ male guardians worship the Goddess and periodically visit shrines where they don circlets through which the controlling women probe their thoughts and transmit ancient, interactive porn. Thus are the hapless worshippers aroused to the “blessed state” in which they commune with images of the Lady. The men’s fondest desire is to be called to a city, where they happily and unwittingly enjoy virtual sex, donating the semen the women need to carry on the species. At such visits the men receive the gift of boys whose young minds have been wiped of memories of life in the domain of women.

I have long regarded Shore as Sargent’s finest novel, and that opinion was reinforced by rereading it after so many years. Narrated alternately by three characters, the book tells the story of a young woman exiled from her city, who must learn to live in the wild world of men, creatures she has been raised to believe are naturally violent and intellectually inferior to women. Sargent skillfully uses descriptors and logic borrowed from misogynist and racist discourse to illuminate the mindset of the ruling sex. The Essentialists who rule the enclaves are a small minority who do the thinking for the masses, most of whom seem to enjoy life in a one-sex environment, blissfully ignorant of the suffering their leaders impose on the fathers of their daughters. Any attempt by men to organize beyond the level of small hunter-gatherer bands is met with preemptive air strikes. The women of the cities regard men with the same contempt that the men of Suzy Charnas’ Holdfast books show towards women: Sargent’s women and Charnas’ men both hope that one day they will find a way to live without the opposite sex. Charnas’ men use Nazi tactics to control and punish women; Sargent’s women incinerate men with heat rays that resemble those of H. G. Wells’ invading Martians in The War of the Worlds. The political intrigue and moral obfuscation of Sargent’s women only heighten the sense that their rule over men is unjust and ultimately self-defeating since the result is a society built on violence and exploitation.

Yet Sargent’s women have legitimate fears. It is pretty clear that patriarchy did destroy the world as we know it, and that life in the sylvan realm of men is nasty, brutish and short. Deprived of creature comforts and indoctrinated by the VR temptresses to believe themselves bestial, the men often descend to acts of barbarism. These small-scale excesses prove to the
women that they are right to deny men access to settled agriculture and, of course, weapons of mass destruction.

The novel’s narrative technique allows for the exposition of three different points of view, each of which captures the consciousness of a person struggling with the results of the dominant ideology. Laissa, whose narration frames the story, is a privileged young woman whose desire to fit in is almost, but not quite, strong enough to extinguish her humanity. Her erstwhile friend Biranna is the unjustly punished exile who finds that her indoctrination has not prepared her to appreciate men’s individual differences. Arvil is Laissa’s twin brother who grows up among men and thoughtfully develops an ethical stance that gives the lie to the women’s one-dimensional story of men’s moral capacities. Each of these narrators grows in ways that demonstrate the human capacity for personal development, even in the face of dystopian hegemony.

The 1970’s and ‘80’s saw the appearance of quite a few same-sex utopias and dystopias. Joanna Russ, Suzy McKee Charnas, Alice Sheldon (a.k.a. James Tiptree, Jr.), Joan Slonczewski and Sheri S. Tepper are, perhaps, the most prominent women writers of this period who explored the question of whether men and women can coexist peacefully and happily or whether women’s happiness requires that men be held apart or even exterminated. When Charlotte Perkins Gilman published *Herland* in 1915, women in the United States were still second class citizens, unable to vote or otherwise exercise many of the civil liberties afforded to men. By the mid 1980’s, most of the obvious legal strictures on women had been dissolved, but the victories came at a price: the threat of true equality incited ugly rhetoric that continues to challenge egalitarian assumptions and championed patriarchy as the naturally and/or divinely ordained social order. Surviving a strong anti-feminist backlash, the Nineteenth Amendment that granted women suffrage was ratified when a Tennessee legislator changed his vote after an appeal from his mother. First introduced in 1923, the Equal Rights Amendment was finally passed by Congress in 1972, only to die a decade later after feminism and other progressive causes were pummeled by a rising conservative tide.

Slonczewski’s *A Door Into Ocean*, Sargent’s *The Shore of Women* (both 1986) and Tepper’s *The Gate to Women’s Country* (1988) all appeared in the aftermath of the ERA defeat during a time when the Reagan administration was deploying MIRV’s and investing heavily in the hopeless dream of the Strategic Defense Initiative (popularly and unpopularly known as “Star Wars”). Each work is a thoughtful exploration of the psychology that leads to and sustains patriarchy, and each posits that patriarchy has been responsible for much of human suffering. Slonczewski’s Sharers of the water world Shora are radical eco-feminists who live in harmony with their planet and whose genetic technology allows them to take control of their own evolution. Shoran autonomy is threatened by a genuine Patriarch whose goal is to dominate the women and mine the seabeds. In Tepper’s post nuclear-holocaust world, women have relegated most men to military garrisons, where they plan for the wars that the women hope will kill off the genetic tendency for aggression and hierarchy that most men carry.

*Door, Shore, and Gate* can be and have been seen as companion pieces. *Door* is a fascinating parable in which it is only through complete sexual segregation that women can evolve socially and make a world in their own image. Shoran philosophy is simple and appealing, and the novel posits that some males are more than ready to give up the masculinist rat race and become male Sharers. *Gate*, the most imaginative feature of which is the creation and annual performance of a Greek-style tragedy “Iphigenia at Illium,” also posits that some men are not tainted. Furthermore, Tepper’s ruling clique of women call themselves “the damned few” because of the sins they must commit to secure happiness for the majority of women. Since there are no men on Shora, the women do not need to commit crimes in order to repress men, but their social system cannot coexist with patriarchy. Patriarchy is clearly the enemy in *Gate and Shore too*; hence, the political viability of the women-dominated governments appears to require sexual segregation. Some disappointed ERA proponents might agree, especially given the bent of our current leaders.

In case you are ready to stop reading, here’s where I talk about sex. Mix a primal urge, millions of years of primate evolution, and an ingenuous brain and you get a powerful force the attitudes toward which say much about societies and individuals. Insofar as sex is central to any potential man-woman power struggle, the political implications of how one views gender, sex roles, and sexual acts are profound. Slonczewski’s Sharers produce children through same-sex relations and are literally allergic to semen. They are not lesbians, though, because sexuality on Shora has but one paradigm, and the term “lesbian” clearly suggests difference. Tepper’s novel is also problematic. The woman of Women’s Country has sex with men only at times designated by their rulers. These Carnivals are, for the most part, orgies where emotional intimacy between the sexes is discouraged. Furthermore, in this world control over their male and female subjects requires that the leaders retain the framework of heterosexuality. Their eugenics experiment would fail if men and women took up same-sex relationships. Although it’s just about impossible to imagine that there isn’t a lot of same-sex sex in the garrisons and in Women’s Country, the absence of it in the narrative suggests that homosexuality would be inconvenient to the plot. The women of Women’s Country are skilled in all reproductive health matters, and they actively seek to “cure” children who might have homosexual
tendencies. Although it is not foregrounded in the text, what Adrienne Rich has called “compulsory heterosexuality” is the order of the day.

When it comes to sexual practices and allegiances, Shore is different from both Door and Gate. The women of the cities practice enforced homosexuality. Since there are no men, there is no other sexual game in town. Most women have never seen a man, and so whatever their natural inclinations might be, there are simply no objects for any woman’s latent heterosexual feelings. The men are conditioned to seek out the favor of spirit-women, the phantasms that come to them via the circlets, but for everyday sex, men have only themselves and each other. There are naturally gay and lesbian characters in Shore. No one thinks them deviant. Would that were true in our world. However, if heterosexuality were not the orientation of most men, then the women’s hold on them would vanish, and likewise, if women could meet men in the right setting, there would no doubt be heterosexuals among them too, and the system of control would falter. The Mothers of the Cities are guilty of an enormous sexual crime: in order to protect women from the irredeemable males, they condition men to want what they can’t have and women to want only what they are allowed to have. The mutual caring that can come from male-female intimacy has been banished from the world, and sex between a man and a woman is assumed to be a perversion that could only happen if a man forced himself on a woman. This novel features some truly erotic heterosexual scenes that attest to the power of good sex based on genuine caring. These scenes are not in any sense gratuitous, for they offer us a vision of heterosexual eroticism as an integral part of deep and meaningful relationships. Since the same status is afforded homosexual eroticism (albeit without graphic descriptions), there is no valorization of any sexual orientation over others, and the sexual tyranny imposed by the ruling women is itself a perversion.

Of the three mid-1980’s novels I have talked about, only Shore fell out of print for an extended period. This is probably due in part to Crown’s weak efforts to promote the book, but it might also be the result of how complex Sargent’s problematization of the role of sex in human relationships actually is. The novel put off some feminists because its women run a cruel regime (anyone remember Mrs. Thatcher?). Although she does celebrate the potential for good relationships between men and women, she also shows us how nasty sex can be when men have been conditioned to think of women as objects or means to an end.

One more thing: Shore is a beautifully written book. Pamela Sargent’s prose is almost always good, but it tends to be more or less invisible. That is to say, the clean, clear language does not draw attention to itself as one encounters a story. This novel is often quite lyrical; the language has the authenticity of skillful composition and is a pleasure to read.

This reissue features a brief introduction by Catherine Asaro. I found this to be a disappointment, not because there is anything wrong with it but because I think this book deserved a longer treatment for its return to print. Asaro’s cogent observations are accurate, but to sell the book as having “an introduction by Catherine Asaro” is a little misleading since it is barely a page long (yes, the Gettysburg Address was short too). I was also displeased to find that my book has two page 115’s and no page 117—luckily I have the 1986 version too.

When I finished rereading Shore, I recalled a song we were made to sing in elementary school, “Reuben and Rachel.” I distinctly remembered its title characters singing of how much better things would be if the other sex were “all transported far beyond the Northern Sea.” Much to my surprise, I discovered that this song was actually written in 1840 and that the lyricist is none other than Emma Hart Willard, a prominent nineteenth century woman educator who founded the prestigious Emma Willard School for Girls, which functions to this day. Although in the song Reuben and Rachel pledge devotion despite their objections to the other’s sex, that its author founded a school that excludes boys suggests to me that Rachel’s discomfort with Reuben’s maleness probably never fully goes away. Unfortunately, there are certainly women for whom this is true, and often for good reason.

I have taught The Shore of Women several times in my science fiction class and will do so again if it stays in print. It is a historically significant text with contemporary appeal. The United States is a nation that is simultaneously obsessed with and repelled by sex. At the heart of the so-called “culture wars” is the question of whether people should be free to enjoy the happiness that can come from finding love with another person, regardless of sexual orientation, or whether government should enforce intolerance by forcing people to follow a one-size-fits-all puritanical model. And, of course, there is the issue of whether women are really equal to men: if you’re waiting for the ERA to resurface, don’t hold your breath. Sex and gender identity are central to who we are, and sexuality is perhaps the most intimate of human experiences. What one feels and what one is taught by one’s culture may be different, the more repressive the culture, the more likely that is to be true. The reappearance of Sargent’s sensitive, intelligent and artful celebration of the ultimate rightness of personal choice and the ultimate wrongness of sexual compulsion is most welcome.
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