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News Items:

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 nominees for the Sunburst Award for Canadian Literature of the Fantastic have been named. The prize is presented annually for Canadian speculative fiction and includes a cash prize of $1,000 and a hand-crafted medallion which incorporates the “Sunburst” logo, designed by Marcel Gagné. Fabrizio’s Return, by Mark Frutkin; Keturah and Lord Death, by Martine Leavitt; The Droughtlanders, by Carrie Mac; Blindsight, by Peter Watts; Before I Wake, by Robert Wiersema.

The nominees for the John W. Campbell Memorial Award have been announced. This award is for best science fiction and has been presented since 1973. It will be presented at the Campbell Conference Awards Banquet in Lawrence, KS the weekend of July 6-8. Titan, by Ben Bova; A Small and Remarkable Life, by Nick DiChario; Infoquake, by David Louis Edelman; Nova Swing, by M. John Harrison; Odyssey, by Jack McDevitt; The Last Witchfinder, by James Morrow; Living Next Door to the God of Love, by Justina Robson; Dry, by Barbara Sapergia; Sun of Suns, by Karl Schroeder; Glasshouse, by Charles Stross; Rainbow’s End, by Vernor Vinge; Farthing, by Jo Walton; Blindsight, by Peter Watts.

SFRA BUSINESS

Editor’s Message
Ed Carmien

On behalf of Christine Mains and the SFRA Review staff, welcome to our Heinlein focus issue. Timed to coincide with our visit to Kansas City, where we are co-conferencing with the exciting Heinlein Centennial, much of the content touches on the work of one of science fiction’s main movers and shakers. First, what don’t we have in this issue? No full-blown Approaches to Teaching Heinlein article, unfortunately. Despite calls for such an item, nothing darkened our door. Kudos and appreciation go out to Warren Rochelle, Edra Bogle, James Gunn, and most especially Margaret McBride, however, who shared thoughts and observations about teaching Heinlein.

Clearly, we are thinking about teaching Heinlein, as the detailed and thoughtful comments we received show. As many of us report teaching Heinlein in our science fiction courses, it may have proved difficult to separate thoughts of teaching Heinlein from teaching science fiction in general. This reflects the size and depth of the critical shadow he casts on the field.

That shadow extends into the realm of contemporary publishing. It proved far easier to find Heinlein-related fiction to discuss in this issue. Just as politicians invoke Lincoln, editors and publicists invoke Heinlein to make a particular point about the wished-for reading experience. New authors are sold to the reading public with that magic word, “Heinlein” in the press release and back cover copy, and from that we readers expect—what? Some of our reviewers help answer that question.

Whether you’re a Heinlein Centennial attendee reading a SFRA Review for the first time, or a long-time member, we think there is something here of interest and use here. Enjoy—and join the conversation.

SFRA BUSINESS

President’s Message
Adam Frisch

If, as Ken MacLeod claims in a recent issue of Foundation, “science fiction is an argument with the world” (Spring, 2007, p. 13), then the job of our association is to re-search sf works in an attempt to clarify and highlight the content and claims of those arguments, their various strategies of debate, and the interconnections that have arisen within the sf genre across the history of its discourse. Thus this summer’s annual SFRA Conference in Kansas City, which joins the Heinlein Centennial and Campbell Conferences in “Celebrating the Golden Age of Science Fiction,” should help all of us re-discover our genre’s “baselines” by re-examining many of our genre’s classics.

Such re-illumination has already begun for me, as on a recent Sunday evening I read through the Acceptance Speech sent to me by this year’s Pilgrim winner, Algis Budrys. A major writer and critic during sf’s Golden Age, Algis is physically unable now to attend events like our Kansas City meeting. But he uses his Pilgrim opportunity to look back at one of the key figures of that era whom he knew personally, John Campbell. Reading his remarks, I began to see a different John Campbell / Don Stuart than the author and editor I have so often presented to my students in the past. Budrys sees Campbell as a much “wilder” figure than he is normally considered, who may have even suggested certain story lines—such as the one underlining Clive Cartmill’s famous “Deadline” story that
posits the secret development of an “atomic bomb”—as “test runs” to see what his wartime government was up to in the way of technology. The Review will reprint Algis’s entire speech in its fall issue, but in this current issue there are already a number of reviews and reflections on Heinlein-related and other Past-Masters-related material that celebrate SF’s Golden Age and begin for all of us this same re-illumination process.

When I joined SFRA back in 1978, it was with the attention to keep up to date with the latest trends in SF and SF scholarship, so that I might someday produce worthwhile academic appraisals of the latest arguments contemporary SF writers were having with our world. Little did I suspect that in my eager anticipation of SF’s future I would, as Nick Carraway finds out at the end of *Gatsby*, be “borne back ceaselessly into the past.”

**SPECIAL FEATURES**

**Approaches to Teaching Heinlein**

Margaret McBride, Warren Rochelle, Edra Bogle, James Gunn

**Margaret McBride:**

I have taught works by Robert Heinlein a number of times at the University of Oregon. The majority of the students are not English majors and most have not read much science fiction. Below are a few comments on the context in which I taught his fiction and some of the questions I used to start discussion and to spark essays from the students. As can probably be told from the wording of the questions, I began the classes with discussion of terms, theories, etc. that could help someone new to the science fiction genre.

A. *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*—used in a general junior-senior level science fiction class. The focus was on how the novels presented government and political concerns. *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* was taught in conjunction with *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by Philip K. Dick, *The Dispossessed* by Ursula K. LeGuin, *Red Mars* by Kim Stanley Robinson, and *The Color of Distance* by Amy Thomson. The comparisons between these novels worked well to generate discussion.

1. Describe the society as depicted in the first 1/3 of the book. What clues does Heinlein give as to how it evolved—language, history, etc.? What are some factors that determine how the culture works, what people cherish, how they dress, how they treat others, etc.?

2. Write a “character” description of Mike.

3. Heinlein has been given credit as one of the early SF writers who included different racial groups in his future, yet the people in this book use racial stereotypes. Why do you think his characterization includes these aspects?

4. Heinlein gives lots of details about “little” things—food, dress, how marriage works, etc. What is the effect of this description—both on how you react to the plot, world and people and as a narrative device?

5. Write a character description of the Professor—what he believes, how he treats others, how others feel about him, his foibles, how believable he seems, etc.

6. The book has a fairly large number of minor characters. Describe two—how they are developed, how believable they are, what is their importance to plot or themes, etc.

7. In Chapter 22 Man implies he is writing the story because the material in the history books is so wrong. What does that statement suggest about his character, what themes might Heinlein have been implying?


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This year’s Nebula Awards were announced at the Nebula Banquet in New York on May 12. Novel: Seeker, by Jack McDevitt; Novella: Burn, by James Patrick Kelly; Novelette: Two Hearts, by Peter Beagle; Short Story: Echo, by Elizabeth Hand; Script: Howl’s Moving Castle, by Hayao Miyazaki, Cindy Davis Hewitt, and Donald H. Hewitt; Andre Norton Award: Magic or Madness, by Justine Larbelestier.

The Arthur C. Clarke Award for best science fiction novel published in the UK has been presented to M. John Harrison for his novel Nova Swing.

8. Analyze the presentation of ideas about how to organize a society or what makes a good government. Which ones make sense; which ones do you have problems with and why?
9. Some people have described Heinlein’s view of human nature in this book as cynical. What evidence do you see for and against that idea?
10. Some critics consider this to be Heinlein’s best book. What qualities do you see that deserve such praise or do you disagree? You can compare the book to other SF or to your standards for literature in general.
11. Heinlein’s books, especially his later ones, have gotten a lot of criticism because of issues with the way he depicts women characters and the relationships between men and women. Yet compared to other SF of his time, he had more women characters who are integral to plot and who are usually intelligent and competent women. What is your reaction to this issue for The Moon is a Harsh Mistress? Did you find yourself having trouble reading it with today’s sensibilities or would you be more apt to praise his intentions? Be sure to analyze some specific incidents or characters.

B. Red Planet—for a freshman class examining science fiction about Mars.
1. How would you characterize the human society (government, family life, economics, etc.)? What clues does Heinlein give?
2. What seems to be the role and character of women in the Mars human society? How might this characterization have been influenced by the time, the audience, etc. that Heinlein was writing for?
3. Describe the science and environmental aspects of Mars. Which ones seem appropriate for the time the book was written and which ones seem outdated even for the 40s? What effect is created by the elements Heinlein includes?
4. This novel was intended mainly for teen male readers. What thematic elements do you see Heinlein including and how—what makes a good society, how is a “man” supposed to behave, etc.—and how are they directed to that audience?
5. Of the themes and common tropes that have been a part of Mars fiction in what we have read so far, which ones do you see Heinlein using and for what purpose? How does he shape/change them?

C. “All You Zombies”—in a junior/senior level class on “classic” Science Fiction, written before 1965.
1. John Campbell, in commenting on the earlier writers he most liked, noted their “remarkable technique of presenting a great deal of background and associated material without intruding into the flow of the story.” James Gunn in a later essay quoting Campbell says this assessment applied most to Heinlein. Analyze how Heinlein evokes a new milieu in this story. What do you know about this new time/world and what is only hinted at? What things seem not to have changed? How do the novums affect the plot, theme, etc.?
2. Some critics have suggested that the story is a metaphor for being a writer. What seems valid or invalid about that idea? If that was intended, what might Heinlein be suggesting about writing—particularly SF writing?
3. Analyze the ByLaws of Time. What do they add to the story and what is being extrapolated from? The narrator suggests they are less inspiring than when he was younger. What is inspiring about them and for whom/what reason?

Warren Rochelle:
I was surprised to remember that I have only taught Heinlein once—back in the summer of 1998, when I was a post-doc teaching fellow at UNC Greensboro and teaching English 105 (Intro to Narrative Fiction) in summer.
school because I needed the money. The theme of the class that summer was Evil (no, I don’t remember why I picked that one) and one of the novels I taught was Podkayne of Mars. The evil that Podkayne faced, as anyone who has read the novel will remember, are those forces that are trying to get Senator Fries to vote a certain way at an upcoming conference on Earth—if he gets there at all. Mrs. Grew is a wonderful evil old lady. Some questions we considered—I think—would be is Clark evil—he certainly seems amoral, or at least completely self-serving? How naive is Podkayne? Is the universe benign or malevolent or indifferent? And, in the end, which ending is the most true? Most of the students, if I remember right, voted to keep Poddie alive.

I am trying to remember other Heinlein works I have taught—as a teaching intern, “The Roads Must Roll,” but I didn’t have direct responsibility for that.

This semester, in a freshman seminar on utopia, while I didn’t teach Heinlein, I found myself referencing him when we talked about libertarianism.

Edra Bogle:

Some years ago—quite a few—I used ‘Star Maker’ in a graduate-level course in Science Fiction as the first entire novel we read. (We also used an anthology of short stories and had read a few items, such as Hawthorne or Verne, in chronological order.) What particularly struck me was that during the rest of the semester the class found elements of the Stapledon book in many of the other titles they read, both full-length and short works. In particular such elements showed up in the books individuals chose from a fairly long list for a paper and brief oral report, one title to a person. I had also described the ideas in other Stapledon novels such as ‘Odd John’ and ‘Sirius’ and students referred to these books, too, as forerunners in their reports.

I would have repeated the choice when, maybe five years later, I got another graduate level sf course, but the book was out of print at that time. (In undergraduate courses I didn’t take a chronological approach, so it seemed less appropriate.)

James Gunn:

One of the approaches that I acquired from my late, lamented colleague and team-teacher Steve Goldman was the way in which Heinlein’s hierarchical authority issues are addressed in novels such as The Puppet Masters (one of the 25 novels I teach in alternate summers). Sam makes mistake after mistake in the early chapters of the novel and is saved by the Old Man’s shrewd judgment but, as the novel proceeds, Sam learns wisdom from his father and gradually makes better decisions until he takes over the interrogation of his wife, learns how to defeat the Masters, and finally rescues his father from the Master and their roles become reversed.

There are other issues to be explored, such as the echoes of the Communist menace, the way in which being taken over by a Puppet Master represents a fate worse than death to a Libertarian such as Heinlein, and Heinlein’s treatment of the Competent Person in a time of crisis and the necessity to break the bonds of bureaucracy and the incompetent people, but I find the role of the old in tutoring the young until they become competent echoes throughout Heinlein’s work and nowhere more than in The Puppet Masters, which also can be approached as a well-made novel on several levels. And, as a curiosity, the scene in which the Old Man persuades Sam to assume his Master once more has a fascinating parallel to the scene in The African Queen in which Allnut goes back into the leech-filled swamp.
The popularity of Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* films gave an excuse for academics to publish new articles and books on Tolkien. When filmmakers then shifted their attention to the work of Tolkien's friend C. S. Lewis with the film version of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, it was natural to see new books on Lewis. Scholars who have long appreciated the work of Tolkien and Lewis were now given the chance to explain that love to a much larger audience. Both of the reviewed books should be considered within this pop culture context—both *Open Court* and *BenBella* have framed and marketed these books within that context. They are not expressly books for the well-seasoned reader of Lewis and Tolkien; the publishers have designed them for the larger audience of readers who have come to Narnia without any wider understanding of Lewis' literary or theological contribution. With that said, the books are an entertaining and insightful read: each is a collection of essays, and as such, each—particularly *BenBella*'s—excels at presenting a variety of viewpoints on Lewis. Atheists and agnostics as well as Christians respond to the mythical world of Narnia: Lewis' mythopoeic project is put to the test. Despite these strengths, though, these works sometimes, as essay collections, lack coherence, and there is notable repetition from essay to essay. Even with these limitations, these books are worth our attention.

*Revisiting Narnia* is the more varied and accessible, though perhaps uneven, book of the two. The editor has not grouped these twenty-five essays into any apparent order or overarching plan; it is a free for all on Lewis' Narnia. Eventual repetition prevents this book from being as varied as one might think, but it does run the gamut from militant agnostics to evangelical Christians. Some of the stronger essays certainly are a pleasure to read. Those interested in Lewis' conception of and use of "myth" in Narnia will be drawn to Charlie Starr's discussion of moral instruction in fairy tales (and, Starr argues, film), particularly important for their power to draw us in and to experience truths that would otherwise be overly abstract. This concreteness is what Lewis, influenced by his friend Tolkien, sought. Joseph Pearce's essay also helps us to distinguish allegory and myth in Lewis' thought, but Pearce argues that participation in Narnia and even Middle-earth requires leaps of the imagination that frequently are allegorical. Pearce quotes Lewis' statement that myths should suggest allegories and observes that Tolkien was more subtle than Lewis on this point. Peter Schakel and Wesley Kort (a former professor of mine) offer convincing arguments for continuing to read the Chronicles in the order in which Lewis wrote them, rather than in the order that he later suggested and HarperCollins currently publishes them, because *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* offers a better introduction to the theology in Narnia, as we slowly build to the encounter with Aslan. Kort, in particular, highlights the significant difference theologically between starting with a doctrine of redemption in *LW&W* rather than the doctrine...
and previous, containing Matthews' discussion of Platonic themes in nine characteristics, particularly in the rejection of Susan. Though, faults the vision of Narnia for its unsympathetic handling of "feminine" their persuasive power behind a mask of playful pretense (144)). Karin Fry, helps to shape the moral imagination of the readers, particularly children (hiding Gayne Anacker and Wendy Hamblet suggest how reading the Narnia books that the children take, particularly in their various encounters with Aslan, and from various evils. Bill Davis highlights the journey through moral education Narnia often shows that there are things worth dying for. Children face challenges on our parts, he still believes (as Tim Moesteller argues) that there is a standard of morality built into creation (Lewis called this standard the Tao). There are values and virtues that we all must face – as Laura Garcia observes, Narnia often shows that there are things worth dying for. Children face challenges where they risk their lives in battle and in other contexts to save Narnia from various evils. Bill Davis highlights the journey through moral education that the children take, particularly in their various encounters with Aslan, and Gayne Anacker and Wendy Hamblet suggest how reading the Narnia books helps to shape the moral imagination of the readers, particularly children (hiding "their persuasive power behind a mask of playful pretense" (144)). Karin Fry, though, faults the vision of Narnia for its unsympathetic handling of "feminine" characteristics, particularly in the rejection of Susan.

The third major section of the book does not cohere as well as the previous, containing Matthews’ discussion of Platonic themes in The Silver Chair and The Last Battle, Cleveland's locating of identity in point of view to say that
character remain the same through different forms (children age to adults in Narnia and then return to childhood in our world, Eustace is transformed into a dragon, etc.), Menge's analysis of Lewis' critique of secular modernism (which might fit better in the first section of the book), and Peterson's detailing of Lewis' creative use of time.

The final section turns more explicitly to the metaphysical and theological. Here we learn from Narnia that encounters with divine goodness, represented in Aslan, can be painful (Wielenberg) and that Aslan's welcoming of Emeth the Calormene into his country in LB is inclusivist, not universalist or pluralist (Sennett: "There is no ultimate source of divine favor except Aslan. However, Aslan's love for all creatures, Narnian and Calormene alike, often moves him to work through whatever means necessary—even the temple of Tash itself—to try to bring those creatures to him" (243)). Taliaferro and Traughber reinvigorate a discussion of the ransom theory of atonement by bringing Aslan's sacrifice in LW in conversation with John Lucas' critique of the ransom theory. In an insightful and entertaining essay, Victor Reppert effectively argues that Lewis did not (as biographer A. N. Wilson argues) revert to children's literature because he could not handle apologetics after Elizabeth Anscombe put him in his place in the infamous 1948 debate (and that the Green Witch is not a disguised jab at Anscombe), for apologetics is frequently incorporated into the mythology of Narnia. Then closing the volume, Gregory Basham highlights Lewis' sympathetic treatment of animals and his theological musings about the lack of souls in animals to argue that Lewis did not open the door to heaven for enough (in LB only talking animals make it to Aslan's country).

Both books, once again, are worthy additions to the growing collection of books analyzing the contributions of Lewis (and Tolkien). Both suffer and benefit from being a collection of essays from various contributors. Perhaps it is best to read the essays individually and not worry about an overarching structure. There are other studies out there to give us that kind of an assessment of Lewis' work. But these volumes do help bring the depth of the discussion of Lewis' vision to a wider audience. Such is to be commended.

NONFICTION REVIEW

Evolution for Everyone

Thomas J. Morrissey


Is your uncle a monkey? Are you holding on for dear life to the slippery links of the Great Chain of Being? Of the earth-shaking discoveries of science over the last four hundred years, none has challenged our view of ourselves more than Darwinism. It was bad enough when we were told that our planet is not the center of the universe. Then we learned that the earth is much older than Darwinism. It was bad enough when we were told that our planet is not the center of the universe. Then we learned that the earth is much older than Darwinism. It was bad enough when we were told that our planet is not the center of the universe. Then we learned that the earth is much older than Darwinism.

If you have an aversion to the possibility of simian forebears, then you will probably not like Evolution for Everyone, though that will be your loss. If, on the other hand (how lucky for writers that we evolved two hands!), you are
implies that cooperation among cells, organs and organisms is how fitness comes 
that unites disparate cells and organs in producing and sustaining life. It also 
cooperation and symbiosis. This implies that DNA is a master control system 
and demonstrates that the evolution of cells and multi-cellular life forms is a story of 
life forms since the first RNA strands floated in the primordial waters. He dem-
might yield. Wilson gives us a quick synopsis on the increasing complication of 
tional thinking often falls short of what an evolutionary approach to the world 
sage is that natural selection manifests itself in a variety of ways and that conven-
refers to them by their first names. It is important to him that readers see these 
but he also employs them as a celebration of human intelligence, self-awareness, 
and describes experiments that almost anyone with patience and time on his or her hands could undertake. 
He uses the experiments to build his case for the undeniability of Darwinism, but he also employs them as a celebration of human intelligence, self-awareness, 
and open-mindedness. After introducing the scientists he knows personally, he 
refers to them by their first names. It is important to him that readers see these men and women as curious humans rather than distant icons. One apt example 
is the story of graduate student Kris Coleman's four-year study of pumpkinseed 
sunfish, which included a description of her spending long hours lying facedown in what Wilson describes as a "glass coffin" watching the fish in a pond below. 
The book's theme is the applicability of Darwinism, but its central message 
is that natural selection manifests itself in a variety of ways and that conventional 
thinking often falls short of what an evolutionary approach to the world might yield. Wilson gives us a quick synopsis on the increasing complication of 
life forms since the first RNA strands floated in the primordial waters. He dem-
strates that the evolution of cells and multi-cellular life forms is a story of 
cooperation and symbiosis. This implies that DNA is a master control system 
that unites disparate cells and organs in producing and sustaining life. It also 
implies that cooperation among cells, organs and organisms is how fitness comes
WHAT: *Extrapolation*

TOPICS: We invite papers on all areas of speculative culture, including print, film, television, comic books and video games, and we particularly encourage papers which consider popular texts within their larger cultural context. We welcome papers from a wide variety of critical approaches including but not limited to literary criticism, utopian studies, genre criticism, feminist theory, critical race studies, queer theory, and postcolonial theory. *Extrapolation* promotes innovative work which considers the place of speculative texts in contemporary culture. We are interested in promoting dialogue among scholars working within a number of traditions and in encouraging the serious study of popular culture. We welcome submissions on all areas of science fiction and fantasy, and are particularly interested in the following areas of study: Racial constructions in speculative genres; Children's and YA sf and fantasy; Sexualities; Fantastic motifs in mainstream texts; Gender and speculative texts; History of sf and fantasy; New weird fiction; Remakes, rewriting and retrofitting; Pulp sf and fantasy; The body in speculative texts; Posthumanism; Political sf and fantasy; Non-Western speculative traditions; Technoculture

SUBMISSIONS: Essays should be approximately 4000-9000 words, written according to MLA standards and include a 100 word abstract. Neither embedded footnotes nor generated footnotes that some software systems make available should be used. Electronic submissions in MS Word are encouraged.

CONTACT: Javier A. Martinez, Department of English, University of Texas at Brownsville, 80 Fort Brown, Brownsville, TX 78520

About, but it also suggests a metaphor that allows for some pretty interesting observations. For example, Wilson describes the hive intelligence of bee colonies. There is no doubt that the bees of a hive work together in ways that give the collective a far greater intelligence than any single individual. He also relates experiments in which groups of humans perform tasks better when they work in groups. Although we are each smarter than the average bee, our social nature allows us to be smarter than the sum of a social unit's parts. Cooperative intelligence enhancement predates our species' genesis by many millions of years. Wilson also stresses the importance of experiments that show intelligence in individual animals, such as the work done on the language capacities of primates and birds. Wilson consistently emphasizes that we must never think of ourselves as apart from the rest of the natural world and that we must not forget that all of our inherited traits are manifestations of an ancient gene pool.

Of course Wilson knows that we are individual human beings, and his text consistently reveals the author's personality. At the same time, the idea that our bodies are superbly coordinated collections of cells leads naturally to the notion that our societies are complex collections of individual selves. Our closest genetic relatives, the chimps, live in small bands and practice complicated intra-group politics. We used to live in small groupings, but of late (since the invention of agriculture) we have developed much larger groups, including continental nation states. For Wilson, understanding social evolution that unfolded over the long millennia of hunter-gatherer existence offers clues that might help us to survive the awesome destructive power that our high intelligence has created.

Like many SF writers, Wilson questions whether our intelligence and psychology will lead to harmonious societies or to extinction. Do we need Clarke's Overlords, Butler's Oankali or Nancy Kress' prabir to come to earth and save us from ourselves, or can we, by understanding our biological and social origins, learn to make good collective choices that will secure our future without outside intervention? Wilson closes chapter 27 by suggesting that we can kill ourselves off or "steer ourselves into the future like Captain Kirk and the starship Enterprise." Gene Roddenberry's vision of our future assumes that social evolution can compensate for our psychological shortcomings. The jury is still out on that one.

Although *Evolution for Everyone* is aimed at a general literate audience, it is by no means simplistic. It is a warm and inviting book that many SF scholars and fans should enjoy.

**NONFICTION REVIEW**

**The Souls of Cyberfolk**

Karen Hellekson


The title of the book's introduction, "Cyberpunk's Posthuman Afterlife," serves as a summary of Foster's aim throughout the volume. Cyberpunk has moved beyond text into other media, including artwork and comics, and intellectual frameworks as diverse as posthumanism, queer theory, racial history, consumer culture, and globalization are being brought to bear on the subject. Foster ambitiously touches on all these, and more, in a sophisticated, dense reading of a variety of texts, many by well-known science fiction authors. Cyberpunk's historical and cultural moment may be gone, but its vestiges remain
in the mind-body split, the naturalness of a life lived in close proximity to technology, the disembodiment inherent in navigating cyberspace, and the transcendence found in the technological sphere. Although the book is marketed to those in the field of cultural studies, its content means that the audience will range far.

In his introduction, Foster makes it clear that he does not attempt to “treat cyberpunk as a postmodernizing of science fiction.” Rather, he wants to read “cyberpunk... as a form of vernacular theory” (xviii), one that informs a particular cultural moment concerned with such things as gender, race, and class. Technology has made the question of what it means to be human much more difficult. Cybernarratives express this cultural moment’s worries about—or the valorization of—disembodiment, the place and role of the soul, and the essence of humanity. He succeeds in his aim: the book is an excellent synthesis of a variety of disciplines that in turn leads to new, insightful readings, and Foster’s connections between spheres of knowledge is impressive. These connections also permit multilayered readings that touch on large social issues, and the book is a good example of praxis.

Chapter 1, “The Legacies of Cyberpunk Fiction,” links the ideas of some of posthumanism’s greatest thinkers (including Hayles, Moravec, Wiener, and Fukuyama), particularly in terms of consciousness divided between the human mind and a technological extension, to several cyberpunk texts by noted science fiction authors (including Greg Egan, Ken McLeod, Pat Cadigan, and Nancy Kress) that feature embodied cognition, disembodiment, and technological transcendence and self-transformation. This chapter defines the broad field of play in popular and scientific terms, and it sets up the terms of the arguments for the rest of the book. The chapters that follow focus on single topics within this realm: embodiment (chapter 2), fetishism (chapter 3), gender and performativity (chapter 4), race and performativity (chapter 5), trauma and white masculinity (chapter 6), and new ethnicities (chapter 7).

Chapter 2, “Meat Puppets or Robopath,” is a close reading of that foundational cyberpunk text, William Gibson’s Neuromancer (1984), and of David J. Skal’s novel Antibodies (1989). The texts consider the mind-body split in different terms, but Foster mediates both readings by positing a third mode of experience, one that genre permits. This third way grows out of the cyborg resistance (following Haraway) and the desire for postmodern culture to “ideologically recontext that potential for disruption” (57).

In chapter 3, “The Sex Appeal of the Inorganic,” Foster moves away from literature and into other cultural expressions of cyberpunk and posthuman embodiment. In an analysis of sexual representations that include disembodiment, including “sexy robot” artworks by Hajime Sorayama, Foster meditates on the nature of fantasy and sex, and their relationship to (female) subjectivity. He concludes, in part, that desire of the technological forces a different kind of desire that does not rely on a male subject reading his lack onto a female body. Chapter 4, “Trapped by the Body,” discusses virtual reality and embodiment, following Allucquère Rosanne Stone’s work, in written texts by three women, including Maureen McHugh, that use gender cross-identification. In works with gender play (drag, butch-femme, camp), the sex of the participant does not necessarily correlate with the gender performance, and this rupture also plays out in texts thematically concerned with gender and technology.

In chapter 5, “The Souls of Cyberfolk,” which again follows the work of Stone, among others, play becomes reconstituted as racial performativity. The title comes from the 1990 Deathlok comic published by Marvel, which is about an African American cyborg. Panels from the comic are reproduced in black and
white. Three forms of embodiment are at play here: a (black) human body, control over a (raceless) cyborg body, and a (disembodied) presence in cyberspace. These forms raise questions about the location of race, the location of the soul, and transcendence. Chapter 6, “Replaying the L.A. Riots,” moves its discussion of race from black to white, with “white” constituted as a race rather than as the human default, a movement permitted in part by trauma. This turn toward trauma (which follows the work of Hal Foster as well as Cathy Caruth) “might be read as [a mode] of resistance to fantasies of disembodiment and of mobilities unconstrained by the limits of the physical body” (174). The author considers the Rodney King video that sparked the L.A. race riots and the music video for “Shock to the System,” by Billy Idol, in terms of race and violence, with trauma cutting across racial lines even as the cyborg figure permits a reassertion of victimized white masculinity.

The last chapter, “Franchise Nationalisms,” extends the nature of race by considering transnational forms of political economy. Neal Stephenson’s Snow Crash (1992) epitomizes Foster’s concerns, and Foster analyzes it following Mark Foster’s notions of “virtually mediated forms of ethnic identity” (207). The group, not the individual, becomes the concern. In the conclusion, which also uses Snow Crash as its exemplar text, Foster analyzes the analogies inherent in posthuman narratives and posthuman critiques, thus emphasizing the ambivalence inherent in the genre. Is the mind-body split that cyberpunk is so concerned with just a metaphor for something else? Are machine and human, code and language actually the same thing? How does this relate to identity? Foster concludes by not concluding: the questions raised don’t really have answers, but the debate is the important thing, because it provides a model for further analysis of technoculture.

This book is a must-read for any scholar working on cybernarratives, whether they be text, film, comics, or still artworks. It’s particularly relevant for people who work with science fiction, that genre of literature so concerned with the intersection between humanity and technology. Despite Foster’s smooth writing style and his ability to clearly lay out his argument, the text is too academic—too nuanced in its arguments, too densely packed with meaning alluding to huge realms of knowledge staked out by other critics—for use as a textbook for an undergraduate course. However, those very features make it ideal as a selection for graduate-level classes in anything from cyberpunk literature to women’s studies to cultural studies.

NONFICTION REVIEW

Through Time

Karen Hellekson


Andrew Cartmel, Doctor Who scriptwriter and novelist, here turns his attention to the history of the iconic and long-running British children’s SF program, which first aired in 1963. It serves as a companion of sorts to his Script Doctor: The Inside Story of “Doctor Who” 1986–89, Cartmel’s memoirs of his time on the show, also published in 2005. The publication of both books was timed to coincide with the show’s resurrection in 2005 after its cancelation in 1989. As an insider, Cartmel’s authority and credibility are beyond dispute: the BBC hired him in 1987 as script editor for Season 24 of Doctor Who, and he was responsible (as he notes in his introduction) for selecting writers and crafting the show’s arc. He
Cartmel did not write a general history of the TV program—indeed, it would be impossible to write a truly comprehensive history because many episodes have been lost, and secondary texts that address these missing episodes usually refer not to the aired episodes but to scripts. Rather, he hits what he considers to be the high points of the show, all from the point of view of a script editor, so discussions of structure and motivation predominate. The book moves chronologically and includes a brief discussion of the 1996 TV movie, as well as a discussion of the first half of the 2005 version starring Christopher Eccleston as the Ninth Doctor. Although knowledgeable Who fans will have no trouble following the discussion, for others, a metatext, such as a relevant Wikipedia entry or a full-fledged episode guide to the entire show’s long run, may be helpful to provide a contextual framework.

Cartmel does his best to provide that framework by beginning the chronologically arranged nine chapters with a discussion of what was going on in the world at the time the episodes under discussion aired, although only rarely does he make overt links between current events and Doctor Who thematic concerns. Casting decisions and important plot elements are addressed, including the notion of the Doctor's ability to physically regenerate, and the Doctor's backstory. Cartmel also consulted reference books for insight into some of the players in the Who universe—he provides tidbits about actors, writers, producers, and science advisors—although the bibliography at the end seems thin, and the lack of an index makes it difficult to find things. The structure of story arcs is described in general terms: we learn, for example, that an adventure story has characters repeating the same kinds of situations with different actors or settings, and that a slice-of-life story revolves around the Doctor's ability to physically regenerate, and the Doctor's backstory. Cartmel pokes good-natured fun at the tendency of fans to refer not to the aired episodes but to scripts. Rather, he hits what he considers to be the high points of the show, all from the point of view of a script editor, so discussions of structure and motivation predominate. The book moves chronologically and includes a brief discussion of the 1996 TV movie, as well as a discussion of the first half of the 2005 version starring Christopher Eccleston as the Ninth Doctor. Although knowledgeable Who fans will have no trouble following the discussion, for others, a metatext, such as a relevant Wikipedia entry or a full-fledged episode guide to the entire show’s long run, may be helpful to provide a contextual framework.

The discussions combine interesting trivia with plot summary and reactions to success or failure of individual episodes, but the word analytical would be inappropriate to describe any of them. Cartmel pokes good-natured fun at the program: he is willing to call a pie plate a pie plate, even if it’s pretending to be a flying saucer. Still, the dense use of pithy, often amusing adjectives illuminates the stories Cartmel describes, but rather Cartmel’s opinion. And if one hoped that Cartmel’s involvement in the last three seasons of Doctor Who would result in a deeper, more multilayered analysis, one’s hopes would be dashed, because this section is indistinguishable from the others in terms of insight or chattiness. Appendix One, a spot-on but shockingly short “Recommended Viewing” list, boils down the best of the best, concluding that the following stories are essential: “Unearthly Child” (1963), “The Dalek Invasion of Earth” (1964), “The War Games” (1969), “Spearhead from Space” (1970), “Inferno” (1970), “The Talons of Weng-Chiang” (1977), “The Curse of Fenric” (1989), “Ghosts Light” (1989), and “The Unquiet Dead” (2005).

The appeal of Through Time lies not in thoughtful analysis or insight, but in sheer joy: it’s funny, witty, and idiosyncratic, focused on story arcs and behind-the-scenes personalities, all filtered through the mind of an insider. This short history complements the longer histories, such as the books by David J. Howe et al. organized by decade (e.g., Doctor Who: The Sixties, 1994). Media scholars working with Doctor Who will find little new here, although it bridges the gap of the program’s eighteen-year hiatus and helpfully discusses the new in the same terms as the old. However, fans of the show will enjoy its exuberance and well-placed adjectives.

**INFO:** www.filmandhistory.org

**DEADLINE:** November 1, 2007

**CONTACT:** Tobias Hochscherf <tobias.hochscherf@unn.ac.uk>

**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.
- What makes science fiction film and television in Britain distinctively “British”? This area treats the last century of science fiction productions. Presentations may feature analyses of individual films and/or TV programs, surveys of documents related to their production, analyses of history and culture as explored through a set of films/TV programs, or comparisons between two or more science-fiction productions. Paper topics might include utopian and dystopian films/TV programs, future warfare, censorship, representation of non-human life forms, politics, the Cold War, science-fiction after 9/11, ethics and morals, representations of science and scientists, myths and legends, terrorism, early science fiction, adaptations, comedy, government and institutions, disasters, environment, gender, ethnicity, race, class, etc.

**SUBMISSIONS:** 200-word proposal

**CONTACT:** Tobias Hochscherf <tobias.hochscherf@unn.ac.uk>

**DEADLINE:** November 1, 2007

**INFO:** www.filmandhistory.org
FICTION mini-REVIEW

Space Cadet
Ed Carmien


One of many Heinlein novels still in print, Space Cadet follows the familiar Heinlein middle-American young male character through the early stages of becoming a Space Patrol officer. In this early, soft-hued version of Starship Troopers that also echoes Have Spacesuit, Will Travel, Matthew Dodson reports for testing to Terra Base. Successfully passing a number of challenges designed to weed out those without a strong IQ and an equally strong sense of morals, Dodson travels to space to begin his training, and here the real bildungsroman begins, as he wrestles with math, the same bugbear Juan Rico faces in Starship Troopers, and his decision to remain in the service of all humanity as the guardian of orbital nuclear weapon platforms and solar-system peace officer. The Space Patrol is a solely male preserve, a fact that reflects the late-1940's origin of Space Cadet. There are only two minor female characters: Dodson's naive, sheeplike mother and an out of reach attractive woman the cadets meet briefly on a space station while on leave. If taught with an awareness of the book's inherent gender imbalance, this text serves as an interesting precursor to Heinlein's career-spanning theme of maturity via military training.

FICTION mini-REVIEW

Farnham's Freehold
Ed Carmien


In this 1964 novel Heinlein crafts one version of the classic time-travel tale in which a present-day person travels to the future, is horrified, then returns with a strong urge to change the present. While similar in broad respects to The Door Into Summer, Farnham's Freehold comes later in Heinlein's career and is more controversial. Farnham is a practical patriarch at a family gathering attended by himself, his spouse, his son, his daughter, his daughter's friend from college, and a house servant who happens to be African-American. An alarm sounds and Farnham ushers everyone into the bomb shelter. Some confluence of atomic affairs shunts them into the future, where in the manner of a lifeboat captain Farnham takes absolute command and they begin life anew, thinking they are the only humans in the world. They are far from alone, however, and after his daughter dies in childbirth are soon captured by the black-skinned people who rule the globe and keep as slaves (and use as a food supply) those with white skins. Farnham's reaction to this dystopia is predictable, but he is unable to escape to the past with his entire lifeboat party: his wife gives in to a life of drugs and leisure, his son volunteers to be castrated so he too can enjoy the soft life, his former servant revels in his new status as a member of the ruling elite, thus leaving only Barbara to return to the past where they survive nuclear war and strive to build a future different than the one they have seen. Farnham's Freehold is of critical interest because of the way it handles race—does Heinlein reflect a typical racist view or does he lampoon then present-day racism? The obvious comparison to The Sixth Column might lead to an answer as regards Heinlein's views on race (see also Space Cadet), but his views on sex are also worth reviewing. Three years after Stranger in a Strange Land it is not too surprising to hear Farnham's daughter propose that he is the logical father for her future children (she starts the story pregnant by another); this presages more explicit generation-hopping romance in Heinlein's later novels.

FICTION mini-REVIEW

Radio Freefall
Ed Carmien


In this first novel marketed by Tor as containing “wild riffs of Heinlein” in the “tradition of The Moon is a Harsh Mistress,” a middle-aged rocker, alias Aqualung, fights for freedom against an encroaching info-dictatorship. Set in a burgeon-
ing information dystopia masterminded by a Gatesian figure close to world domination, the comparison to Heinlein's 1966
work is appropriate if somewhat unfortunate for Jarpe, as *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* showcases Heinlein's talents at or
near their peak, while this is unavoidably a first novel. This is no more clear than in the complex distributed plot Jarpe offers,
par for the course for novels of this type in recent years, as four significant actors in the story wend their largely separate ways
to the conclusion. Had this novel come along later in Jarpe's career it may well have been three novels, one detailing the rise
to power of Walter Cheeseman, the spider-puppeteer of *Radio Freefall* who serves as a tinny info-despot. Another novel
might have been made of Quinn Taber's rise as Cheeseman's apprentice, fall as disgraced genius who identifies an actual
artificial intelligence living in the wild of the web, and redemption as he finds true love and overcomes his dysfunctional
upbringing. And finally, the story of political rebellion in an Earth orbit space station deserves its own story: Jarpe's
speculative powers here given free rein as he imagines how a highly regimented society of scientists lives in space (three jobs
each, four hours a day per job, and someone has to be the roach wrangler) and ultimately comes to rebel against Earth
authority. Even without the elbow-room such a tale could use, *Radio Freefall* is still a good read, largely due to Jarpe's use
of music as mode of political expression. His wit and humor come through a sharp lens of pop-culture mastery—each chapter
begins with a quoted lyric, and he is consistently "on" with his cultural observations. Yes, it is true: kids today watching
"Kim Possible" on the Disney Channel will someday rock out to a band called "Naked Mole Rat." Jarpe is one to watch, and
though his first novel may suffer in comparison to one of Heinlein's finest, expectations in the world of publishing have
grown over the decades, making Jarpe's first undoubtedly a better read than Heinlein's first.

**FICTION REVIEW**

*Variable Star*

Bruce A. Beatie

ISBN 0-765-31312-X.

Spider Robinson's "Afterword" gives us the crucial fact about this novel: "On November 14, 1955, ... Robert
Anson Heinlein sat down at his desk in Colorado Springs and wrote an outline for a novel he first called *The Stars Are a
Clock*. ... His outline filled at least eight extremely dense pages: single-spaced ten-pica type with absolutely minimal margins
on all four sides and very few strikeovers. He also filled fourteen 3X5 index cards with extensive handwritten notes relating
to the book. And then, for reasons only he could tell us, he closed the file and put it in a drawer, and never got around to
writing that particular book." (310-311)

For anyone who knows Heinlein's juveniles, however, the reason is clear: between November 11 and December 1 of
details, the plots of both *Variable Star* and *Time for the Stars* are as follows: a starship limited by light-speed sets out from
dearth to look for planets that can be colonized; contact with earth (instantaneous, like LeGuin’s ansible) is maintained by
telepathic twins, but with a constantly-growing age differential because of relativistic effects; while under way, the sublight
starship is caught by an FTL starship invented after the first ship left earth; the first-person narrator, in his late teens, marries
a girl who was much younger when the starship left, but who is now the proper age because of the relativistic time-
differential. It is unlikely that Heinlein’s publishers would have accepted two novels with such similar premises at roughly
the same time. If both Robinson and Major are correct in their dates-of-writing, Heinlein began *Time for the Stars* three days
before writing the outline and notes for *Variable Star*, but both obviously proceed from the same stimulus. The effects of
relativistic time dilation were apparently on Heinlein’s mind in late 1955: two of “half a dozen alternate titles” (“Afterword,
310) he’d noted on the outline were *The Stars Are a Clock* and *Doctor Einstein’s Clock*—and “time” is of course the first title-
word of the book he finished and published. There are, of course, some crucial differences in the two novels.

How did Robinson come to finish a novel that Heinlein had shelved in 1955? He was on a panel discussing “rare and
obscure” works of Heinlein at Torcon 3 in 2003, and when Dr. Robert James mentioned “an outline for an entire novel that
no one knew about,” an audience member, Kate Gladstone, shouted “You should get Spider Robinson to finish that
novel!” (“Afterword,” 311-312) Following the conference he was invited by Art Dula, trustee for the Heinlein estate, to
submit sample chapters and a proposal—which led to two years of hard work and the novel *Variable Star*. (It is worth
noting that in 1940 Heinlein himself turned an unpublished story by John W. Campbell into the novel *Sixth Column.*

How much of the story-line belongs to Heinlein? Robinson had said (quoted above) that the outline “ran at least eight pages”—but only seven survive. These pages “establish the fiction—Robert’s term for the time-and-place in which a story is set. They create vivid characters and their back stories, especially Joel, Jinny, and her grandfather. They describe the basic antinomy that impels Joel to emigrate, discuss the economics of interstellar colonization, and sketch in some of his early adventures after he leaves. And then they chop off in mid-sentence, and mid-story.” (“Afterword,” 313) So the outline may have given Robinson the story-line through, perhaps, chapter 14 of the 22 chapters. The ending is all Robinson’s. In it, (a) two of the five Relativists (whose mental gifts operate the quantum ramjet that powers the *Sheffield*) die, leaving the surviving three under tremendous stress, (b) the telepaths learn that earth’s sun has exploded (perhaps has been exploded by some alien force), leaving an expanding cosmic-ray wave-front chasing the ship and threatening all earth’s colonies, (c) a third Relativist commits suicide, leaving the *Sheffield* traveling at over 99% of light-speed and no means of slowing down, and finally (d) the FTL ship that catches them had barely escaped the explosion, and is owned by Richard Conrad, Jinny’s megabillionaire grandfather who intends to betray the *Sheffield* and its people (as Jinny, Joel feels, had betrayed him), simply using the *Sheffield* as a means of resupplying his FTL ship and arriving at one of the colonies in a position of strength.

The novel nonetheless “feels” very like one of Heinlein’s later juveniles. Robinson has got the “voice” of a Heinlein late-teens narrator down cold, and the novel is full of echoes of other Heinlein novels. From *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress,* for example: Jinny’s autopilot car enters traffic “with minimal hulu” (14); notified by Paul Hattori, ship’s banker, of his sudden and unexpected wealth, Joel says “Somebody had to be getting swindled for it. TANSTAFF!” (136); and Joel’s temporary girlfriend Kathy enters “a group or line marriage.” (190) The novel’s last words are an almost over-the-top echo: Joel and Evelyn (Jinny’s baby sister, whom Joel married) are traveling from colony to colony warning of the threat of both the wave-front and the possible star-destroyer, and Joel as narrator concludes: “The narrator of an ancient poem by Tennyson ‘held his purpose form, to sail beyond the sunset.’ My wife and I—all of us—have actually done that. It’s going to get interesting now.” (308)

More extensively, however (and not typical of Heinlein’s juveniles), the novel is set within Heinlein’s Future History. For example, Jinny’s family, the Conrads “wielded wealth, power, and influence comparable to that of … Harriman Enterprises in their day.” (25) After learning Jinny’s identity and fleeing in a drunken stupor to Tampa, Joel thinks “the high-speed sidewalks ought to get me back to Vancouver in no more than seventeen hours or so.” (70) And it is a post-Prophet world. At the end of the *Sheffield’s* first year, Joel as narrator comments: “The mores and customs we had all been raised in, fruits of the *Covenant,* continued to work their unlikely magic ….” (203) The Prophet himself had been mentioned casually on pages 76 and 186, but the most significant reference to Scudder comes when everyone aboard the *Sheffield* is in total fugue because of the explosion of the sun and the suspicions that it died of unnatural causes. Hideo Itokawa, the zen Relativist, makes a long speech that turns people around, arguing that “Both fear and its cover identity, anger, are notorious for producing spectacularly bad decisions. … I will offer,” he says, “only a single example: the Terror Wars that led inexorably to the Ascension of the Prophet. Shortly after Captain Leslie LeCroix returned home safely from the historic first voyage to Luna, fanatical extremist Muslims from a tiny nation committed a great atrocity against a Christian superpower. Suicide terrorists managed to horribly murder thousands of innocent civilians.” (263) He goes on to describe exactly what the Bush administration has done as reaction to 9/11 and concludes: “they ignited a global religious war that threatened to literally return the whole world to barbarism.” In reaction, “Nehemiah Scudder became the Holy Prophet of the Lord, smote the false prophets, and darkness fell.” (264)

Unless I am misremembering the early stories of the Future History, Robinson has here introduced a stimulus for the rise of the Prophet that has more to do with our own time than with Heinlein’s fictional or real time. This is something Robinson does regularly, making his novel much more than just a realization of a Heinlein outline. There are such casual contemporary references as Joel’s “Life is going to continue to such until somebody finds the Undo key.” (19) Joel as narrator notes that the quantum ramjet powering the *Sheffield* was “first proposed by H. David Froning (an engineer!) back before the Collapse” (107)—and Froning’s article “Propulsion Requirements for a Quantum Interstellar Ramjet” appeared in the *Journal of the British Interplanetary Society* in 1980. When Matty Jaymes talks of the possibilities of intelligent life in the universe, Joel responds: “Didn’t someone settle this back before the Dark Age? Webb? Wrote a book listing forty-nine possible solutions to Fermi’s Paradox—and demolished them one by one, leaving only the fiftieth solution, namely: we’re alone.” (185) Stephen Webb’s *If the Universe Is Teeming with Aliens—Where Is Everybody? Fifty Solutions to the*
Fermi Paradox and the Problem of Extraterrestrial Life appeared in 2002. And the therapy Joel undergoes in the Sim (the Sheffield's holodeck) after a violent episode is based on “a series of paintings… by a PreCollapse artist named Alex Grey” (170) The two series of paintings Robinson mentions, “Sacred Mirrors” and “Progress of the Soul,” are discussed on Alex Grey's website, alexgrey.com, born in Columbus, Ohio, in 1953, his “Sacred Mirrors” series “take the viewer on a journey toward their own divine nature” (website).

That last reference points to still another, perhaps more significant non-Heinleian aspect of the novel: the importance of the arts. In the opening chapter, Joel and Jinny are dancing in the Hotel Vancouver, and their dance is described in a way that Heinlein, for whom the arts seem to have been a closed book (pace Rhysling, the blind poet of the spaceways!), never could have managed, but which reminds inevitably of Robinson's Stardance. And Variable Star is full of music. Joel is a saxophone player, and when the deaths of two of the Relativists puts a third, Sol Short, into a profound depression, Joel pays the debt he owes Sol (“an original composition of at least fifteen minutes, on the baritone sax, with his name in the title” 222) for acting as his advocate when he’d gotten in trouble, with a composition (done with “circular breathing” 225) entitled “Sol keeps Shining.” (228)

The book is well-edited. I caught no typos, but the paragraph at the bottom of page 81 has a missing initial clause. And there is perhaps a Robinsonian oversight: Joel notes that he had met Kamal Zogby, “on the morning of my second day aboard the Sheffield—but found now that I had almost no memory of the event, or the man” (120), but there is no earlier reference to this meeting.

There is much more that is fascinating about this postmortem collaboration, but this review has already gotten overlong. Inviting Robinson to consider the task, Art Dula had told him: “I do not want you to try and do the literary equivalent of a Rich Little impression of Robert Heinlein. I want you to take his outline and write the best damn Spider Robinson novel you’re capable of.” (“Afterword,” 316) Variable Star IS a damned good novel, and a credit to the canons of both writers.

FICTION REVIEW

**Starship Troopers**

Jason W. Ellis


It's fascinating looking back at the 48-year history of Heinlein's seminal military SF work, *Starship Troopers*. Upon its publication in 1959, it set the standard for military SF, because Heinlein went where others feared to tread by elaborating on the operation, training, and structure of a future war making machine through the eyes of an individual soldier developed by personal misconceptions and instilled prejudices of the alien other. The novel became THE lightning rod for many authors to strike against and in response to during the intervening years of real life war and military build-up. In fact, the 2006 US edition cover sports the tagline, “The controversial classic of military adventure,” while futuristic armored troops scurry over the barren landscape while drop ships akin to George Lucas’ Republic attack gunships’ roar past overhead. Interestingly, the 2005 UK edition cover proclaims it, “The Science Fiction Classic,” and “Winner of the Hugo Award,” and the cover is devoid of action besides a distant landing craft and a slug-like alien watching from the foreground. This juxtaposition reveals the difference in which readers from these two countries approach and consider this work of SF.

*Starship Troopers* is a first person narrative told by Juan “Johnny” Rico, an average Filipino student from a wealthy family that goes against his family’s wishes and elects to join the Terran Federation Mobile Infantry in approximately the 28th century. He dons a “powered suit” that looks like “a big steel gorilla” to do battle with encroaching alien forces. Chapter one begins with a “drop” or attack on an enemy planet, chapters two through ten are a flashback explaining Johnny’s education as a civilian in History and Moral Philosophy and his progression from enlisted to officer training. The first thread of the story is resumed in chapters eleven through fourteen, which ends with a drop on the dire enemy’s home planet. The ambiguous ending questions Johnny’s future as well as the ultimate resolution of the war.

*Starship Troopers* is historically located at the apex of the first phase of the Cold War. The novel was originally published six years after the end of the Korean War, five years before the Gulf on Tonkin Incident, and the same year as the Cuban Revolution and the founding of the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam. Strictly speaking, this is a
novel created in the midst of the Cold War as well as at the crux of some of the bloodiest 'hot spots' in the protracted conflict between Western and Eastern ideologies. Instead of presenting a reaction against prolonged and ambiguous wars, Heinlein presents a militaristic utopian future that glorifies the role of the soldier as one of the few professions leading to full citizenship and enfranchisement. Others deemed worthy of these privileges include individuals devoted to equivalent federal service, which reinforces and supports the military hegemony. Therefore, the novel is heavily embedded in the Cold War mythos and historical moment as well as Heinlein's personal views on utopian world building.

Starship Troopers has remained in print throughout its history, which reflects its continuous popularity among readers. The book's uninterrupted run also reflects the constant state of fighting during the Cold War. However, Heinlein's novel extends beyond the era of its initial publication, and it carries meaning and engages ideas relevant to our here-and-now in a post-9/11 world embroiled in the Global War on Terrorism.

The most obvious connection between Starship Troopers and the Global War on Terrorism has to do with the identification and conception of the enemy: Heinlein's two explicit enemy others in the story are labeled the 'Skinnies' and the 'Bugs.' The Skinnies (think alien 'greys' from The X-Files or Spielberg's Close Encounters of the Third Kind) play a minor, albeit significant part in the narrative by being the target of malicious destruction and immolation in the opening chapter as well as providing Earth forces with intelligence data that supports Terran attacks against the Bugs. On the other hand, the Bugs are a much more formidable opponent for Earth's Mobile Infantry. Unveiled, Earth represents Heinlein's extrapolation of an idealized militarist democracy, while the Bugs symbolize the author's contemporary enemy: Communism. In the middle of the novel, Johnnie describes the Bugs and their collective thus: "The Bugs are not like us...They are arthropods who happen to look like a madman's conception of a giant, intelligent spider, but their organization, psychological and economic, is more like that of ants or termites; they are communal entities, the ultimate dictatorship of the hive." The enemy's derogatory name, 'Bugs,' itself implies a pest, which necessitates eradication. The multicultural and racially diverse Mobile Infantry belies humanity's racial hatred and prejudice of the alien Skinnies and Bugs. Additionally, these eusocial arthropod-like organisms represent an evolved form of communism, which mirrors social Darwinian issues propounded by earlier authors such as H.G. Wells in "A Story of the Days to Come" and The Time Machine. Additionally, Johnnie's linking the Bugs to the social behavior of ants and termites brings up the image of colonizing groups that go out in search of new resources. Furthermore, another colonizing arthropod is the bee, which conjures the image of the cell. The Bugs live underground, just out of sight, but they are observable by their burrowing sounds. Therefore, the identification of these Bugs with the underground cell elicits the idea of the cell structure of contemporary terror groups operating independently, but tangentially toward a common goal. Also, the Bugs' fighting behavior devalues the individual in ways that many persons feel about the use of suicide bombers.

Another contemporary issue bound up with Heinlein's novel is the ambiguity and amorphousness of the Global War on Terrorism. In Starship Troopers, Johnnie either cannot or chooses not to explain the beginning of the human-Bug war. Skirmishes and small incidents are mentioned, but there's no indictment against one side or the other except when the war escalates following the destruction of Buenos Aires. Additionally, the non-voting, but tax paying citizens of Earth are out of touch with the expansion of the war, which might point to the identification of the Korean War as the "Forgotten War." Heinlein's future society labels of peace, state of emergency, and war are government mandated states of mind regarding the Terran Federation's engagement with the 'enemy,' and are analogous to the United States' Department of Homeland Security National Threat Advisory levels.

The novel's importance in the web of cultural connections goes beyond its contents. Starship Troopers has spawned a movie by Paul Verhoeven, a CG television series, comic books, and roleplaying games. More importantly, it has provided the inspiration for derivative works as well as powerful reactions to the subject matter and Heinlein's ideological expression. Notable examples include the novels: Joe Haldeman's The Forever War, John Steakley's Armor, and John Scalzi's Old Man's War, as well as the popular video games: Halo and StarCraft. In the current political and ideological milieu, the novel engages many themes found in the stories of Farah Mendlesohn's edited collection, Glorifying Terrorism.

Starship Troopers is obviously an important and enduring SF text that is one of the founding works of military SF. Albeit didactic, Heinlein's novel is a treasure trove of engaging Cold War, as well as contemporary, issues involving war, imperialism, and ideology. Furthermore, this novel is a postcolonial text, because Heinlein elucidates his theory of conflict due to population expansion, which implicates both Terrans as well as the Bugs in imperialistic growth. Race and gender are also explored somewhat through a combined human unity against the alien other, which provides its own ironic message.
Heinlein's military SF masterpiece should be included in library collections, and its varied themes, style, and length lend it to inclusion in a range of undergraduate courses. The novel's importance to the SF canon and its intersection with many cultural as well as historical elements of the Cold War establish its utility in research projects about that era as well as the contemporary Global War on Terrorism and beyond.

FICTION REVIEW

The Moon is a Harsh Mistress
Alfred E. Guy Jr.


The Moon is a Harsh Mistress tracks the inhabitants of the Moon's penal colony as they plan a revolution for their freedom from Earth. The story of how ordinary folks become central figures in an interplanetary drama links Mistress to other important Heinlein novels like Double Star and Stranger in a Strange Land; it also shares with Starship Troopers a pragmatic and largely unromanticized perspective on the conduct of war. The novel's events are set in motion when the narrator, a computer repairman named Manuel Garcia O'Kelly Davis, makes two discoveries in quick succession: that the computer he's repairing for the Lunar Authority has become self-aware, and that the Authority's mismanagement will drive Lunar society to depression and famine within five years. By enlisting the aid of the computer—whom he calls “Mike,” Manuel and his friends lead a revolution that emphasizes propaganda and persuasion over brute force. Written at the height of its author's powers, Mistress advances many of Heinlein's key themes and modes of thought, with touches of planetary romance, libertarianism, militarism, and hard science. The very harshness of the Lunar environment, and the lawlessness of its convict colonists, permit (in Heinlein's view) a Social Darwinism that produces a society superior to the corruption of Earth. Since Mike's analysis and planning are legitimated by mathematics and logic, the rebels' libertarianism (one central character invokes Ayn Rand approvingly) is “proven” to be more rational than bourgeois democracy. The rebels' campaign is a masterpiece of diplomacy by any means—overt, covert, economic, and military. And perhaps most refreshingly for someone re-reading it forty years after its publication, the ballistic science matches the rigor of the best contemporaries in Hartwell's and Cramer's omnibus anthology—this last is perhaps unsurprising, given Heinlein's first career as a naval officer. After Troopers and Stranger, Mistress must be considered an indispensable title for any sf collection, as it exemplifies the rational optimism of Heinlein's early and middle career.

FICTION REVIEW

Spindrift
Donald M. Hassler


After finishing this latest novel set in the future world of Allen Steele's colony on Coyote, fans ought to sense more than ever what a fine collaborative effort modern SF storytelling has become and how well Steele understands and makes good use of this literary fact. Echoes from Steele's earlier work and from so much else that our memory holds dear since we first heard of the Nazi rocket program out of which has come our own NASA genius, of Asimov's Foundation, of Heinlein's own futurehistory for Earth and his TANSTAAFL values, of first contact in Clarke and in his mentors out of the thirties, of Le Guin's Ekumen—all these images and ideas resonate and grow in our minds as we read this powerful new tale of First Contact and of human colonies far from Earth. In short, this novel grows out of the literary tradition of hard SF, or speculative fiction, about the future of humankind and, similarly, ought to send the reader right back to absorbed rethinking about all the great writers I list above. My pet theory of genre, especially this genre, is that it allows us to respect, preserve and conserve the best ideas, and even character types, from the set of stories that make up the genre. But this must be a review of Steele's new book, not a theory essay.

Further, even though there is the hint in this story of mature aging and perhaps some sexual reality thinking
(whatever we conclude that might be), the characters here, the tone of exuberant voice and youthful voice, and most especially the huge themes or ideas make this book very much a juvenile story in the best Heinlein sense of the ambitious juvenile. Only when we are in our late teen years, even if that period could have been extended some as it seems to have been in charismatic leaders such as Jack Kennedy or Bill Clinton, were we able to muster up the exuberance really to read Thoreau and really to dream about what is needed to save the world—whether that might be new governments, or civil disobedience, or simply profound speculation about nature. Somewhere in *Tunnel in the Sky*, Heinlein’s youthful hero says that the most important creation of humankind must be government. If we combine that huge general notion with the tough-minded and equally broad Heinlein notion that there are never any “free lunches,” that the governing of ourselves must be learned, we see how impossibly “philosophic” youthful, or teenage, thinking has always been. Such is the tone and substance of this new Steele book. It is wonderful, and it is also literary and generic because it keeps evoking earlier roots of ideas from the writers who came before him in hard SF.

Not least in my mind after reading the book is an image of a future city light years away that crops up near the end where everything the eye can see from horizon to horizon is steel, glass, and glorious architecture. This is Asimov’s Trantor. But the main references and roots in this Steele story are more general, more governmental in the Heinlein sense, more purely philosophic. Here is the global and “juvenile” speculation that governs the action, both human and alien in the whole story: facing a universal death force that is called here “the Annihilator” but that we know, also, as Malthusian population pressure which, in turn, motivated Marxian theory, government must choose what to do. In this futurehistory one solution the humans pursue is the Frankensteinian and cruel move to reduce population with a practical and efficient genocide. Two other solutions balance this fascism approach. One is a sort of pastoral escapism. The other is imagined in a fantastically crafted “lifeboat” that preserves as many individuals as possible. In other words, the novel suggests a broad contrast between horrid solutions that Swift jokes about in “A Modest Proposal” and generative and womblike solutions as we might read in Yeats’s generation poems. Then Steele manages to link the latter, generative and benevolent solutions to the inscrutable wisdom of an alien and mysterious species, actually a group of species that have joined together into a sort of special and wise fraternity that he calls “The Talus.” This very wise club of life makes contact with humankind in order to determine if we are “good enough” to join their fraternity. The clear emphasis here is on goodness of heart, goodness of character; and it is not clear at the end that our species has learned that goodness yet. A related “juvenile” theme is truth telling. The Talus insists on absolute candor and honest thinking, and the club has developed a clothing technology to monitor this. Such truth telling may be the most alien element in this encounter for the humans, and Steele manages nicely to raise the issue of fiction itself versus the truth. When we tell ourselves stories about aliens such as The Talus, are we telling ourselves the truth or are we deceiving ourselves? Are First Contact stories reaching somehow for a truth, or are they deceptive entertainments? This is a further theme that seems both real juvenile and profoundly philosophic at the same time.

If the strength of fiction lies somehow in its well-madness, Steele realizes that too. His plot is never boring and moves well from one technological and astronomical wonder to the next. His best characters sound like Rod Walker in Heinlein or like Poddyl in *Podkayne of Mars*. They get right to the task. They like each other a lot. They have the youthful energy and the “right stuff” of good pilots like Poddyl wants to become. And then the problems they are forced to confront are, indeed, the most basic human problems of how to govern, how to lead, how to be a “good” person which, in turn, must become the basis for good government and good survival in the face of death. This is a very serious and very juvenile story. The beauty of hard SF is that such a combination not only is possible but also is continual wrapping around itself in generic repeats. In this sense, Le Guin, Asimov, Heinlein keep living, and genre is generational in keeping ideas reproducing and alive.

**FICTION REVIEW**

**Zenith**

Thomas J. Morrissey


“*They didn’t think about the future, did they? They never thought about us.*” Such is the justifiable and damning complaint of Julie Bertagna’s young heroine in *Zenith*, the engaging sequel to her well-received 2002 novel *Exodus*. Both books depict life
in an over-warmed world where hell and high water have killed or disrupted a sizable fraction of the Earth’s population. Named after the biblical book of deliverance through aquatic miracle, *Exodus* follows the ill fortunes of Mara Bell and the people of her doomed Scottish isle of Wing as the seas rise at the turn of the next century. Mara’s people are not chosen; rather, like most humans they are the random, hapless victims of a global catastrophe set in motion by their shortsighted forebears. The towering storm-proof citadels that house the select few and exclude all marine refugees not suitable for slave labor are stronger than the walls of Jericho. And the accusation that Mara levels against us is all too well deserved.

*Zenith* picks up where *Exodus* left off, with the orphaned Mara leading a motley crew of marginalized survivors on a northward voyage that she hopes will lead them to a de-glaciated promised land in the Arctic. Their perilous journey and near disastrous misadventures in Iceland are as harrowing as the plight of the Israelites. Like Moses, Mara is a figure of destiny whose face appears in mysterious rock carvings, but unlike the biblical patriarch, she gets no help or obvious messages from on high.

Bertagna is a gifted storyteller whose often lush prose carries the reader along as surely as the tide. Her young protagonist is well drawn. Led on by fear, grief, and the almost blind faith of youth, Mara makes mistakes that cost lives and try her burgeoning sense of self. She is a natural leader with limited experience, a young person forced at an early age to take on adult responsibility, the adults of the world having squandered everyone’s birthright. Among the refugees are bands of inarticulate feral children whose wild state is an element in Bertagna’s indictment of today’s adults.

In both of these books the world is in terrible shape. Bertagna makes no effort to hide or diminish the potential for global suffering awaiting the inevitable rise in global temperature. We know that whole nations have drowned and that those victims unlucky enough not to be included in one of the fabricated havens face the collapse of land-based civilization are on their own. Even the URLs of the old world wide web have collapsed into piles of electronic rubble, a detail that is likely to resonate with YA readers for whom connectivity is a way of life.

Dystopian narratives for young adult readers are problematic. Just how does one depict accurately the dismal state of world affairs without seeming to point to a deadly future? M. T. Anderson’s award-winning novel *Feed* is an excellent case in point. Anderson wants his novel to have a positive message, to be a cautionary tale. The problem is that the events and imagery of the book seem to preclude almost any future, happy or otherwise, for humans. Like Anderson, Bertagna strives to tell an inconvenient truth. Like his character Titus, Bertagna’s Mara is an appealing and reflective youth. She suffers losses even greater than those sustained by Titus, but whether her efforts will actually save a subset of humanity or whether things are too far gone, no one can tell from *Zenith*, the indeterminate ending of which clearly demands a third volume.

Both *Exodus* and *Zenith* endow Mara and her peers with agency. Though we cannot know whether they will make a go of it in the far north, they are giving it their all, and there is reason to hope on their behalf. When she and her small band emerge from a winter underground, “a green wind blows over the mountains,” and hope seems to await them on the horizon. In this sense these books remind me of Billy Joel’s “We Didn’t Start the Fire,” an anthem for his and my generation as we struggle to deal with the colossal errors to which we are heirs. Mara and her troupe did not make the world in which they must struggle to survive. One comic and telling note is that sometime during the twenty-first century the word “dubya” entered the vernacular to mean someone decidedly stupid. Hence, the dubyas of yesterday and today have sold out the Maras of tomorrow. Those in power today who think that colonial wars and oil company profits are more important than saving our descendents from climatic cataclysm deserve Mara’s plaintive rebuke. That rebuke makes Bertagna’s global warming fictions cautionary as well as predictive.

At the same time, the plot of *Zenith* is fast-moving and exciting. Like many of the best nuclear holocaust fictions, the action and prose style of *Zenith* serve to divert attention from the omnipresent realities. The young Glaswegian novelist has told another good an important story.
Sixty Days and Counting

Bruce L. Rockwood


*Sixty Days and Counting* is the third book in Kim Stanley Robinson’s *Climate Change Trilogy*, which began with *Forty Signs of Rain* (2004) and continued in *Fifty Degrees Below* (2005). It brings the myriad themes and subplots of what is really one extended novel published in the traditional three-parts of SF publication to an optimistic if somewhat uncertain conclusion. Major personal conflicts that have been building in the first two installments are at least temporarily resolved, and the author leaves us with a hopeful prognosis for the ability of 21st century global society to address the political, institutional, economic and scientific challenges of realistically addressing the rapidly unfolding consequences of climate change.

Accomplishing all this even in three volumes is a tall order, but Robinson has similarly tackled environmental themes with political overtones in *The Mars Trilogy* and *The California Trilogy*, and is adept at introducing complex scientific concepts and political insights through credible characters whose individuality is not lost amidst the exposition. His plot entwines the reconciliation of Tibetan exiles with a China threatened by ecological devastation, and the election as President of Phil Chase, a Senator whose values and determination seem a combination of FDR and Al Gore. With the help of a rogue intelligence agent whose software leak is reverse engineered by clandestine associates of Argentine immigrant scientist Edgardo Alfonso, a black-Ops intelligence gathering unit fails in its attempt to steal the election by manipulating computerized voting, and Chase’s election is “unstolen.” The black-Ops unit may be in league with establishment political figures reminiscent of Dick Cheney or Karl Rove. The scientist Alfonso is motivated by his recollection of the dirty war in his own country (180-188) to help the main character in this final volume, Frank Vanderwal, protect both Chase’s election chances and the agent, who is Frank’s lover Caroline. Frank is a troubled academic on leave from UC/San Diego’s Department of Bioinformatics to work at the NFS, who finds himself homeless after the flooding that devastates Washington, D.C. in the first book of the series. He then blends a feral life in a tree house or living out of his van, exploring his paleo-human nature with fellow homeless Washingtonians, with his day job as aid to the new White House Science Advisor in the Chase White House. He keeps tabs on various R&D projects around the world, and we see the changes and challenges through his eyes as he travels in his work. Other insights are gleaned through the family life and crises of Charlie Quibler, a Chase environmental staffer and primary care giver for his two young sons, and his wife Anna Quibler, whose continued work at NSF aims to provide seed money and support for responsive science wherever she can.

The uncertainty left open for our consideration is whether — even with the right leadership finally in place in the United States after years of denial and neglect, and the coordination of scientific innovations with financial support from world governments, the World Bank (141-142), and the reinsurance industry — there are still the time and resources available to stave off global disaster in the next fifty years.

James Lovelock, creator of the Gaia hypothesis, offers one answer to Robinson’s uncertainty. He posits that it is already too late to avoid major dislocations, and argues for quick reliance on nuclear power to enable us to reduce our carbon dependence immediately or risk the loss of civilization, in *The Revenge of Gaia: Earth’s Climate Crisis & the Fate of Humanity* (N.Y.: Basic Books, 2006). Elizabeth Kolbert’s investigative journalism in *The New Yorker*, published as *Field Notes From a Catastrophe* (N.Y.: Bloomsbury USA, 2006) is not much more optimistic. Robinson recognizes that even with Phil Chase as President, acting with redoubled vigor to push his legislative agenda after surviving an apparent assassination attempt, we won’t find solutions quickly. “‘This is just a start,’ Phil would say at the end of his press conferences, waiving away any questions that implied he had suddenly become more radical. ‘All this had to be done. No one denies that, except for special interests with some kind of horrid financial stake in things staying the same. We the people intend to overturn those destructive tendencies, so grab this tiger by the tail and hold on tight.’” (323)

The novel concludes with Phil Chase finally helping Frank to run down Caroline’s ex-husband and his fellow clandestine agents, who seemed hell bent on using a frighteningly believable “total information awareness” system to control the country. There is enough ambiguity at the end to leave you wondering about Caroline’s motives, and the work that remains to be done is as great, if not greater, than what faced the protagonists at the end of Sinclair Lewis’s novel of a
fascist take-over in America, *It Can't Happen Here* (1935). That is, the radical reconstruction of American values is underway, but don't kid yourself into thinking that we are home free yet. Unlike contemporary commentators who see America's primary "enemy" as the "other" in foreign lands, whom we must confront through military might — whether terrorists in the Middle East, or Robert A. Heinlein's bugs in *Starship Troopers* (N.Y.: Putnam, 1959) — Robinson's novel reflects Pogo's insight that our greatest challenge is our own way of life. [One solution is suggested by the stabilization wedges advanced by Robert Socolow at Princeton; see: http://www.princeton.edu/~cmi/]

Throughout the novel, Frank makes use of philosophical reflections on Emerson and Thoreau from his "Emerson for the Day" web site to center himself as he struggles to overcome his increasing inability to make decisions, while the Quiblers ponder the meaning of the close connection their youngest son, Joe, develops with the Khembalis (Tibetan) community. Robinson demonstrates sensitivity to issues of gender, race and sexuality in a variety of settings that stands as a rebuke to the shrill personal and political discourse of our present day. In that respect, his novel may be seen as an alternative view of our present situation, more utopian than dystopic, hopeful and understated. It would make a perfect Robert Altman movie.

**FICTION mini-REVIEW**

**Hydrogen Steel**

Amy J. Ransom


*Hydrogen Steel* is a powerful machine intelligence willing to destroy anything that threatens the security of information it was programmed to protect: the truth about Earth's destruction. K. A. Bedford's Aurealis-nominated third novel takes place in the same universe as his earlier works, *Orbital Burn* and *Eclipse* (the latter won Australia's award for Best SF Novel). Retired homicide inspector Zette McGee faces Hydrogen Steel as she investigates the death of an android whose self-consciousness she would normally consider anomalous, if she had not inadvertently discovered her own questionably human status. Androids commonly fill professions requiring limited, programmable skill sets; referred to as "disposables," they are not considered self-aware in a fully human sense. This hybrid detective novel takes place in a far future human-colonized, galactic space and contains some elements of hard SF. Its potential critical interest may lie in its contribution to robot/AI fiction. However, its very self conscious speculation about the nature of humanity offers little beyond that found in Capek's *R. U. R.* Narrated in the first person by the (female) android police detective, the novel does alter the strategy of Dick's related text, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*. The novel interrogates the treatment of androids as things, a praxe found, of course, in human slavery and engages, albeit in a minor way, the issue of postcolonial identity: not only is McGee's Australian "identity" a programmed fiction, she discovers entire rogue colonies of self-conscious disposables. Of interest to libraries specializing in Australian popular culture and "other" SFs.
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