The SFRAReview (ISSN 1068-395X) is published four times a year by the Science Fiction Research Association (SFRA) and distributed to SFRA members. Individual issues are not for sale; however, starting with issue #256, all issues will be published to SFRA's website no less than 10 weeks after paper publication. For information about the SFRA and its benefits, see the description at the back of this issue. For a membership application, contact SFRA Treasurer Donald M. Hassler or get one from the SFRA website: <www.sfra.org>.

SFRA would like to thank the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire for its assistance in producing the SFRAReview.

SUBMISSIONS
The SFRAReview encourages all submissions, including essays, review essays that cover several related texts, and interviews. If you would like to review nonfiction or fiction, please contact the respective editor.

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News Items:


The winner of this year’s Philip K. Dick Award for best paperback original has been announced as Chris Moriarty’s Spin Control. A Special Citation was issued for Elizabeth Bear’s novel Carnival.

The inductees into the Science Fiction Hall of Fame, housed at the Science Fiction Museum in Seattle, have been announced. The induction ceremony will be held on June 16 in conjunction with the presentation of the Locus Awards. This year’s inductees include: Gene Wolfe, Ridley Scott, Ed Emshwiller, Gene Roddenberry.

The winners of the Tiptree Award have been announced. Half Life, by Shelley Jackson; The Orphan’s Tales: In the Night Garden, by Catherynne M. Valente. Special Mention for James Tiptree, Jr.: The Double Life of Alice B. Sheldon, by Julie Phillips.

The Lambda Award nominations, given for Gay, Lesbian, Transgendered, and bisexual writing have been announced. The finalists in the Sci-Fi/Fantasy/Horror category are Carnival, by Elizabeth Bear; Mordred, Bastard Son, by Douglas Clegg; A Strong and Sudden Thaw, by R.W. Day; Izzy and Eve, by Neal Drinnan; Spin Control, by Chris Moriarty.

Wow, it’s that time again? As far as I can tell, we just celebrated Christmas! And now we’re well into the New Year. That means, among other things, a new executive committee, whose contact information is on the back page of the SFR-A Review. It means a new conference is almost upon us, and President Adam Frisch encourages everyone who can make it to Kansas City to make their plans soon. Sadly, I won’t be seeing you there this year (too much teaching in Spring term), but I am very much looking forward to 2008 in Dublin.

And now it’s time for the broken record again. In the last issue, we were able to include a contribution to the Approaches to Teaching series by Neil Easterbrook, and we (still) hope to include a piece on Approaches to Teaching Heinlein in the next issue (and if you have any thoughts at all on teaching Heinlein in the classroom, whether it’s a few sentences to share your own experience or a couple of paragraphs on what you would do if you could, please contact me). We’d love to be able to run something in the Approaches series in every issue, so if you have any thoughts on any aspect of teaching science fiction, any experiences you’d like to share, please drop me a line.

And on that note: If you have ever had any trouble emailing me, please email any one of the other SFRA Editors to pass along a message to me. Apparently there is a very occasional and very weird glitch in my email (something my ISP is unable to track down) that responds to a very few emails with a note that I am not accepting callers (or some such wording to that effect). I really do want to hear from SFRA members with their thoughts and ideas on the Review, so please don’t let a little technological gnome stand in the way of our communication.
the publishers warning of impending termination. Also, SFRA will have fewer costs sending out back issues to members who renew late (you'd be surprised the hassle and cost that late renewals entail), and future secretaries and VP's will have an easier task identifying and attempting to re-establish contact with members who don't renew.

Meanwhile, your executive committee is continuing to search for and implement improvements that should make networking with colleagues ever more efficient and useful. By this summer's meeting changes to the SFRA website should be in place, including a password-protected area where the 2008 Annual Directory can be posted online (you'll still get your hard copy of the Directory in the fall) without being accessible to those nasty web crawlers looking to expand the Empire of Spam. We also are hoping to update the SFRA website on a more regular basis; we're looking for a volunteer who will take an hour or so of his/her time once a month to scout our Listserv and a few other sources and then send our Webmaster Sam information on the latest SFRA news, awards, paper calls, projects, etc. to update our website. For this small but very useful service the volunteer will be able to augment his/her resume with the title of “SFRA Web Content Director,” no minor addition in what one of my former students called the “doggy-dog world of academics.” (Let me know if you're interested in this new position.) And speaking of the Listserv, the executive committee continues to take all appropriate steps to assure the free exchange of relevant S.F. information on this wonderful site.

Finally, SFRA has confirmed commitments for its annual meetings through 2010 (after Kansas City this summer there will be meetings in Dublin [2008], Atlanta [2009], and Phoenix [2010]), and we have already received preliminary inquiries about another European meeting site for 2011, details of which we hope to present to the membership at the Kansas City annual meeting. So come on down (up? over?) to Kansas City in July. It’s an easy-to-reach and relatively inexpensive venue, and conference director David Mead is doing a wonderful job “meshing” our sessions with all those celebrity sessions the Heinlein Centennial folks are paying for. Not only will you get to interact with your colleagues, hear some fine papers and panel presentations, plus eat too much, but on Friday evening you’re guaranteed to be challenged by and delighted by the remarks of our 2007 Pilgrim and our 2007 Pioneer winners.

Hope to see you there.

SFRA BUSINESS

Minutes of Executive Board

Shelley Rodrigo

Science Fiction Research Association

Executive Board Meeting

Dates/Times:
- January 26, 2007; 6:00pm-9:15pm
- January 27, 2007; 8:00am-12:00pm; 1:00pm-3:30pm

Attending:
- Adam Frisch, President
- Lisa, Yaszek, Vice President
- Shelley Rodrigo, Secretary
- Donald M. Hassler, Treasurer
- David G. Mead, Immediate Past President

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

We started with a discussion of the agenda for the weekend and reviewed the roles of each officer as dictated by the organization's by-laws. We noted the official recruitment and advertising responsibility of the Vice President and decided that unofficially related to that roll was overseeing the website. We also discussed the time and labor intensive nature of the Treasurer's roll since s/he is responsible for...

Recent and Forthcoming (Spring, 2007)


upkeeping all of the membership data and dispersing as needed (which includes a lot of individuals: secretary, VP, the editors of all the publications, etc).

2007 ANNUAL CONFERENCE (Kansas City, held simultaneously with the Heinlein Centennial Conference)

As of the meeting, Dave Mead (conference organizer) had 12 paid conference registration fees/memberships. $60 dollars of each conference registration fee goes to the Heinlein conference; however, they are giving us use of presentation rooms in the hotel. Dave is hopeful we will have many people since it is early in the registration process. He thinks we'll get enough to pay for our guests, and that is all we need! Philip Snyder and Carolyn Wendle are organizing the presentation schedule. Leslie Ann Swagart said she will put the program together. Our awards presentations and speeches will be on Friday evening so as not to conflict with the Heinlein banquet. No dinner will be served at our award event, so it will probably run from 6-7:30 pm, letting attendees out early for other activities. Adam will announce the winners at Saturday's banquet. Currently our guest authors include: Steele, Pohl, & Gunn. We may have others; Heinlein conference has lots of authors coming as well. We are offering our authors rooms, conference participation, and $300 for travel. The Heinlein organizers may comp SFRA some of those rooms for the authors. There will be no separate SFRA bookroom. Dave mentioned that they think the Heinlein conference is managing technology in Kansas City, and he doesn't think they will be billing us.

Dave's tentative program:

- Thursday afternoon—12:00 registration; 3:00pm couple sets of papers; general meeting in the evening with guest writers up front
- Friday: papers; 6-7:30: Award Presentation (no food) in evening; local First Friday art galleries (open until 9)
- Saturday: papers up to 5pm; announce award winners at Gala

Some concerns and ideas:

- We wondered if people assume that if they are registering for one event and that they are automatically signed up for our conference?
- In the past SFRA good for hanging out w/authors; what will happen at this event?
- Making sure no major conflicts with the “big” Heinlein events? Get general outline up on website/out so people know what is doing. Give people that propose papers early good time slots and advertising for their papers/panels, even in the listserve prior to the conference. Have Carolyn put together panels and announce them early
- Will our schedule be in the general Heinlein program book? Need to have a more prominent link from the Heinlein conference website to our conference website.
- Do we need to schedule a trip?

OTHER UPCOMING CONFERENCES

- 2008: Dublin—set for Trinity College, Dublin; Farah Mendlesohn organizing
- 2009: Atlanta—set for Georgia Tech; Lisa Yaszek organizing
- 2010: Phoenix/Tempe—set for Tempe; Shelley Rodrigo & Craig Jacobsen organizing
- 2011: Pawel Frelik is planning to submit a proposal for Poland; there are other potential sites being proposed as well

We briefly discussed whether or not we needed to change processes, including front money, costs, and the manual. Dave had a copy of the manual and is sending copies to Lisa & Shelley. We also mentioned that one of the strengths of our conferences is the variety in style, organization and structure. We want to suggest and support conference organizers to build in a variety of events, trips, and other activities that take advantage of their location and strengths as conference organizers.

SFRA AWARD COMMITTEES

We discussed the current make up of each jury and gave some suggestions for future 2008 replacement members. We emphasized the need to reconfirm and/or reestablish the three year rotation on each committee. We agreed that the President should have the ability to make up the committees without direct executive com-
committee input. We clarified that the chairs of the award committees do not notify
the winners, the president does so. We also agreed that we should institute a
practice of sending thank you notes to the committee members so that they can
save them for tenure files.
2007 Award Committee Members
1. Pilgrim Jury
   a. Dave Hartwell (c)
   b. Charlie Brown
   c. F. Brett Cox
2. Pioneer Jury
   a. Lisa Yaszek (c)
   b. Christine Mains
   c. Janice Bogstad
3. Clareson Jury—We discussed that Joe Sanders (Cleveland) has the award
   specs.
   a. Mack Hassler (c)
   b. Neil Easterbrook
   c. Martha Bartter—we were not 100% positive and will follow up
      with Martha.
4. Mary Kay Bray Jury—Winners receive a check $100 & Mike Levy might have a
certificate template on file.
   a. Ritch Calvin (c)
   b. Philip Snyder
   c. Tom Mornssey
5. Graduate Student Paper—Winners receive SFRA membership for a year
   a. Sarah Canfield Fuller (c)
   b. Paul Brians
   c. Pawel Frelik—we were not 100% positive and will follow up with
      Pawel.
GOALS OF INCOMING BOARD MEMBERS
1. Dave Mead, the Immediate Past President, wants to expand our member-
   ship through cross pollination with other organizations; for example, by
   exchanging advertisements in organization publications. Other ideas included
   constructing a Second Life community. He wants to make sure that every
   single person who inquires about SFRA is genuinely welcomed. Finally, he
   wanted to make sure that we were systematically archiving all of our materials
   (especially conference programs) with our archivist at the University of Kan-
sas.
   Richard Clement
   University of Kansas
   Special Collections
   Kenneth Spencer Research Library
   University of Kansas
   Lawrence, KS 66045

2. Shelley Rodrigo, the Secretary, wants to see more strategically planned (and
documented) recruitment strategies that include an updated website and the
eventual construction of an online database. She suggested that we begin
dialogue with Digital arts and Gaming organizations. Finally, she suggested
that we construct conference recruitment packets that include brochures, so
that SFRA members can readily request them to take to other conferences.
3. Mack Hassler, the Treasurer, emphasized his love of the continued return of
   members; that SFRA gatherings are like homecomings. However, he believes
   that electing new officers and keeping some turnover in the executive board
   is healthy for the organization. Finally, he would like to see a dedicated histo-
   rian/chronicler of the organization.
4. Lisa Yaszek, the Vice-President, agrees with the desire to grow the member-
   ship; however, she wants us to retain our sense of identity and community.
   She would like to look backwards in old directories to try to entice past
   members back as well as look forward and try to entice both graduate and
   undergraduate students. She also thinks it would be useful if we were to
   create visible tracks at MLA and other conferences. She would like to see us do

Glyer, Diana Pavlac. C.S. Lewis and
J.R.R. Tolkien as Writers in Com-
mittee. Kent State.

Grebowicz, Margret (ed.) SciFi in the
Mind’s Eye: Reading Science
through Science Fiction. Open
Court.

Hazell, Dinah. The Plants of Middle-
earth: Botany and Sub-creation.
Kent State.

Joshi, S. T. Icons of Horror and the Su-
pernatural: An Encyclopedia of Our
Worst Nightmares. Greenwood.

Kane, Paul. The Hellraiser Films and
Their Legacy. McFarland.

McKee, Gabriel. The Gospel Accord-
ing to Science Fiction: From the
Twilight Zone to the Final Frontier.
John Knox Press.

Nevins, Jess. Pulp Magazine Holdings
Directory: Library Collections in
North America and Europe.
McFarland.

Newitz, Annalee. Pretend We’re Dead:
Capitalist Monsters in American
Pop Culture. Duke UP.

Proucher, Jeff. Brave New Words:The
Oxford Dictionary of Science Fic-
tion. Oxford UP.

Russ, Joanna. The Country You Have
Never Seen: Essays and Reviews.
Liverpool UP.

Stableford, Brian. Science Fact and Sci-
ence Fiction: An Encyclopedia.
Routledge.

Tuerk, Richard. Oz in Perspective:
Magic and Myth in the L. Frank

Willis, Martin. Mesmerists, Monsters, and Machines: Science Fiction and the Cultures of Science in the Nineteenth Century. Kent State.

Wilson, Eric G. The Strange World of David Lynch: Ironic Religion from Eraserhead to Mulholland Dr. Continuum.

CfPs:

WHAT: The Postcolonial Wondrous: Third World in Science Fiction and Fantasy

TOPICS: Since the publication of Edward Said’s influential book Orientalism (1978) and the seminal study The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures (1989) by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, Postcolonial Studies has emerged as one of the most productive and significant academic disciplines of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The concepts of empire-building, various forms of governance, colonization, and power and cultural relations between different species/races have been central to SF/F ever since the inception of these genres. Both in the quests of Fantasy and exploring space frontiers of Science Fiction, the dilemma of responding to encounters with the “Other” is resolved in various ways - ranging from the most retrogressive to the utopic. This book aims to fill this lacuna in both postcolonial and science fiction and fantasy studies. The book is comprised of two main sections: the first dealing with representations of the third world in SF/F literature and cinema of the West, and the second something with the large amount in savings. Finally, she wants us to figure out an incentive to (re)join on time, without having to punish those who do not.

5. Adam Frisch, the President, wants to retain the casual environment that includes the ease with which people can join, the friendly nature of the people and our meetings, and use what pluses we have (including meeting working writers) as promotional materials. Over the next two years he wants to grow the membership close to 400 individuals, be more interactive with international organizations, and overall become a more proactive organization with a more proactive executive committee.

TREASURER’S REPORT
As of December 31, 2006, SFRA has $61,632.97 dollars in the bank. Mack mentioned some of the differences from earlier years’ expenses, including an ad in The Chronicle of Higher Ed, and some of the Secretary’s costs. The conference in White Plains was about a $9,000 loss. The conference hosts had mentioned the possibility of publishing a proceeding with Fine Tooth Press to help make up some of the loss. The Review and Annual Directory appear to be under control. He mentioned that handling all of the pass-through monies for the other journals is a tedious task, especially since he has to supply all the names and addresses. Mack also mentioned that the executive board meeting would cost approximately $1,700. We were excited about the surplus amount, especially in light of our construction of explicit “Support a Scholar” programs; however, we also do not want to only take from this amount. We learned from White Planes and know we need to have a reserve sitting for emergencies.

Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dues and subs (328 members)</td>
<td>31,343.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(since paypal takes %, amounts are not even)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royalties</td>
<td>513.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scholar support gifts</td>
<td>700.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bank interest</td>
<td>278.79</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carryover from 12/31/05</td>
<td>62,684.41</td>
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<td><strong>Total Income</strong></td>
<td><strong>95,519.67</strong></td>
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Expenses

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<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President Office (copies at conference)</td>
<td>56.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.P. Office (ad in Chronicle)</td>
<td>375.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary Office</td>
<td>743.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer Office</td>
<td>352.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference in NY (1000 seed, plus motel)</td>
<td>8915.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel support (NY conference)</td>
<td>400.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Univ. of Kansas (Gunn About SF)</td>
<td>1000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bray Award</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clareson Award</td>
<td>79.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilgrim Award</td>
<td>40.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorial for wife of Peter Brigg</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review and Directory</td>
<td>4300.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science Fiction Studies</td>
<td>5144.00</td>
</tr>
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<td>Extrapolation</td>
<td>5144.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>NYRSH</td>
<td>2528.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>2731.50</td>
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<td>JFA</td>
<td>880.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMSPEC</td>
<td>425.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January exec meeting (advanced)</td>
<td>622.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>33,886.70</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**On hand 12/31/06** 61,632.97

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Dues Structure
Mack mentioned that both Foundation and Femspec needed to raise their rates. He told both we could not do so for ’07; however, rates for those journals will be raised in the ’08 dues structure. Adam is to get in touch with Foundation to verify what needs to be changed. We briefly discussed the possibility of adding an unemployed category; however, Mack reminded us how complex the dues struc-
tured the renewal notices and dues/billing form. Membership options by the Summer conference. The Secretary will need to recon-

For this to be ready to go in early fall, we need to pin down the rates for all calendar year and the rhythm we are in, especially with rolling membership, is difficult to manage. We are concerned that hard-line renewals might make the actual number of members drop. We have decided to slightly revise the renewal letter and bill format with a little more "bite" to motivate people to renew on time. We also decided to move up the timeline:

- September 10—start sending out revised renewal notices
- November 1—send another round of renewal notices
- November 15—requested deadline
- December 1—emphasized deadline

For this to be ready to go in early fall, we need to pin down the rates for all membership options by the Summer conference. The Secretary will need to reconstruct the renewal notices and dues/billing form.

"Support a Scholar" Fund

Currently the "Support a Scholar" fund is only used for travel support requests and occasional membership benefits for scholars who need other support. We decided that the use of these funds needed to be more clearly defined. We agreed to institute three official programs:

- SFRA Research Grant—for people to use to collect resources, travel to archive collections, etc. We need to organize a proposal, review, and approval process.
- SFRA Travel Grant—Currently people apply/ask the president and he approves and tells the treasurer. We may need to organize a proposal, review, and approval process in the future.
- SFRA Membership Relief—Currently scholars who can’t afford memberships, especially non-North American / International scholars, maybe apply/ask the president and he approves and tells the treasurer. We may need to organize a proposal, review, and approval process in the future.

However, we do not want to whittle away our resources, so we will establish an endowment line item in the budget to pay for the three items. To get started we will purchase a $30,000 CD, and use its interest to fund this line item. We also briefly discussed how we can more aggressively advertise for donations to the "Support a Scholar" fund, and possibly even pursue an endowment.

SFRA Tax Status

Currently we are a not-for-profit, 7C status where dues are not deductible. (3C status allows deducting dues.) The institutional status is in the state of Ohio for the next 4-5 years. We are currently in good standing with both the state and the IRS. Bruce Rockwood looked into pursuing 3C status and suggested it is not worth the headache of all involved. Adam is going to verify with Bruce one last time and then let sleeping dogs lie for a while.

MEMBERSHIP

SFRA had 328 members in 2006 (Adam will write a letter to Peter Brigg telling him his goal of getting a membership over 300 was met). Adam’s goal is to get 400 members (a number the organization was at in the mid ’80s). We then discussed standard retention procedures of renewal reminders. We spent a lot of time discussing recruitment procedures, with a focus on the Brochure. We agreed it needed to be updated and discussed the following types of ideas:

- Add to the front that we study “literature and other media”
- We liked the history, maybe make it more dynamic, bring into the present (organized, continue, expanded)
- Discuss our restructuring of support a scholar, research grants and other exciting changes
- Make the table of dues very clear

exploring SF/F produced from the third world. Possible areas of research include (but are not limited to): the importance of SF/F in providing forums for examining third world issues; intersections of postcolonial theory and SF/F; analyses of third world characters in Western SF/F (includes case studies); the imperialist tradition in Western SF/F - this may also be with special reference to constructions of race, gender, class, sexuality, culture, and so on; Western SF/F that confounds or avoids stereotypical representations of the third world; SF/F that investigates issues specific to a particular third world country/culture; case studies of third world SF/F authors and filmmakers; third world adaptations/variations/parodies of Western SF/F; SF/F traditions in third world countries outside of the West (i.e., pieces that illustrate a history of SF/F outside of, and possibly pre-dating, or concurrent with, the emergence of Western SF/F); exploration of issues such as technology, ecology, reproduction, social structures, political systems, etc. in SF/F produced in the third world; representations of the West/first world in SF/F produced in the third world.

SUBMISSIONS: 3500-6000 words

MLA

CONTACT: Ericka Hoagland <ehoagland@mercyhurst.edu> and Reema Sarwal <reema.sarwal@gmail.com>

DEADLINE: 31 July 2007
WHAT: South Atlantic Modern Language Association (SAML A)
WHEN: November 9-11, 2007
WHERE: Atlanta, Georgia
TOPICS: The Science Fiction and Fantasy Discussion Circle invites papers addressing the role of space and place in works of science fiction or fantasy. The intention of this panel is to explore some of the fantastic, other-worldly, and transfigured locations of these two genres, in particular the political and ideological implications of creations such as Middle Earth (Tolkien), Arrakis (Dune), and New Caprica (Battlestar Galactica). How do spaces motivate conflicts in s.f. and fantasy? What attitudes towards the inhabitation and use of space dominate? How do fictional places participate in the construction of identities such as race, class, and gender? What new political possibilities or formations do speculative spaces allow? Paper topics could address but are not limited to: The politics of exploration and colonization- Spaces outside of capitalism and the nation-state- Utopias and dystopias- Global empires, interplanetary federations, and post-national governments- Representations of ecological disaster and the politics of other Natures- Visions of the city- The home of the future, and the future of homemaking- Conventional topoi such as the lost civilization and the post-apocalyptic wasteland- The political implications of technologies such as space ships and teleportation- Virtual spaces, other-dimensional spaces
SUBMISSIONS: 300-500 word abstract and updated CV
CONTACT: Andrew Reynolds <areynold@english.ufl.edu>
DEADLINE: May 15, 2007

* Take the rest out of after “member type,” we can follow up with them to get that information

Lisa, the Vice President, is charged with revising the brochure by the 2007 conference in Kansas City.

Other ideas for recruitment included making officer appeals in the Review, especially from the President and Vice President, exchanging advertisements with other organizational publications and links on organization websites, and being sure to print the membership form on the back of the Review. It seems like the advertisement run in the Chronicle did not have any results and was not worth the cost. Adam is going to check with Chrissie about any exchange agreements we might already have. We discussed more targeted recruitment strategies. First, members should take brochures to local conventions and to other conferences with memberships that might be interested in them. We discussed writing personal notes to people that we read an essay by that are not already members. (Lisa is going to look into getting note cards and/or postcards printed for more casual communication.) We discussed possibly sending thank you cards to conference presenters, maybe even all conference attendees. We discussed the hard sciences folks as a potentially neglected group and brainstormed ideas of asking scientists to each conference to do brown bags with themes like “What is the event horizon like these days in science?” Lisa suggested Sydney Berkowitz for 2007. We also discussed high school teachers as a possible audience and discussed targeting them at the National Council of Teachers of English conference (Shelley may be going in November) and build them as targeted individuals for the travel grants. Finally, we discussed asking Wendy Bousfield and Leslie Swagger about how to better engage with librarians and archivists.

SFRA PUBLICATIONS

Website
The website does get random Google hits that produce communications with individuals outside the organization. The board believes it is currently easy to read, easy to negotiate, and aesthetically pleasing. We discussed that we have multiple audiences with different needs, including members, prospective members, and possibly teachers looking for materials to help teach SF. Currently the site map suggests materials that are not present. Some ideas we discussed were to include sample syllabi, notices of membership achievements (upcoming books and awards), a password protected section for member materials (especially the membership directory), and switching all the “@” symbols to “<at>” so that bots will not spam anyone whose email address is listed on the website. We also discussed creating a “Website Content Reviewer” position. That person would review the website once a month, solicit materials, and then provide copy and suggestions for changes to the webmaster. The President will contact the webmaster to discuss the reviewer position and the possible changes.

Review
The board wanted to recognize Chrissie Mains and Jan Bogstad for getting the Review out on time, especially with the constant struggle to obtain materials. We discussed various methods for helping obtain content for the publication. We first wanted to make sure all the current editors are still happy to serve in those positions. We wanted to discuss with the editors possibly rekindling the Approaching series, motivate members to write with the Mary Kay Bray award, explicitly soliciting material (especially for the approaching series), possibly have a special issue connected to the Heinlein conference. The President is going to look into getting note cards and/or postcards printed for more casual communication.) We discussed possibly sending thank you cards to conference presenters, maybe even all conference attendees. We discussed the hard sciences folks as a potentially neglected group and brainstormed ideas of asking scientists to each conference to do brown bags with themes like “What is the event horizon like these days in science?” Lisa suggested Sydney Berkowitz for 2007. We also discussed high school teachers as a possible audience and discussed targeting them at the National Council of Teachers of English conference (Shelley may be going in November) and build them as targeted individuals for the travel grants. Finally, we discussed asking Wendy Bousfield and Leslie Swagger about how to better engage with librarians and archivists.

Listserv
We discussed the fact that some people are having problems getting and staying on the listserv. We also noted that there have been a few inappropriate messages. We agreed that we did not want the list moderator to have to slave over the work, and will ask her to moderate just what appear to be problematic postings. The President will be sending a message via the listserv (and possibly in the review) about some of the major changes we decided upon, including the shift in membership renewal timeline and the support a scholar activities (including the need to build reserves for an endowment).
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been needed and inspired some of my early essays on Butler. Her articulations and
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Nevertheless, Melzer’s work is exciting in adding the postcolonial and
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Nonfiction Review
Alien Constructions
Janice M. Bogstad


It is in many ways a pleasure to read Melzer’s Alien Constructions as a
continuation and expansion on the dynamic interaction between the best of femi-
ist theory and the best of feminist science fiction which has engaged the sf critical
community for almost two decades. Additionally, she reexamines works of Octavia
Butler, both those which have already received extensive critical attention like Kin-
dred and The Xenogenesis series (Lilith’s Brood), and those which have not, like Survi-
ror, a personal favorite of mine but least favorite of the author. Yet another
pleasure is the careful integration of the body of post-colonial feminist theory
into the discussions of feminist theory and feminist science fiction. Or the insis-
tence on examining global, gendered, constructions of social power through the
appropriation of the female body.

The list of sf authors, as well as sf critics, both from the larger critical
community and the sf critical community, is extensive and fascinating, although
not surprising except for a few notable absences. Areas of inquiry which focus on
sexuality as performativity through androgyney and sex roles would seem to be a
reference to Nathalie Rosinsky’s early work in this area, and, in this era when
dissertations are widely available through Dissertation Abstracts Online and a very
large body of work, beginning in 1992, has focused on Butler’s work, it is surpris-
ing that none of these are cited. That this lack is a lamentable absence in formal
critical work, due to previous inaccessibility and unreliability is nevertheless puz-
zling in the work of a feminist scholar who is also familiar with the early barriers to
publishing of feminist sf criticism.

Nevertheless, Melzer’s work is exciting in adding the postcolonial and
media criticism to her explorations not only of what feminist theory can contrib-
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exemplification of the difference between cyberfeminism (which she negatively
WHAT: H. G. Wells, Science and Philosophy
WHO: The H. G. Wells Society
WHEN: 28-29 Sept 2007
WHERE: Imperial College/Conway Hall, London
TOPICS: Proposals are invited for this year’s H. G. Wells Society Annual conference. The conference will be hosted by both Imperial College, London (on the 28 September) and by Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London (on the 29 September). The first day of the event will include a plenary lecture by the science fiction writer, Stephen Baxter. The conference will focus on ‘Wells, Science and Philosophy’. Proposals may centre on either Wells and science or Wells and philosophy exclusively, or might examine the intersection of both science and philosophy in the author’s work. Proposals might focus on, but are not limited to: Wells and evolutionary biology; Wells and Physics; Wells and Darwin/Huxley; Wells and Astronomy; Wells and Plato; Wells and Liberalism.
SUBMISSIONS: 300 word proposals
CONTACT: Steven McLean <stevemclean_7_ @hotmail.com
DEADLINE: June 11, 2007

WHAT: Science Fiction in British Film and Television
WHO: 2008 Film & History Conference
WHEN: Oct 30-Nov 2, 2008
WHERE: Chicago, Illinois
TOPICS: The consistent quality of science-fiction films and television programs in Britain has won audiences for generations, both in the UK and around the world. One reason for this sustained popularity lies in the ability of British cinema and TV to constantly reinvent the genre, keeping it socially and philosophically elastic. How, for example, has British science fiction and television as a whole resonated with audiences? The conference will focus on British cinema and TV’s contribution to the genre, and how it has managed to keep its audience engaged in the genre.”

The introduction itself is complex, setting a range of theoretical groundwork as much as it, near the end, prefaces the organizational elements of the text. The work is subsequently organized into three sections: Part I: Difference, Identity, and Colonial Experience in Feminist Science Fiction focuses on Butler, especially Survivor and Dawn. Part II: Technologies and Gender in Science Fiction Films explores the cyborg identity in Alien Resurrection and The Matrix. Part III: Posthuman Embodiment: Deviant Bodies, Desire and Feminist Politics contrasts what she typifies as a female-cyborgian dystopia in Calder’s Dead Girls with trans- and intersexed identities in Butler and Scott. Melzer thus engages with some of the major areas of theorizing current in the feminist community and thus asserts: “While some science fiction relies on feminism for its conceptualizations, feminist theorists tend to ignore the genre as either fantastic or unsophisticated and ‘nerdy’. They miss the often crucial insights science fiction offers in its dialogues with feminist theory.” (p. 263). Of course, to be fair, Butler, a major focus of this work, has indeed engaged critics in the fields of gender, race, and identity theory, thus giving Melzer a wide-ranging body of critics from which to draw. Perhaps this is why this one writer is so central to her entire critical work.

I can highly recommend this text, as much to measure historical and subsequent works on the interconnectedness of feminist theories and science fiction embodiments as for its fascinating connections between bodies of feminist, post-colonial and other cultural theorizing.

NONFICTION REVIEW

Fan Fiction and Fan Communities
Christine Mains


Fan fiction (particularly slash) and other fan-produced responses to media and literary texts have generated an increasing amount of scholarly interest in recent years, partly because of the explosion of source material enabled by the Internet and partly because a growing number of fans are entering academia (or, in many cases, a growing number of academics are becoming comfortable identifying themselves as fans). For several years, the discourse has been shaped by a handful of works, including Henry Jenkins’ Textual Poachers (1992) and Camille Bacon-Smith’s Enterprising Women (1992). But recently, a number of books and
articles have appeared that move the discussion in different directions. One of those books is *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet* (2006), a collection of essays edited by Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse. In the preface to the volume, the editors announce their intention to place their work “at the intersection of the fanthic community and academic discourses on fan culture” (1), encouraging their contributors to take an autoethnographical approach that would make use of their fandom experiences. The result is a fascinating collection of essays taking a variety of approaches to a variety of fan productions.

In the introduction, the editors provide definitions of terms current in fan discourse and used repeatedly throughout the essays, and provide a brief overview of fandom on the Internet and of the history of fan studies. They include a comprehensive and useful bibliography of critical works for further reading. Following the editors’ introductory remarks, contributor Francesca Coppa provides a brief history of media fandom, in a chronological introduction to several of the works that commonly inspire fan response and are discussed in the essays. The essays themselves are divided into four sections.

The essays in part 1 place fan fiction in the context of other genres, exploring possible ways to define fan fiction by examining its relationship to both the media source texts and to other types of literature. In “Archontic Literature: A Definition, a History, and Several Theories of Fan Fiction,” Abigail Derecho proposes replacing current definitions of fan fiction as derivative or appropriative literature with a new definition, archontic literature, derived from Derrida’s discussion of the archive, a body of work “ever expanding and never completely closed” (61). Derecho explains that the archive of an archontic text includes not only the source text (in media fandom, the television series itself) but also all texts related to it (sequels, prequels and spin-offs, tie-in novels, fan-produced work). Derecho goes on to explore archontic literature from the seventeenth century on, making a strong case that, at least in terms of literary production, fan fiction should be considered a similar form of storytelling as, for instance, the Jane Eyre archive which includes Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea* and other works inspired by the original novel. Catherine Driscoll’s “One True Pairing” looks at the links between pornography (usually considered a masculine interest), romance novels (described by some critics as “women’s pornography” [80]), and sexually explicit fan fiction, including the much-studied slash fiction. Slash, defined by the editors as stories focused on a same-sex relationship (predominantly between two male characters such as Kirk and Spock, to fall back on the most-used example), is also the subject of Elizabeth Woledge’s essay “Intimatopia.” Woledge narrows her interests to works of slash fiction that deal with male intimacy, noting that the same subject matter appears in published works by authors such as Mary Renault. This section does an admirable job of drawing connections between the fiction produced by fans on the Internet and the fiction produced by professional authors.

Part 2, subtitled Fan Fiction as Literature, includes essays that focus on close textual analysis rather than the more usual sociological approach. In “The Toy Soldiers from Leeds” Mafalda Stasi uses the metaphor of the palimpsest in place of the usual privileging of source text over fannish interpretations of the source, noting the intertextuality of fan fiction and the communal nature of its production. Stasi also argues that fan fiction, as a genre, “points back to techniques more commonly used in poetry, or in genres such as folktales or mythological cycles” such as symbolism or the medieval allegorical code (122-3). Deborah Kaplan’s essay explores character construction in fan fiction, and Ika Willis, in “Keeping Promises to Queer Children,” looks at positive uses of the much-maligned Mary Sue character in relation to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s model of queer reading, seeing the writing of fan fiction as a means of “resist[ing] the docile
intertext, the continuity which would *keep meanings in line*’ (168, emphasis hers).

In keeping with the editors’ desire to bring together the fanth and academic selves of their contributors, Willis uses her own fan fiction stories as objects of analysis. In Part 3, a section focusing particularly on the community of readers and writers of fan fiction, a collaborative essay by Eden Lackner, Barbara Lynn Lucas, and Robin Anne Reid does something similar. “Cunning Linguists” explores the process of creation of a particular work of RPS, or Real Person Slash, as it evolved (and is still evolving) as a dialogue between two of the authors (in chat, on Livejournal, and in person) and, more broadly, as a conversation in which their online readers participated. The result is a fascinating peek into a creative process shaped in part by new communication technology, as well as a convincing argument against the over-simplifying approaches to slash as produced by “straight women writing gay men” (194, emphasis original). Other essays in this section include Angelina Karpovich’s look at the role of beta readers — similar to but not, as Karpovich demonstrates, the same as, literary editors, and Kristina Busse’s “My Life is a WIP on my LJ” which focuses on the performance of queerness by the community of fan fiction writers and readers as a form of play and play-acting not that different from the RPS stories that they write. Busse argues that recognizing the performative aspects of “reality” points up the false dichotomy between reality and fantasy, between fan fiction about fictional characters and that about real-life celebrities, between online interaction and face-to-face interaction.

Part 4, titled Medium and Message, deals more extensively with the issue of performance, acknowledging not only the existence of other forms of fan production aside from fan fiction, but also aspects of performativity underlying textual fan fiction. Francesca Coppa’s “Writing Bodies in Space” proposes that fan fiction be considered in the light of performance theory rather than, or at least in addition to, literary or sociological theory. Coppa believes that such an analysis helps to explain some of the generic features of fan fiction derided as flaws by mainstream critics, such as its focus on the physical bodies of the actors and its repetitive nature; after all, she observes, “in theatre, there’s a value to revising the same text in order to explore different aspects and play out different behavioral scripts” (236). The final two essays in the book look at different types of fan production. Louisa Ellen Stein’s “This Dratted Thing: Fannish Storytelling through New Media” explores the “new modes of storytelling” enabled by technology, such as blog-based role playing games, and the kinds of narratives that can be created using the game *The Sims*. And in “From Shooting Monsters to Shooting Movies,” Robert Jones looks at *machinima*, “fan-created manipulations of video game images” (31) usually the work of male fans, in the light of theories of media fandom, generally the province of female fans.

All in all, this anthology is a useful and thought-provoking addition to the library of any scholar interested not only in media studies or fandom studies, but also in the practices of storytelling as it is shaped by the episodic nature of sequels and television series, by the world-building concerns of science fiction, by ever-changing technological capabilities. Fan fiction and fandom culture is an area of growing academic interest, and a site where our students are already working and playing. Hellekson and Busse’s book was the first one I put on my syllabus for my upcoming course on Fan Cultures and the Internet, and I highly recommend it.

**NONFICTION REVIEW**

**Alien Theory**

*Ed Higgins*


Patricia Monk’s wide-ranging, intelligent, well-documented, and interesting study readily serves as an exemplary bit of scholarship and literary criticism in handling a very large and extensive sf topic. From the considerable merits of *Alien Theory* one hopes Dr. Monk’s recent retirement from Dalhouse University classroom and other duties means there is more scholarly work yet to come, especially with a focus on sf. But lest I gush overly much in Professor Monk’s direction, I do have some complaints later in my review.

Divided into seven chapters under the three topic sections of “Conceiving the Alien,” “Writing the Alien,” and “Reading the Alien,” Monk moves through both an extensive theory-related overview and a literary-folklore tracing of the Alien as archetype underpinning her own essentially Jungian approach. Initially, she traces the history of the Other in folklore and mainstream literature generally, then moves to explore various conceptual frameworks in sf texts offering archetypes of alien alterity. Her final section examines and applies several typologies of characterization used in sf stories for their various
science-fictional purposes and effects.

Monk’s title is somewhat misleading, indicating a more narrow focus than her study actually offers. While her primary concern is mainly with the alien in short fiction, her Preface itself expands this focus: “The discussion deals only with written science fiction, concentrating on the shorter texts (short stories, novellas, and novelettes), although some novels will be mentioned in passing” (ix). And indeed novelists such as Le Guin, Benford, Gibson, Brin, and Poul Anderson, along with others, are given significant attention, or at least passing application.

But Monk’s concentration remains on the short story treatments of the Alien/Other, with her declared attempt to demonstrate how theoretically and practically storytellers present plausible, credibly constituted aliens. She explores story constructs which in their turn serve as archetypes/tropes of intelligence and sentence reflecting both the “Other-strangeness” and the mirrored pervasiveness of humanness that attracts (or in some cases repels) us in sf stoned forms.

Readily conceding the obvious popularity of the alien as one of the most popular tropes in science fiction, Monk examines several ways in which this trope functions to encode meaning within given story texts. While she is certainly not new to such observations, she points to various ways in which fear of the Other as an effective plot device can also devolve into a moral trope as “a mirror presenting ways of recognizing inherent and important truth about humans.” And as such, she asserts, alien alterity provides sf with various kinds of didactic elements relating to the unknown. Here she draws on feminist theory and readings of sf as “significantly shifted from the old androcentric encodings toward the new feminist encodings” since “both in metaphor and beyond mere metaphor, woman(self) informs all narratives of the Alien in feminist science fiction” (70).

Monk is especially interested in the different types of alien portrayals which she examines under the terms “humanoids, bems, little green men, and potentiated aliens,” and how they have informed the idea of the alien in science fiction, as well as how such imaginative characters present forms of “OtherSelfness or alterity.” I found this one of the more interesting chapters in her study. Despite the varying quality of sf writers’ use of these techniques of characterization, Monk, after examining quite a number of pulp magazine published stories—and even in some cases, film variations—concludes, “Yet, for all the creations of the Other or the OtherSelf, regardless of the quality of their conception or literary modeling, the question of why such creations should be presented must still be answered” (260). The answer for Monk lies in the trope’s complexity and pervasiveness as viewed through the lens of Jung’s general theory of archetypes. And that lens, of course, is what Monk, I believe convincingly, holds up for us to peer through as the raison d’être of her entire study. This seems both the main strength as well as sometimes limiting weakness of her arguments concerning the Alien/Other.

So, beyond mostly gushing and my overall favorable impression of her interesting study, I do have two niggling complaints. Monk’s introductory, heavily theoretical chapter overuses a frequently opaque, academic, and arcane language of Jungian analytical psychological theory. Such phrases and repeated terms as “alterity,” “allomorphic,” “sphont,” “problematic,” “cognitive estrangement,” “necessary alterity,” “consensual hypothesis,” “idiopathogenic,” “the numinous archetype is potentiated,” “the potentiated alien,” “proleptic activity of imagining the Self in the Other,” “psychological substrate,” etc., are in warehouse abundance. After a while I found myself rolling my eyes at this overload, especially when the jacket blurb declared the book to be “of interest to academics and students as well as general readers.” I don’t know what general readers might wade through such dense prose but even students, I suspect, would have to be on an advanced graduate level. As well, I suspect, most academics’ patience with the psycho-jargon will wane. Also, I did sometimes find her repeating herself in too frequent précis of what had already been set forth in earlier chapters or sections. This, too, seemed overdone, so that a quite longish four-hundred twenty-four pages could have been trimmed by one-third, at least. But perhaps this is an unfair quibble given the considerable range of Monk’s topic; or maybe reflects just my own time constraints wishing for a quicker read. Still, less would have been more for this reader.

Finally, a considerably detailed and, I think, particularly useful bibliography of 46 pages attends Monk’s study (along with copious, informative notes ending each chapter). Of particular interest is her thorough scouring of pulp magazine articles, interviews, editorials, fiction pieces, etc. that conveniently locate otherwise difficult material to track down. Others in this sf study area will be saved notable time and much spade-work here, I’m sure.

While reading Alien Theory I couldn’t help thinking of Kingsley Amis’s groundbreaking New Maps of Hell (1960) in which Amis opens by poetically observing:

What makes us rove that star lit corridor
May be the impulse to meet face to face
Our vice and folly shaped into a thing,
And so at last ourselves...
Monk, as is to be expected, quotes Amis a number of times—although not from the poem which gives Amis’s book its title. But I believe her study similarly brings us very much in scholarly critical fashion face to face with the vice/folly of what is a major shaping of theory and explication for the alien in sf storytelling. I for one have found much here that translates into useful classroom material for teaching my own sf course—now if only I can find a way past that more arcane psycho-jargon for my students.

NONFICTION REVIEW
Caped Crusaders 101
Van Norris


In the rather sparse field of credible academic study on superhero narratives this concise, affordable volume by Jeffrey Kahan and Stanley Stewart proves to be a very welcome addition. Graced by a pastiche Gil Kane cover, this rationalisation of mainstream comic books via a range of elevated academic theories appears as much geared towards validating the subject matter as providing an undergraduate window into areas of literature, history, psychology and philosophy.

In this context I’d recommend this tome be used with Coogan’s excellent Superhero: Origins of a Genre (2006) as a companion piece. Both enrich a discipline defined by a paucity of solid analysis that either falls into form-focused methodologies (as embodied within Carner’s philosophical/art-based The Aesthetics of Comics and McCloud’s Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art) or simplistic list-style reference works. Kahan and Stewart (rightly) assert that for many students text/narrative-focused work appears to connect most effectively and often facilitates an entry point to allow undergrads to access the more esoteric and abstract issues alluded to explicitly and implicitly within the prose. As a part of this exploration of comic narratives the spread of pertinent literary/socio/psychological/historical/cultural paradigms presented here also serves as a useful and all-important cultural ground map for students, one that helpfully encapsulates and ‘fences off’ somewhat over-familiar topics within undergraduate comic research and notably suggests possible appropriate avenues for further exploration. Themes such as Corporate Responsibility, The Prison System, Homosexual Identity, 9/11 and Democracy are all illustrated with a range of key heroic narratives from a variety of comic histories and backed by a solid rationale. Selected pages of contextual artwork are reproduced throughout which also go towards cementing the links between mature investigation and textual/primary work.

For me some of the positive and negative aspects of the book are exemplified and summarised by the discussion of problematic racial representations of Black characters within Marvel comics and the obvious correlation between Luke Cage, Blaxploitation and broader socio/political issues that are outlined here. While the chapter seems to skip any real/deconstruction of the stereotypes proffered it does at least supply a handy counterpoint to Coogan’s exhaustive assessment of this character, where ‘genre’ is quite rightly given credence as a crucial factor in evaluation.

It is here also that the recurrent, rather scattershot approach to ‘overview’ dominates and overrides too often a more focused approach to individual analysis. This is marred to a prose that, (as the writers themselves admit), in attempting to match the vitality of the comic books under study often sacrifices clarity for a good line or throwaway gag. In laying out a model for academic writing practice, then offering as model for Liberalism, “Cap (America) seems fine walking down a street that has falafel and dim sum…” simply plays into undesired review-like registers of writing.

It is also apparent that the authors seem less happy when marrying geo-political context as the list of slightly clumsy analogies that are found throughout the less successful The Comic Books, Cold Wars and Desert Storms chapter demonstrates. The positing of Dr. Doom as a “moral equivalent” of Saddam Hussein occasionally veers into the puerile and highlights when this methodology can backfire. Conversely their musings on morality, (meat and potatoes within superhero analysis surely) supersedes many previous efforts in this field such as the rather disconnected, patchy Morris and Norris 2005 collection, Superheroes and Philosophy – Truth, Justice and the Socratic Way. At least here the sense of attachment to the comic medium is transmitted with clarity and they negotiate smartly through familiar territory as covered by the likes of Fingeroth in Superman on the Couch (2004), which sees the book succeed well within in its stated parameters.

To conclude I have to say the basic concept of the ‘thinking, debating, writing’ tasks posed at the end of each chapter does go towards reinforcing the open-ended nature of the analytical process but perhaps falters when removed from the
context of a stated pedagogical framework. To be fair, expecting students to debate Doctor Strange's conception of God in their own time with a local, (hopefully very patient) clergyman smack of utopianism. Despite these minor reservations Caped Crusaders really should be among next semester's cited key sources as a highly recommended, valuable contribution.

**NONFICTION REVIEW**

**Superman on the Couch**

Brett Chandler Patterson


A growing number of books each year analyze popular culture, from films to video games to other images in the media. The wide-scale success of a number of films in the last decade based upon comic book characters has brought attention to the much neglected genre. Of the series of academic books that I have seen addressing comic books, and the superhero genre in particular, Fingeroth's work is one of the best. Fingeroth, lecturer at New York University, editor of *Write Now!* magazine, and past directing editor of Marvel's Spider-man line, is eminently qualified to comment on the topic. His style is effective and subtly profound and should appeal to those who are not, as well as to those who are, familiar with the world of comic books. In ten chapters Fingeroth lays out his reasons why we should give superheroes our attention. After giving us a sense of the origins of this genre in the twentieth century, Fingeroth goes on to analyze the common appearance of dual identities, the preponderance of orphaned heroes, the portrayal of Amazonian women, visions of family life in these strange scenarios, stories of anger and revenge, the genre's appeal to adolescents, and the changing presentations of villains over the years. Fingeroth's study is not esoteric, an internal discussion among comic books fans; he uses these iconic characters to comment on our society and on the human condition. As Stan Lee remarks in the book's foreword, "The conclusions [Fingeroth] reaches will both surprise and fascinate you as he colorfully demonstrates that superhero writers and artists, like all creative people in every medium, have always, with surprising accuracy, reflected our society and the times we live in" (10).

Fingeroth begins by defining a superhero as someone with character, a system of positive values, and a determination to protect those values through certain superhuman abilities. Noting that this list could also apply to villains, he advances the definition by including that the superhero must "represent the values of the society that produces him"; he knows what the "right thing" is and does it (17). Here he explores whether it is healthy for our society to be preoccupied with these archetypal heroes: are these stories mere escapist pulp? Here, of course, Fingeroth mentions the infamous psychiatrist Frederic Wertham, who in the 1950s adamantly criticized comic books, including superhero stories, for violence, racism, and sexism, and pushed for censorship. However, he goes on to say that there is not much analysis in our society today about the effects of these stories. It is important that we do so because societies, families, and individuals find themselves shaped by the myths that they tell repeatedly.

Although heroic fiction goes back for centuries, Fingeroth focuses his attention on early twentieth-century pulp writing. 1896 saw the first comic strip run in a newspaper ("The Yellow Kid") and the first pulp magazine (*The Argosy*). The two media would not meet until 1929. In these early years, several characters appeared: the Shadow, Doc Savage, the Lone Ranger, Zorro, Tarzan, Buck Rogers, and Conan the Barbarian. Fingeroth notes that these characters evolved across the media (pulps, movies, and radio) in a similar way to the folk and western heroes of previous generations (Paul Bunyan, John Henry, Buffalo Bill Cody, etc.), but the growth of mass media created a wider audience. Superman appeared in 1938; then Batman in 1939. The superheroes would also bridge into radio and film – the cross-media presence stretches from their origins to the present.

From this point, Fingeroth then turns to his partially psychological, partially literary analysis of several important themes in superhero stories. He draws important connections from the stories to statements about American society and the human condition. He begins with the common device of dual identity; drawing first on ancient stories about concealing one's identity (Jacob, Odysseus, etc.), he focuses on the Scarlet Pimpernel and Zorro in the pulp magazines and then turns to Superman. He connects the Jewish immigrant experience of Superman's creators Siegel and Shuster to the desire to construct one's own identity in U.S. society. The appeal to readers is that they can fantasize that they are more than they appear to be ("if they only knew the truth about me . . ."). The duality raises questions about identity: who are we – the person we hide or the person we pretend to be? Stan Lee's Fantastic Four in the early 1960s would be the first significant challenge to this duality; this
superhero team would be public.

Fingeroth then observes that many superheroes are orphans—certainly notable heroes like Superman, Batman, and Spider-man. The trauma of the loss of their parents feeds their quest to make the world right. Fingeroth claims that these stones feed into the wish fulfillment, when we feel that we are alone, most often in adolescence (cut off from our parents as well as our peers), that there is some payback against those who have hurt us. The idea also feeds into the American mythology: “We fight our own battles, make our own rules, defy those who would destroy us. We are alone to succeed or fail, to triumph or succumb. We make our own destinies” (71). But the orphan myth also brings guilt; Batman and Spider-man are haunted by visions of how they could have saved their loved ones.

Fingeroth’s study illuminates the sexism in previous generations, but locates a modern turn that presents a number of strong women as heroines—from Buffy the Vampire Slayer to Lara Croft, Tomb Raider. The one heroine that goes back to the early days of comic books, though, is Wonder Woman. Fingeroth carefully highlights the differences in her origin story, created by the infamous psychologist William Marston—observing that her story lacks the “visceral quality” of the origins of Superman and Batman, that she is not as interesting a character as Buffy. Fingeroth lists the number of spin-off heroes (Batgirl, Spiderwoman, etc.), noting that it would take some time before women characters would develop some independence—but many of these, like Jean Grey who became Dark Phoenix, or Sue Storm who became Malice, often flirted with the “bad girl” image. Fingeroth holds out hope that our generation is putting out more complex heroines.

Fingeroth further analyzes the family of the Fantastic Four and the family quality of the Justice League and the X-men (as we escape family life, we often find ourselves attempting to recreate it; “when you are a freak, you need a family of freaks” (107)), the expressions of anger in the Hulk and Wolverine (the lashing out of a berserker rage and the cathartic channeling of readers’ anger), the number of teen heroes from Spider-man to Robin (Stan Lee largely broke the side-kick mentality and gave adolescence more substance in several of his creations), and the changing presentation of villains (and the values reinforced and challenged by their appearance in these stories). A number of more recent comics, from Watchmen to Powers, have questioned vigilante justice, but the vast majority of the populace still envisions heroes and villains in opposition to each other—with the common assumption that the universe which they inhabit will in the end validate the hero and punish the villain. The hero’s values reflect the society’s values. Fingeroth concludes that superhero myths have so infiltrated American society that it is difficult to avoid them. These myths are “metaphor systems” that appeal to many. We seem to be living in an age of their popularity (like the 1940s), but this age is more in film and video games than in the shrinking comic book market. Whatever the medium, though, Fingeroth argues that “superheroes as metaphors and icons are here to stay” (171).

NONFICTION REVIEW

Three Books on Fantasy by Jared Lobdell

Bruce A. Beatie


Between 2003 and 2005 Jared Lobdell, whose record of published work on Tolkien dates back to 1972, published four slim volumes of criticism centered, to judge from their titles, on Tolkien and his circle. The earliest of these, A Tolkien Compass (2nd ed., Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2003, orig. 1975), is a volume of critical essays by other hands, mostly conference papers, that Lobdell edited; since only his “Introduction” has been revised and a “Postscript” added, I will not comment on it here (though it is the only one of the four focused solely on Tolkien’s work). The publication of four books, two of them new editions of earlier publications, by a single author within three years was doubtless enabled by the success of Peter
Though *The Rise of Tolkienian Fantasy* (hereafter *Rise*) was published a year after *The Scientifiction Novels of C. S. Lewis* (hereafter *Lewis*), its chapters consist mostly of conference papers written or delivered between 1983 and 1993; as the earlier work both in terms of its writing and its content, and because it is referred to frequently in Lewis, I propose to discuss it first. *The World of the Rings* (hereafter *World*), published the same year as *Rise* but consisting mostly of work first written in 1979, is in its origins the “earliest” of the three; but for reasons that will, I hope, become apparent, it forms part three of the “trilogy.”

The first chapter of *Rise*, “Far from the Madding Critics” (1-20), is new, written “at the suggestion—or should I say command?—of my friend Mack Hassler” who felt the original six chapters (2-7) were “riding madly off in all directions, and worse, … the horseman doing the riding was headless.” (“Preface,” xiii) In it Lobdell argues that “the stream of Tolkienian fantasy begins in the medieval hills” (2), specifically with Langland’s *Piers Plowman* and Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, and that the “stream” metaphor will provide a rhetorical (though hardly a substantial) structure linking the succeeding chapters. His goal is to support the thesis that “Tolkien set out to write an adventure story in the Edwardian mode” (19—the title of the first chapter of *World*, delivered as a conference paper in 1976).

Chapters 2-7 seem to have been substantially revised from their conference form: lengthened, the “stream” metaphor added, references to previous and subsequent chapters included, as well as to *Rise* and *Lewis*. “Children of Mona: ‘Mythology’ and Things Celtic” (21-40, delivered in 1987) follows the stream of Celtic revival begun with Rowland’s 1723 *Mona Antiqua Restorata* that flows through Blake and Morris. The “Lear” of the next chapter, “Children of Lear: Breaking and Remaking Reality” (41-59, delivered in 1992), is not Shakespeare’s king but the 19th-century Edward, whose nonsense verse is representative of a separate stream. The fourth chapter, “Pilgrimage to the Northward: Adventurers All” (61-80, delivered in 1992), uses the novels of Scott and Buchan, and S. R. Crockett’s *The Black Douglas*, to introduce the theme of pilgrimage: with pastoral, discussed in the second and especially the third chapters, one of the two main generic motifs Lobdell argues as central to the Tolkienian stream.

Lobdell’s discussion of the stream involving humor and the fantastic (“Blackstick, Prigio, and ‘IT’: Comic and Fantastic,” 81-98; delivered in 1987) depends heavily on Bakhtin’s “distinction between the culture of order and the culture of carnival” (98) and focuses on Thackeray’s *The Rose and the Ring* and the novels of Andrew Lang and Edith Nesbit—the latter author’s Bastable stories were acknowledged by C. S. Lewis as a model for the Narnia books. The sixth chapter is cryptically entitled “Kaleyard Gospel and Kaleyard Gothick: George MacDonald,” (99-118: it “combines parts of several of the other [chapters],” xiv) and is the only one concentrating on a single author; the obscure term “kaleyard” (which Lobdell assumes his readers know) refers, according to the *OED*, to “a group of late 19th-century fiction writers, including J. M. Barrie, who described local town life in Scotland in a romantic vein and with much use of the vernacular. Kaleyard in Scots means literally ‘kitchen garden.’”

The title of the seventh chapter, “Et in Arcadia Frodo” (119-140, written for conferences in 1993-1994, but not delivered), leads one to expect, finally, some direct discussion of “Tolkienian fantasy,” but in fact it concerns “the distinction between Arcady [the world of the child] and Olympus [the world of adults]” (119) in Grahame, Kipling, and Henty. In the final chapter, “A Scent of Old-World Roses: Tolkien and ‘Fantasy’” (141-165, written for this volume), Lobdell leaps over Tolkien’s work to consider an example of the fantasy genre which (he argues in passing) Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* established: Stephen King’s *Dark Tower* series. The appendix, “Sequels in the Edwardian Mode: A Problem in Calquing” (167-175, delivered in 1983 and presented here as “prepared for publication in 1984” [xv]—but not published, according to the MLA bibliography), uses Tom Shippey’s notion of calquing to discuss, oddly, why *The Silmarillion* and *Unfinished Tales* fail as sequels; it concludes with comments on the Harry Potter series.

Lobdell’s style is often annoying. The frequent addresses to the reader, especially in chapters 2-7, may be relics of their origin as conference papers, but the equally frequent rhetorical questions and parenthetical reservations about points just made would, I think, have been as irritating to a listening audience as they are to this reader. The book is not especially well edited: I found a number of typos and even grammatical errors (most egregiously, “flown” as a past participle of “flow,” 150).

The book is, however, full of fascinating, if often idiosyncratic, comments on English literature of the 19th and 20th centuries, and demonstrates Lobdell’s great breadth of knowledge about this literature. Unfortunately, the “stream” metaphor, the new initial and final chapters, and the internal cross-referencing do little to resolve the problem Mack Hassler found with the original manuscript. Lobdell himself notes that “my approach is (to use the kindest word) over-eclectic. I have used...
Mikhail Bakhtin, Northrop Frye, Thomas Shippey and the idea of the *calque*, C. S. Lewis, Tolkien himself, Nikolaus Pevsner, historians of popular culture, practitioners like Buchan and Stevenson, Old Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all. But that is what is to be expected,” he continues, “if one is confronting a phenomenon outside the bounds of criticism and literary history as we know them.” (7) But the 1649 articles on Tolkien listed by Judith Johnson through 1984 (J. R. R. Tolkien: Six Decades of Criticism, 1986) do not seem to justify considering “the Tolkien phenomenon” (see my 1967 article in the *Journal of Popular Culture*) as outside those bounds. Lobdell’s argument in *Rise*, to the extent that one can pull it from his eddying streams, is not convincing, at least to me; but his comments along the way gave me much to think about that had not occurred to me before, and that is a valuable contribution.

II

Lobdell’s “revival” (1) of the term “scientifiction” in the title of *Lewis* (though only there: throughout the book he returns to the more current term “science fiction”) is appropriate because, as we shall see, there is little in his analysis that touches on what members of the Science Fiction Research Association would consider pertinent to the current term (though I must add that two of the chapters did appear in earlier forms in *Extrapolation*).

In his “Preface” (1-6), Lobdell notes that he has “finally finished writing” the book “after more than thirty years” (5), and indeed he published three short articles in 1971-1973 that, from their titles, have contributed to the content of his chapter on That*Hideous Strength* (in *Orivist* 6 and *Bulletin of the New York C. S. Lewis Society*, 4). The title of the first chapter, “The Ransom Stories in Their English Literary Context” (7-29), echoes that of an article Lobdell published in 1991, in which he had argued that the Ransom novels “were not a trilogy in the sense that they play a single theme or center on a single concept.” (3-4); but now in this chapter he suggests that, together with the unfinished *Dark Tower* (more on that later), they form part of “an intended tetralogia” whose over-riding theme involves “the moral imagination” (4) in a sense that derives from Colenidge. He concludes that “All four Ransom novels are in the fairy-tale mode” (26), especially *That Hideous Strength*, which it may “be easier for readers of the trilogy to accept … as pageant, … if the second volume were An Exchange in Time [Lobdell’s alternate title for *The Dark Tower*] rather than *Perelandra.*” (28)

The second chapter (“Malacandra, or Space Travel: Out of the Silent Planet,” 31-56) begins with a prospectus of his analyses of all the novels: “All four books have a characteristic organization or pattern, a characteristic ‘fairy-tale’ motion …; all have a moral imagination so characteristically English as to define or constitute ‘Englishness’ (Pevsner’s sense [a constant theme in *Rise*]), and a characteristic attitude toward the intermingling of ordinary and extraordinary—characteristic, *inter alia*, of science fiction.” (31) Of Out of the Silent Planet Lobdell notes tellingly that “it seems to bear … an affinity to Eddison’s *The Worm Ouroboros*, which (theoretically) takes place on Mercury, but is not science fiction at all.” Elsewhere he places the novel in “the tradition of Kepler, Godwin, and Cyrano de Bergerac’s satire” (35) and of Jonathan Swift (55); though he talks of science fiction repeatedly, his analysis (often fascinating) tends to identify it with other genres.

Lobdell’s third chapter, “The Dark Tower, or An Exchange in Time” (57-83), offers special problems. An earlier version was published in *Extrapolation* 2000 as “Prolegomena to a Study of C. S. Lewis’s Arcadian Science Fiction: How Would The Dark Tower Have Come Out?” That earlier title indicates the problem: Lobdell in effect writes his own completion of Lewis’s torso, and then bases his analysis on the “completed,” not the manuscript version—a technique he repeats in the second chapter of *World*. I had never read Lewis’s 75-page fragment, published for the first time by Walter Hooper in 1977, fourteen years after Lewis’s death, and I am fairly sure that few of the members of the Science Fiction Research Association have done so. Lobdell argues that Lewis intended this novel, untitled in the surviving manuscript (Lobdell retitles it as An Exchange in Time), as the second or third part of a “Ransom tetralogia.” It is true that Ransom and MacPhee (of That*Hideous Strength*) are the names of the major characters in *The Dark Tower*, and that the last words of Lewis-as-narrator in *Out of the Silent Planet* are “if there is to be any more space-travelling, it will have to be time-travelling as well …!” (Macmillan 1977, 160) But the “chronoscope” that is central to the action of Lewis’s torso seems, as the story develops, to facilitate transdimensional rather than transtemporal communication. Lobdell’s highly imaginative and, to me, unconvincing speculation as to how Lewis would have completed the novel distracts from and vitiates his otherwise interesting comments on the torso, and does nothing to substantiate its proposed place within the Ransom novels.

The title of the fourth chapter, “*Perelandra*, or Paradise Retained” (85-109), emphasized one of his arguments: that *Perelandra* is “Lewis’s … answer to” Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (94). But Lobdell’s more final answer to his own question “What is *Perelandra*?” (88) is that it is a musically-structured religious pageant. He notes unpublished comments by John Kirkpatrick comparing it to Wagnerian opera; the last words of the novel take him, says Lobdell, “beyond Wagner” to Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. (108-109)—and see comments on chapter two of *World* below. Lobdell provides a fascinating (and deeply felt)
analysis of the novel, but clearly not one that connects it to science fiction.

There is certainly a lot of discussion of science in Lewis's That Hideous Strength: the National Institute of Coordinated Experiments purports to be a center of scientific research, but its acronym, N. I. C. E. (by which Lewis always refers to it), suggests from the beginning that its science is not to be taken seriously qua science. Lobdell's analysis in the fifth chapter ("Thulcandra, or Our Time under That Hideous Strength," 111-134) seems more disjointed than the other chapters; two sections have virtually the same subtitles as his 1972 Oriënt articles, and seem not to have been significantly revised, or at any rate are not clearly connected to the other sections of the chapter. To the extent that Lobdell makes any generalizations about That Hideous Strength, his analysis underlines Lewis's subtitle “A Modern Fairy Tale for Grown-Ups” and his comment in the “Preface” to the novel that it is “a ‘tall story’ about devilry” (Macmillan 1979, 7).

In the concluding (though not the final) chapter, “Lewis's Arcadian Science Fiction” (135-160), Lobdell reviews the pattern he sees in all four Ransom novels, a pattern apparent in his subtitles: “Expeditions in Arcady;” “The Threat to Arcady;” and “The Journey Home to Habitual Self.” Though he uses the term "science fiction" in the chapter title, his whole focus in the text is on the novels as pastoral Arcadian .pageant; that, he concludes “perhaps … brings us further into the realms of myth.” (160) And following from that, he adds as a final chapter his 1998 article in Extrapolation, “C. S. Lewis and the Myth in Mythopoeia” (161-182), apparently with little revision. There is a bibliography (183-189) and an index (191-194).

Lewis is a much more coherent and unified book than Rise, and Lobdell offers many insights indeed into Lewis's Ransom novels and their derivation from English literary traditions—even into the unfinished torso. But his arguments in fact generally contradict rather than support Lewis's claim to be writing "scientific fiction," much less science fiction. The style has fewer of the ticks I found annoying in Rise, though there are still occasional sentences like “None of this gets us much further.” (169) As with Rise, the editing is sometimes careless. To give only one example, quoting Lewis's Perelandra the text speaks of “the women's breasts” (92) when there is only one woman on the planet. An example of Lobdell's own carelessness (that an editor should have caught): discussing That Hideous Strength, he notes that “Wither and Frost and Feverstone survive the dinner and are given another chance at salvation” (123); but Wither is killed fleeing the dinner by the bear Mr. Bultitude (which Lobdell himself mentions on the next page), Frost dies in the subsequent fire, and Feverstone is never mentioned as being present.

III

The title of the first chapter, “Defining The Lord of the Rings: An Adventure Story in the Edwardian Mode” (1-24—unchanged from 1981), is an accurate summary of its content. The main “Edwardian” authors and works adduced by Lobdell as models for Tolkien are H. Rider Haggard's King Solomon's Mines, S. R. Crockett's The Black Douglas (new in the revision), G. K. Chesterton in general, and Algernon Blackwood in general—though none is suggested as a model for the whole of The Lord of the Rings, only for specific motifs. In addition to the discussion of Crockett, the revised chapter has some updated and new paragraphs. One addition, perhaps inspired by Shippey's The Author of the Century (2002) is Lobdell's statement that “I think it entirely possible that The Lord of the Rings is the last great book that will be read as the great books of old were read, for the story and as a lens through which to view our experience ….” (23). I have no quarrel with this judgment, but I am not convinced of the crucial importance of “the Edwardian mode” in understanding Tolkien's creation.

The second chapter, “The Philologist's World of The Lord of the Rings” (25-47, first of the 1979 chapters), covers much of the same ground that Tom Shippey did, more extensively, in The Road to Middle Earth (1982, rev. 2002). It too has been revised; interestingly, in the light of Lobdell's discussion in Lewis of The Dark Tower, the longest addition (27-31) is a speculative discussion of “a book that was never written—the collaboration by Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, Language and Human Nature … “ (27). An interesting comment in both editions is Lobdell's suggestion that "music provides an analogy for [Tolkien's] use of style to represent action" (39); my colleague Edward Haymes has argued recently and frequently (in public lectures, unpublished) for parallels between the Rings of Tolkien and of Wagner. Again in the third chapter the title, “The Timeless Moment in The Lord of the Rings: Christian Doctrine in a Pre-Christian Age” (49-70), expresses the core of Lobdell's
argument, to show “why a good Christian made a godless Middle Earth (it’s Christian, all right, but Incarnation and Fall are still to come.” (Richard Brookhiser, National Review, 1-22-82, p. 65). The few added paragraphs in this revision serve mainly to amplify comments made in 1981.

The most significant new material in this revision is chapter 4, “In the Far Northwest of the Old World” (71-93), but it is disappointing. For the most part, the chapter consists of Lobdell’s comments on many, if not most, of the instances in The Lord of the Rings where one of the four directions is mentioned—including the odd misunderstanding that the Anglo-Saxon phrase “Westú Théoden hál!” (Éomer’s greeting to the revived Théoden, “Be thou well, Théoden!” [Two Towers, 2nd ed., 122]) somehow relates to the fact that “the Rohirrim under Théoden ride West” (76). His conclusion is that “It is at the great set pieces in the narrative … that we see North and East and South and West laid out before us, in full—I might even say almost heraldic—significance. And we know that they are not accidental directions, but inherent in the very nature of the world’s four corners. … Each has its sacral, if not its sacred, value.” (93) Tolkien would, I think, have considered this rhetoric dangerously close to allegory.

The fifth chapter, “Tolkien’s Genius: Mind, Tongue, Tale, and Trees” (95-114), is the last of the 1979 chapters. Minimally revised, it offers mostly a reiteration of points already made, now more from the perspective of Lobdell as reader and lover of the text. He feels that “the past alive in the present … is really (in the forests) the heart of Tolkien’s world …, as it is the heart of the Edwardian mode.” (97) This is echoed specifically and personally in his concluding paragraphs. After noting that, in the recent films, “that which we so greatly feared … has come upon us—and not so ill done, some say, as we had feared,” he concludes that “somewhere … there is a corner of our mind where it is always 1966, with the Tolkiens at 76 Sandfield Road, and always the Great Years in the Third Age of Middle Earth. The timeless moment intersects our lives—both lives, in both times.” (113-114)

Lobdell’s new “Afterword: From Third Age to Our Age” (115-122) is mostly a commentary on the Peter Jackson films, with side references to his own Rise. In the fifth chapter Lobdell had noted in an aside that Tolkien’s story is “from a world that has become so much part of my experience that I should like to write in it as well.” (112) His “Appendix: A Sudden Coming, Being a Story of Later Time” (123-131) is a curious effort to realize that desire, a short allegorical tale set implicitly in Minas Tirith in the years after Aragorn’s death. The book concludes with a list of “References” (133-134) and an “Index” (135-139).

Two of the reviewers of the 1981 version of World noted Lobdell’s acknowledgement that “I speak with full recognition of the fact that I am suggesting without proof, by indirection, with nothing much to rely on besides my own confidence that I understand The Lord of the Rings better than those with whom I disagree—a confidence sometimes shaken and not always a matter of logic.” (World, xv; repeated verbatim from the 1981 version). This confession applies equally, I feel, to Lewis and to Rise. My sense of frustration with the first two books discussed here lies in good part in disappointed expectations aroused by the titles: Rise says little about Tolkien, and Lewis has little to do with science fiction. Yet both Rise and Lewis are, in spite of my often negative comments, well worth reading for their unusual perspectives on 19th- and 20th-century English literature and on Lewis’s Ransom novels. World is an interesting updating of a highly idiosyncratic view of The Lord of the Rings. Even the points where one disagrees with Lobdell’s arguments raise questions that provoke further thought. Each book, taken alone, offers as many frustrations as insights; read together, as I have done for this review, they constitute a substantive, often provocative, and certainly idiosyncratic work of criticism focusing more on the history and nature of fantasy than on Lewis or Tolkien as creators of it.

NONFICTION REVIEW

The Literary Galaxy of Star Trek

Justin Everett


Star Trek, like Star Wars and other products of the media-driven “sci-fi” movement, has been much maligned by writers and critics alike. Orson Scott Card, in a 2005 Los Angeles Times article, celebrated the “death” of Star Trek. Yet those of us who teach and write about “serious” science fiction are often also closet fans, as evidenced by the number of books, articles and college courses that focus on Trek as a popular culture and literary phenomenon. In this context it was with great
excitement that I anticipated reviewing a book with such an ostentatious title as The Literary Galaxy of Star Trek: An Analysis of References and Themes in the Television Series and Films. I was, however, soon to be disappointed.

James Broderick begins his book with an apology. He claims to have avoided the show and its fan culture and to only have returned to it after somewhat accidentally discovering its literary references. Though he boldly claims that “Star Trek IS literature,” he does not discuss its value in terms of its own literary merit (which, I admit, is dubious at times) but in terms of the ways in which it addresses or mirrors the themes of the great works of Western literature. His approach causes Star Trek not to be the object of inquiry itself, but a mirror for reflecting on various works of “canonized” literature. While I learned something about the places in Star Trek where the great works are engaged, Broderick’s book did little to enlighten the study of Star Trek itself.

The fault may not lie as much in the book’s approach as in the thinness of the analysis. In 233 pages, the author covers 24 separate “themes.” This comes to about eight pages dedicated to each “theme.” Some of these “themes” are significant and would have been better served if they had been properly researched and developed. It would have been far better to discuss fewer of these “themes” in greater depth so that the reader would come away with a greater understanding of the text as opposed to the superficial and “top-of-the-head” treatment that each of these topics is given. I would also like to point out that not all of these are themes in the formal sense of dianoia, of thought, idea, or line of argument. Many address motifs and other elements of fiction, though the reader is not informed of these differences.

Let me pose one example. Chapter 5, “The Way of the West,” is a good example of a missed opportunity. The chapter does not address a theme in the formal sense of the word, but the plot and character elements normally associated with the Western. Even these treatments are superficial. Here was the perfect opportunity for the author to address manifest destiny, a theme that permeates American literature and is played out significantly throughout all of the incarnations of Star Trek. This chapter presents the reader with another flaw: the glaring overabundance of plot summary (both of works of Western literature and individual Star Trek episodes). Within each chapter there is much summary and little of the “analysis” promised by the book’s subtitle. What analysis does exist is not contextualized within any recognizable critical tradition. Research clearly did not play a significant role in the writing of this book.

It was not just Star Trek that was treated superficially in this book. When literature is mined for its themes, the discussions often take the form of summaries, followed by summaries of parallel treatments in Trek episodes. In cases where some analysis was provided, the information was sometimes misleading. In Chapter 20, “The Quest for Perfection,” Broderick writes, “Like Utopia, Star Trek often seeks to provide a blueprint for a better way of living,” a statement which largely ignores the ironic nature of More’s work. Though he briefly acknowledges differences between the two approaches, the analysis is brief and disappointing. The idea of Utopia is a dominant theme in Star Trek, which—contrary to popular understanding of this theme in the Trek canon—is treated differently in various episodes. Some, like “The Paradise Syndrome,” embrace the idea of utopia, while others present it as dysfunctional.

On a final note, I would like to comment on the weakness of style throughout this book. While it seems apparent that the author was attempting to address a lay rather than academic audience, his tongue-in-cheek style and occasionally awkward, blundered sentences does not make the book more entertaining or readable. In fact, I found that the style called attention to itself to the point of irritation. As I read each chapter, I anticipated with increasing dread what clichéd subtleties and awkward sentences would lie on the next page.

The greatest weakness of The Literary Galaxy of Star Trek: An Analysis of References and Themes in the Television Series and Films is perhaps that it attempts to do too much. As a result, no single theme is treated with the depth and attention it deserves. Any one of these themes could have made a book in itself. I cannot recommend this book for anyone who is interested in serious inquiry into the Star Trek phenomenon, though it might be handy, in a superficial way, for identifying themes for teaching purposes. I would also not recommend this book for undergraduate students out of a fear that students might emulate the superficiality of its discussions. This work, though it promises much with its bold title, I must view as a missed opportunity.
Deliverer
Edward Carmien


In this the (felicitous?) ninth novel of Cherryh's Foreigner series there is once again a threat to the stability of the Atevi government. Bren Cameron, human translator to that government, is of course in the thick of things, as is the irrepressibly grumpy yet lovable grandmother of the Atevi leader, Ilisidi. Only recently returned from space (along with the Atevi leader's son, Cajeiri, who grew quite fond of humans during his sojourn) and still recovering from un-couping the coup that occurred while they were away, it isn't long before the main characters must confront those naughty easterners who continue the process of destabilizing things begun by the usurper Murini, still on the run after Tabini returns to power.

If this sounds like the tip of an awfully big iceberg of plot and counterplot, one's ears do not deceive. Deliverer continues the now episodic storyline established in Foreigner more than a decade ago; recent novels have become less complete novels in their own right and more complex chapters in an ongoing story. Cherryh's management of this shift to episodic fiction has been uneven, as particularly noted in book 8, Pretender, which suffered from underplotting and a lack of participation in ongoing interesting events by the primary viewpoint characters.

Happily, Deliverer represents a defter hand at the wheel. Cherryh finally avoids presenting “here's what happened in the past” material early in the novel, a logical and very welcome choice. In addition to Cameron's narrative viewpoint we now are privileged to hear the story from Cajeiri's perspective. This is a welcome addition to the narrative flow, as it places more action into the reader's view. In addition, this allows Cherryh to provide the reader with Cajeiri's unique observations, as an atevi, about the human/atevi interface. Bren Cameron has spent a lot of time helping raise the heir to the Western Association during their two years in space, and during that time the boy formed strong atevi-like (at least on his side) associations with a group of human children. While he snapped into his biologically destined role as a focal point for man’chi in Pretender, accumulating two atevi followers, he is still a child and misses his space-journey human pals quite a bit.

Such human association is anathema to more conservative atevi elements, of course, so it is lucky Ilisidi has had such a strong hand in his political and social education, skills and knowledge. These things serve him well in the events of Deliverer. Aside from Cajeiri's storyline (told with an entertaining flavor that comes from his exposure to human action films), Bren is of course still a player in the game, and serves in a pivotal role in restoring harmony to the tangled world of atevi governance.

Readers familiar with the series will be rewarded as usual with a mention or two of Bren's now long-term relationship with his bodyguard, Jago. In addition, there is a somewhat mechanical and predictable interaction with his brother, Toby. Ilisidi carries on in her usual manner—naturally, mecheta (riding beasts) and a daunting journey are involved. In many of these, Cherryh's narrative restraint continues to operate. For example, there are no steamy descriptions of sex: describing the ongoing and warm status of Bren and Jago's relationship seems to be sufficient.

Even readers accustomed to this restraint may find themselves annoyed by a choice Cherryh makes here. After dangling hint after hint throughout the novel, a key thing goes largely undescribed. It will come as no surprise that the book ends with a small-arms firefight in difficult terrain and conditions—such is a staple of the Foreigner series—but it is quite disappointing that the thing, so painstakingly foreshadowed throughout the book, is only vaguely described, despite having a pivotal role at a key moment of heart-pounding conflict. The fact that what this thing is echoes all the way back to the very first novel in the series makes its fuzziness even more aggravating.

Cherryh's deft hand with palpably alien aliens (to readers steeped in a Euro-American perspective, at least) continues to attract, as do the ongoing lives of her cast of characters in the Foreigner series. If too many things seem to possess script immunity, it may be that Cherryh, having now clearly ventured into the world of series fiction, may wish to review the lessons of the greats in this field. John D. McDonald's Travis McGee series, although now quite dated, is a good example of how series characters can live in a changing world without losing appeal in the eyes of a reading audience. Tony Hillerman's Navajo detective books, featuring Lt. Leaphorn and Jim Chee, are another such example. While Flash may never be seen consummating his love for Dale, McGee ages, Leaphorn "retires," Mary Russell grows up and marries her Holmes, Hornblower gets promoted, and so on.

Even with a presumption of script immunity for key characters and plot elements, the finale here is rousing, though
one is roused within the strong confines of Victorian-like restraint. Cajeiri's narrative and Bren's rejoin with droll abandon and
one is again left with a yen to move on to the next chapter—errr, "book," of the series, this time with the added tension of
wondering how and where Cherryh will continue the overarching story of a human enclave on an atevi planet set in a corner
of the galaxy that now has both friendly and unfriendly parties in nearby space. As I have mentioned in several reviews of
books in this series, Deliverer is not a suitable starting point for readers interested in Cherryh, a prolific and important science
fiction author. See Foreigner instead, still in print and available on bookshelves. However, once hooked, beware: eventually,
gentle reader, you will end up in Deliverer's clutches…and be left after that with a yen to wonder what will happen in book 10.

**FICTION REVIEW**

**The Android's Dream**

Jason W. Ellis


John Scalzi, recipient of the 2006 John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer in Science Fiction, pens a humorous,
often tongue-in-cheek, pop culture laden amalgamation of space opera and cyberpunk with a dash of military action and law
in his latest offering, *The Android's Dream*. The story revolves around Harris Creek, a computer geek turned soldier turned
diplomat, burdened with the duty of protecting a woman named Robin Baker, because she is the last remaining being carrying
DNA from a type of sheep known as The Android's Dream. Her protection is tantamount to preventing a war between Earth
and a reptilian species known as the Nidu, which are reminiscent of *Farscape*'s Scarren mixed with the family-clan culture of *Star
Trek*'s Klingons. The plot begins with noir inspired subterfuge and investigation and then explodes with an evading the bad
guys vector inspired by SF films such as *Total Recall* and *Minority Report*.

There is a tradeoff between action and dramatic content in *The Android's Dream*, which makes it a much lighter novel
than the author's *Old Man's War* series. However, it is much more in line with his blogging style on *Whatever: Taunting the*
*Tauntable Since 1998*. His taunting of cultural references, some cleverly dressed and others bald-faced, as well as invoking a
variety of SF themes goes beyond the postmodernism of works such as Stephenson's *Snow Crash*. Nonetheless, Scalzi does
borrow from Stephenson's work by projecting a similar story structure into the stars while maintaining a level of irreverence
essential to the narrative. Though, the author takes irreverence to a far higher level through his witticisms, colorful metaphors,
and joke making.

Regardless of the novel beginning with a twenty-page fart joke that actually delivers a laugh-out-loud punch line, it
does contain some elements that are worthy of serious academic consideration. The most cogent and thought provoking of
these concerns law in SF and the rights of the individual. The Nidu attempt to take possession of Robin by asserting their
property rights of The Android's Dream sheep DNA contained in her body. These passages evoke contemporary legal issues
surrounding property rights enforced by patents and the rights of the individual in an increasingly biomedical age. Addition-
ally, the author further challenges the sovereignty of the individual nested within the world state as well as the interplanetary
Common Confederation, which is upheld through state and business interest treaties. Another element is the author's
concise, though blunt, mirroring of off-world aliens with the American immigrant experience. In one example, Scalzi men-
tions a "Teha middlesex" in a passage describing the alien neighborhoods (85). Despite differences in literary meaning, I
wouldn't be surprised if this juxtaposition directly references Jeffrey Eugenides' *Middlesex*, which is, in part, about the early
twentieth-century immigrant experience in America. A final element worth looking at is the depiction of the two artificial
intelligences: Brian, a search agent based on Creek's dead best friend, and Andrea Hayter-Ross, the muse of the founder of the
Church of the Evolved Lamb. In many ways, these two AI characters are just people trapped in the system. However, Scalzi
goes deeper than that in several, albeit short, passages that question the nature of self, replication of the self through brain
modeling, and the divide between a digital copy of the self and the continuation of life, however brief, of the physical self.

*The Android's Dream* does have a bit of serious SF meat on its bones, but it isn't intended as a critical SF work, even
by the author's own admission. It's an entertaining and fast read that engages a few topics worthy of further investigation. In
addition to some SF scholars using the novel in their work, I can see it being employed in undergraduate survey courses,
because it's exciting and it covers a variety of themes that can be further explored in other works. Libraries in need of a bit of
light entertainment for the reading room should also carry *The Android's Dream*. Having said that, I should mention the novel
carries an implicit warning: Will Provoke Laughter!

Roberts' latest novel is an engaging and dynamic near-future thriller. Ranging over three generations during the late 21st and early 22nd century, the novel depicts the emergence of “the uplands,” near-earth orbit populated by wealthy hobbyists and enthusiasts, as an independent political body. The men and women staking their claims in the uplands have come under their own power and without national or corporate endorsement. Wealthy hobbyists, reclusives, and refugees are not people who work or play well with others. Yet as shifting political and economic developments on Earth bring long-simmering conflicts to a head, the wealth and the tactical strengths of the uplands begin to look like extremely tempting targets to the military powers of the United States and the European Union.

Against that historical backdrop, the novel follows three generations of a family working out a complicated pattern of vengeance and power. The centerpiece of the story is the enigmatic but compelling Gradisil, whose emergence as the *de facto* President of the Uplands both drives and is driven by the growing tensions with the American military. Gradisil's mother, Klara, dominates Part One of the novel. Her father was one of the first hobbyists to begin setting up housekeeping in the Uplands, but is murdered by a mysterious figure who may or may not be a notorious mass murderer. Klara's youth and the physical realities of the Uplands, where scores of kilometers separate neighbors and houses can be hidden simply by shifting orbit, make bringing her father's killer to justice impossible, but she never surrenders her desire for revenge. In Part Three, Gradisil's sons Hope and Sol seek their own revenge against the man they feel betrayed their mother. This multi-generational saga takes on the rich complexity of Greek tragedy, and Roberts mines the emotional and psychological strata revealed here successfully.

*Gradisil* generally does a good job of balancing the thriller mode with hard-SF space opera. The growing confrontation between the United States and the Uplands encourages comparisons with contemporary conditions, and here the novel occasionally edges into satire, not always effectively. Other reviewers have noted that Vice-President Johannes Belvedere III is reminiscent of Dick Cheney, and Roberts' characterization of coalescing military, industrial, and legal institutions is biting and funny, although this element can be distracting at times. The first part of the novel, Klara's story, is more personal and character-driven; before the Uplands become a tempting target, they are an unforgiving wasteland drawing adventurers and hermits alike. As Klara discovers that she is isolated more by her private pain and anger than by the vast distances separating the colonists, she has to make difficult choices about just where her loyalties lie.

Roberts handles the space opera mode a bit more confidently than he does the political intrigue. The novel's title, the name of its central character, is derived from the Norse myth of the World Tree Yggdrasill, which stretches from the underworld to the heavens. This becomes a metaphor for the lines of magnetic force branching from the Earth which serve the Uplanders as both path and power for reaching orbit. Eschewing the costly, clumsy rockets employed by NASA, the Uplanders have developed “elemag” planes that allow them to fly to and from their homes above the Earth at will. The technologies of traveling to and living in orbit are plausible enough to be richly intriguing, and Roberts makes the prospect of living in orbit comparable to American pioneers settling the open stretches of western prairie. The speculations about the day-to-day struggles of living in orbit are fascinating, especially when one principal character finds himself decelerating out of orbit wearing nothing but an incomplete spacesuit.

Roberts deploys a range of narrators over the course of this novel, and perhaps the chief criticism of the work as a whole is the manner in which these choices distance the reader from the major characters. It's difficult to sympathize fully with any of the individuals we meet, and while this lends the novel depth, it does risk alienating the reader. Klara tells part one in her own voice that, as she matures in the shadow of her frustrated desire for revenge, becomes increasingly disaffected and cold. The central section is shared between a third person narrator describing the military characters responsible for the American assault on the Uplands and Paul Caunes, Gradisil's husband. That we never have direct access to Gradisil's thoughts or motives is undoubtedly necessary to Roberts' perception of the role she has to play, but Paul's complicated relationship with his wife and her cause often makes him seem petty and weak rather than genuinely conflicted. Hope, the central figure of the third section, is not much more engaging, vacillating between revenge and forgiveness almost to the point of paralysis.

Roberts also experiments with language for reasons that are not always clear. Klara's section is refreshingly free from the
labored argot that marks so much recent space opera; typically the terminology surrounding new technologies or social practices is either readily apparent or adequately explained. In part two, set a few decades later, the characters' vocabulary is a bit more idiosyncratic, although not to the point of alienation. However, Roberts also begins changing the spelling of some words, dropping a letter from digraph pairs, so that “black” becomes “blak” and “what” becomes “wat.” This is consistent across quoted speech, Paul's first-person narration, and the third-person narration of the military chapters. This is taken a step further in part three, in which the gerund ending “-ing” becomes “-in’.” Since the sounds of the words are affected only a little, if at all, it's hard to understand the purpose of this choice; it does indicate the changing time periods of the novel, but it does not seem to accomplish much more than that.

Despite these concerns, Gradiisol tells an engrossing story, intertwining imagery of Norse saga, the thematic drive of classical Greek tragedy, and the technophilia of contemporary space opera. It is one of six novels nominated for the 2007 Arthur C. Clarke Award, and certainly deserves that distinction.

**FICTION REVIEW**

**Rollback**

Geetha B


Rollback, the latest novel by the Hugo and Nebula award winning SF author Robert J Sawyer, has a thoroughly engaging story line even when it deals with some ethical and moral questions waiting on the threshold of our technological advancements. The novel deals with the implications of ‘rollback’— a hugely expensive experimental rejuvenation procedure. Sawyer, known for his examination of philosophical and ethical problems that come with advancing technology, tries to explore these issues on both human and cosmic scales.

The novel is set in the near future, the year 2048 A.D. Central to the plot is the message of aliens from Sigma Draconis, first received in the year 2010. Now after 38 Earth years, there is another message received by Earth in response to what Earth had sent back in 2010. The protagonist Sarah Halifax, an ET researcher, is the only person on Earth who could decode the alien message the first time. In response to the communication from the aliens, Earth had sent filled in questionnaires; one of the responses had been Sarah’s. Even after 38 years, at the age of 87 years, she remains pivotal to any communication with this alien race as there is nobody around who can decode the second message. And that is the reason for a ‘rollback’ on Sarah. Not only to decipher this message, but, if she is around for 38 more years, she could still decode the message from Sigma Draconis and this chain of communication would continue. Otherwise, in all likelihood, the message from the aliens may go unanswered.

The human element of the plot stems from the rejuvenation of Sarah that the wealthy industrialist and SETI enthusiast McGavin offers to pay for. Sarah is ready to go for it on the condition that the procedure of ‘rollback’ is done on Don. As McGavin has realized the importance of Sarah in this communication with aliens, he agrees to pay for Don too. However, in an ironic twist of events, the procedure works on Don and not on Sarah.

Through the flashbacks throughout the novel, we are told how loving a couple Sarah and Don have been. Their sixty years of married life have been spent in synch and now Don becoming once again youthful, ‘physically twenty five’ with high levels of testosterone, his libido high, there are issues now they have to face. Yes, for Don it feels great to feel really ‘alive’ once again; yet it is a bit depressing as Sarah now cannot share this life of his; not respond to his revived appetite for sex. Through the portrayal of highly evolved characters Sawyer examines issues that crop up in such a situation. The feeling of guilt that Don suffers from when he gets involved with Lenore — a SETI researcher working in the same lab in which Sarah used to work years ago — is very real. Don also feels the burden that Lenore is being wronged in this relationship due to his inability to be hundred percent in it. He breaks up when the guilt becomes too much for him to deal with. Sarah, even when she has inklings about the relationship, never makes it an issue. Though she is angry at the circumstances that forced such a twist to their relationship, she perfectly understands rejuvenated Don’s needs for a life of sheer physicality. In one of her conversations with Gunter, the housebot (essentially a robot), she points out that if it had been her and not Don who had gotten rolled back, she would have left him by now! Sawyer, noted for his attention to the development of individual characters, does it well in *Rollback* too. Characters are not submerged in the deluge of issues of cosmic scale. Even Lenore’s character is not incidental. Don’s rolled back life is intricately connected to hers and in the last chapter, set in the year 2067, we see the picture perfect family of Don, Lenore, their daughter and two Draclings- teenagers of Draconian origin!
The human interest is thus kept alive throughout the book. However Sawyer does more: he examines issues of larger significance. One such is the question of altruism and communication with ET. Through references to the ‘Selfish Gene’ theory of Richard Dawkins' and discussions between Sarah and Don on “Encoding Altruism: The Art and Science of Interstellar Message Composition”, Sawyer is close to expressing an opinion. The book points out how encoding altruism is the fundamental basis for SETI. The discussion then moves on to how evolution eventually gives rise to technology, which has a survival value up to a point; once technologies of mass destruction are readily available, the psychology that Darwinian engine forces on life forms almost inevitably leads to their downfall. Sawyer insightfully reasons out that encoding altruism in communication with aliens would be a deciding factor to have any further interactions with ET.

The book carefully handles two main science fictional ideas: the technology of rollback and communication with ET. Sawyer mostly succeeds to sail between human and cosmic perspectives. However, there are instances when the reader is not fully convinced of the logic. One such instance is when we are told that of all the thousand different responses sent from Earth, Draconians have found only Sarah's response to be close to their expectations. Also, the bit about the second message that was meant exclusively for Sarah, that the idea that Draconians could not trust it with anybody else makes one somewhat skeptical. The only justification one can think of is that a discussion on issues related to rollback necessitate Sarah to be pivotal in the whole process of communication with ET and Sawyer is forced to take it up.

Another such instance is when Don and Sarah try to figure out the reason behind Draconians' sending of the genome code. It is reasoned that the Draclings would grow up to be ambassadors from Sigma Draconis who once grown up would send messages to their home planet. One wonders if it is possible for them to retain a Draconian perspective after having been brought up by human parents. Is it not difficult to resist the human influence in their outlook is a question which has not been answered in the book.

Sarah (who manages to decipher the genome coding) entrusts Don with the job of bringing up the Draclings modeled according to the coding sent by the aliens. Sarah's pact with Mc Gavin to provide for all the expenses needed for the building of the artificial womb, the synthesizing of the DNA etc. keeps one wondering what business sense it makes to Mc Gavin. It seems sensible to ask whether communication with ET is worth the effort if finally it is one Don, a Sarah or Lenore who would have sole proprietorship! There seems to be a confusion caused mainly due to the juxtaposition of the moral, ethical issues at both the human and cosmic scales.

All in all, Rollback is an interesting, well-told story with beautiful characterization. The genuine attempt to discuss the moral conundrums makes it yet another engaging book by Sawyer that plays to the readers' intellect as well as emotion. Sawyer believes in finishing the story without any loose ends.

**Fiction Review**

**Sun of Suns**

Dominick Grace


*Sun of Suns*, the first volume of the Virga trilogy, was published in hardback in October 2006, and is due out in paperback in Summer 2007. Schroeder's fourth novel and first foray into trilogy territory is a lean and economical adventure story that focuses on action without skimping (much) on Schroeder's usual wild concepts or characterization.

Virga is a constructed hollow world, a giant gas balloon powered by an artificial sun (referred to in the title) located in its center and inhabited by various communities living in constructed environments, some incorporating asteroids. The far-future technology required to create such a world takes a back seat to the more nineteenth-century-style (for the most part) technologies these communities create. Their cities, for instance, are built of wood and given artificial gravity via rotation powered by motorized “bikes.” Schroeder imagines a far-future steam punk world, with most of the social and technological elements making up these communities reminiscent of earlier historical periods. The communities loosely resemble colonial powers, though they are more like city-states than full-fledged nations, and the vast air-space of Virga is like nothing more than the seas such powers crossed to build their empires. Indeed, their vast fleets are called navies, pirates proliferate, and the action is reminiscent as much of C. S. Forester or Patrick O'Brian as it is of classic Space Opera.

The plot is driven by conflicts between these city-states. The novel begins with a small one, Aerie, attempting to win independence from a larger one, Slipstream, that has absorbed it, by creating its own mini-sun, thereby providing for itself a
power source and freeing it from dependence. This plan is thwarted, the new sun exploded, and the traitors or freedom fighters, depending in one’s point of view, including the parents of the protagonist, Hayden Griffen, killed in the blast. A major narrative strand involves Hayden’s infiltration of the Slipstream air navy in a quest for vengeance against Chaisson Fanning, now admiral of the fleet but the commander of the attack that killed Hayden’s parents. Hayden is very much in the Luke Skywalker vein, even having a climactic sword duel with the true architect of his parents’ death, and the novel is reminiscent of classic Space Opera (I found myself thinking of books like Jack Williamson’s *Legion of Space* while reading it), so much so that some of the nods to contemporary taste (e.g. the occasional profanity) seemed somewhat out of place.

However, there is much more to the novel than the basic growth to maturity of the questing hero we follow in the figure of Hayden. Another major character is a visitor from outside Virga, a representative of more technologically advanced cultures that live in what the novel calls Artificial Nature (a “reality” heavily interpenetrated by virtual reality, as in Schroeder’s previous novel, *Lady of Mazes*). Her true mission remains unknown for most of the book, but the designs of the outside world on Virga will clearly feature prominently in subsequent volumes. What is evident is that the conflicting factions within Virga will face a much larger threat of absorption and perhaps annihilation from without, as their hitherto protected status (outsiders can visit, but technological interpenetration is strictly prohibited, as Virga is maintained as a kind of wilderness preserve/native reservation) is challenged, an ironic contrast with the internal attempts of the different communities to take each other over.

Here the novel adopts a more complex and interrogatory stance towards the imperialist tropes common in Space Opera. While there are more and less admirable characters in the novel, Hayden’s initial view of Slipstream as the Evil Empire is compromised and ultimately undercut. Indeed, the irony of his view of the Slipstreamers who destroyed Aerie as “traitors” foregrounds the extent to which concepts of loyalty and betrayal are culturally specific; a Slipstreamer who fights for Slipstream is no more a traitor than is (say) an Iraqi who fights for Iraq. Unquestioning loyalty to a cause is problematized as the novel proceeds, with Hayden eventually becoming as much a reluctant ally of the Slipstreamers as an opponent to them. For one thing, he recognizes that the Slipstream conflict with other of the city-states will not serve the interests of reviving Aerie if Slipstream loses. A major battle with Falcon Formation, one of these other communities, and possessed of a new super-weapon (albeit not quite a Death Star), takes up another major narrative strand, in which Hayden’s quest for revenge is sidetracked into a sort of treasure hunt (complete with pursuing pirates) to acquire another super-weapon, this one advanced technology (by Virgan standards) with which the Falcon fleet can be defeated. Furthermore, by the end of the novel, Hayden has grown beyond something as simplistic as the search for revenge (which the novel suggests is as simplistic as unthinking nationalism), actually sparing the life of another killer—a killer whose action was necessary to the survival of Virga but whose victim was dear to Hayden.

In short, Schroeder here provides all the earmarks of operatic action and adventure, which he renders in expertly plotted and thrilling detail. But he also colors the adventure with subtle explorations of more complex political and psychological issues. *Sun of Suns* is by no means a philosophical tract or character study (indeed, Schroeder seems to have taken some pains to have his characters speak in the sort of witty banter of the action/adventure genre), but it is certainly much more than a thriller. It is an exciting novel, constructed to keep the reader engaged and turning the pages, but it offers pleasures beyond the visceral, and it offers food for thought as well as excitement. Admirers of Schroeder, as well as of the Space Opera models in the works of writers such as David Brin or Dan Simmons should like this book, but any serious reader of SF should find it rewarding as well.
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