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Summer 2009

Editors
Karen Hellekson
16 Rolling Rdg.
Jay, ME 04239
karenhellekson@karenhellekson.com
sfrareview@gmail.com

Craig Jacobsen
English Department
Mesa Community College
1833 West Southern Ave.
Mesa, AZ 85202
jacobsen@mail.mc.maricopa.edu
sfrareview@gmail.com

Managing Editor
Janice M. Bogstad
McIntyre Library-CD
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
105 Garfield Ave.
Eau Claire, WI 54702-5010
bogstajm@uwec.edu

Nonfiction Editor
Ed McKnight
113 Cannon Lane
Taylors, SC 29687
emcknight@andersonuniversity.edu

Fiction Editor
Edward Carmien
29 Sterling Rd.
Princeton, NJ 08540
sfrafiction@mac.com

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

SFRA Review

A publication of the Science Fiction Research Association

In This Issue

SUBMISSIONS

The *SFRA Review* encourages submissions of reviews, review essays that cover several related texts, interviews, and feature articles. Submission guidelines are available at http://www.sfra.org/ or by inquiry to the appropriate editor. Contact the Editors for other submissions or for correspondence.
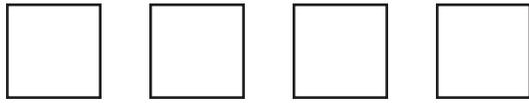
SFRA Review Business

EDITORS' MESSAGE

Term Limits

Karen Hellekson and Craig Jacobsen

Alert readers of the SFRA meeting minutes that appear in this issue will find that there is already discussion about replacing the two of us as editors of the *Review.* When we came on board, we agreed with each other that we would do the job for three years, and we are now midway through the second year. If you have an interest in editing the *Review,* feel free to contact us (sfrareview@gmail.com) and ask questions. We'll print a job description when it's time to actually fill the job. We also hasten to stress that the three-year limit is one we made up, for our own sanity and to permit long-term planning. There is no term limit set by SFRA bylaws, and successful candidates may serve as long as they like at the Board's discretion.

We are foreseeing an era of transition: we are not sure how much longer the print version can be sustained, but sustain it we will, in part because the membership likes the print version. We anticipate that some content will begin to migrate online, particularly for sections of the *Review* that are particularly time-sensitive, such as calls for papers, many of which are obsolete by the time we go to print. We're looking forward to exploring and exploiting the full capabilities of our new Web architecture.

Meanwhile, you're not getting rid of us that fast. We continue working behind the scenes to bring you interesting, relevant content. As always, we encourage all SFRA members to submit content to us. We are always on the lookout for people to research and compile the calls for papers. We have some 101s in the works, including one in the New Weird, and this issue features Ritch Calvin's Mundane SF 101. We would love to see some One Course features and particularly invite teachers to send us theirs. Those who wish to contribute reviews should contact the respective review editors, whose contact information is listed on the masthead.
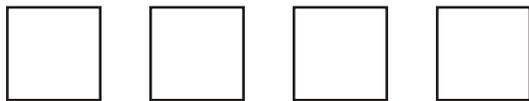
SFRA Business

CONFERENCE COORDINATOR MESSAGE

SFRA 2009 Conference Wrap-up

Lisa Yaszek and Doug Davis

Over 100 people attended SFRA's 2009 annual conference in Atlanta, GA at hotel midtown this past June. Braving floods, airport closings, all-night interstate drives, frozen travel budgets and the second great depression, guests came from as far as South America and were as young as four months of age. The conference featured 21 panels of academic papers, a large book room with four independent dealers, a day-long stream of creative readings by seven guest authors, and an southern buffet awards banquet. We tried out several new initiatives at this year's conference: all of our guest authors served as respondents for each of the conference's 21 panels; we featured two film screenings by local independent filmmakers; the "Sci Fi Lab" podcast interviewed each of our guest authors; Georgia Tech and WREK radio filmed and taped much of the conference presentations; and the SFRA joined forces with the SFWA to hold the first open mike reading night by SFWA members.

Those who didn't make it to Atlanta this year can soon see several of the panels and hear all of the interviews and readings and awards ceremony speeches online—we will send out details to the SFRA e-mail list as soon as they are available. The conference venue, the hotel midtown, was a welcoming and comfortable place, conveniently located in midtown Atlanta amidst a variety of eateries and attractions. The hotel's steep discount on rooms, the generous financial support of Georgia Tech and Gordon College, and a larger than expected number of walk-in conference registrants all helped us bring in the conference under budget, leaving the SFRA with a nest egg for the forthcoming conferences in Arizona and Poland.

As usual, SFRA conference participants explored a wide array of issues related to teaching, reading, and researching SF across media. As conference hosts, we did not get to attend nearly as many panels as we might have liked, but were delighted to hear the many lively conversations they provoked afterward. (And our students continue to reference these panels and conversations in their class discussions this summer.) We were also delighted to see so many conference participants engage the conference themes of engineering the future and southern-fried science fiction and fantasy in their presentations. The latter theme was particularly fruitful for those scholars who explored how the complex and often contradictory history of race relations in the American south inform the unique storytelling tradition that Mark Dery, Alondra Nelson, and others call "Afrofuturism." Indeed, as many of the scholars exploring this subject made clear, it is precisely by working within new storytelling traditions that science fiction writers begin to engineer new futures for their chosen genre as well.

Of course, we cannot take sole credit for the success of SFRA 2009. Instead, we hope you will all join us in thanking Susan George, Mary Pharr and Patrick Sharp for preconference support, and then in thanking Susan and Mary again for running the registration table. We also want to thank Susan, Joshua Cuneo, Craig Jaconsen, Shelly Rodrigo, Jason Embry, Joseph Brown, and Jason Ellis for serving as our author liaisons: as one author put it, "I felt safe and cuddled!" by all the careful attention. Thanks also to Ed Carmien for hosting Open Mike Night, Paul Clifton for organizing the WREK interviews; and last but absolutely not least, our good friend who organized the conference program, oversaw the multimedia room, supervised the graduate student ice and beer brigade to the Windsor Suite, and made all the clocks run on time: Jason Ellis.

Update and Request for Help

Leslie Kay Swigart

As reported in the Summer 2008 Review (#285: 5), the SFRA, in partnership with the University of South Florida Libraries Digital Collections (Dr. Mark I. Greenberg, Director, Special Collections and Florida Studies Center), is engaged in a project to digitize the complete run of the *SFRA Review* (originally the *SFRA Newsletter*) from issue #1, 15 January 1971. Just before the 2009 Conference, Mark's colleague Richard Bernardy (Digital Collections Systems Administrator) reported that the first round of digitization had been completed, thanks primarily to Jan Bogstad, the *Review*'s managing editor, who provided most of the initial batch of copies for the project.

These original copies were converted to searchable texts in the most labor-intensive fashion, without "disbanding" (chopping the spine and scanning the now-loose pages), because the originals will now be donated to the SF Collection at the Kenneth Spencer Research Library of the University of Kansas (http://spencer.lib.ku.edu/sc/sf.shtml), our hosts for the 2008 conference. It is hoped that we can complete the digitization project, and the KU collection of original issues, but this can only happen with your assistance.

As this is written, in mid-July, the digitized collection is incomplete. I've recently received five of the missing issues (#231–234, 257) from Art Evans at *Science Fiction Studies* (thanks Art!); these issues will be sent to Florida before I leave for Montréal and Worldcon. Thus, by the time you read this, the digital collection should include at least issues #31, 37–39, 41, 72, 105, 150/151, 158–179, 181–186, 188–204, 208–213, 215–285 (1974/Aug; 1975/Feb–Apr, Jun–Jul; 1979/Jun; 1982/Oct; 1987/Aug; 1988/Jun–Jul; 1990/Jul–Aug; 1990/Oct; 1993/Mar–Apr; 1993/Nov–Dec; 1994/Sep–Oct; 1995/Jan–Feb; 2008/Sum). An additional call or two for donations (or loans) will have appeared on SFRA-L, IAFA-L, and SF-Lit.

Have copies gathering dust on your overcrowded bookshelves? Taking up valuable space in your overflowing filing cabinets? If you have copies of the *Review*/*Newsletter* that you would like to donate to the project for digitizing and then donation to KU (or other incomplete institutional collections should we receive more than one copy of an issue), if you would like to *loan* your copies for the project and have them returned to you after scanning, or if you have questions about the project, please contact me. Also being sought are older copies of the *SFRA Membership Directory* for donation to KU and other special collections, but they are *not* part of the digitization project.

To view, browse, or search the digital collection of the *Review*, please point your browser to: http://purl.fcla.edu/usf/dc/s67.

To read about the USF Libraries' Science Fiction and Fantasy Collection, please see: http://www.lib.usf.edu/public/index.cfm?Pg=FeaturedCollection.

All donations of *Review*s, *Newsletter*s, or *Membership Directories* should be sent to me as coordinator of the project. My preferred mailing address is: PO Box 15294, Long Beach, California 90815-0294, USA. E-mail me at: lswigart@csulb.edu.

Changes to the SFRA Web Site

Matthew Holtmeier

There have been quite a few new changes to the SFRA site, and, as you might have noticed, it is still constantly going through changes. With all of the possibilities now available to us, it is difficult to choose what features will serve our organization best. So far, we've had a few suggestions from members that we've been able to implement. For example, we've added a resources section where members can post files, such as syllabi, class assignments, and other teaching resources. We also have a teaching forum where more permanent conversations regarding teaching science fiction can take place. For example, Phil Nichols has started a thread on "Ray Bradbury in Media" and Bruce Rockwood has posted some comments and ideas (and is soliciting suggestions) for a law and literature class he is teaching. Currently this is the only forum topic - please let me know if there is another guiding topic you would like to see structuring conversation on the Web site.

Perhaps the largest change on the Web site is that we've made online registration available to members. Now, when our next membership renewal starts (September), members have the option of updating their membership using our membership store. All members need to do is visit our membership store by clicking the "Join SFRA" tab on the Web site. You will recognize all of the normal membership types such as "individual" and "student." Recently, we have also made it possible to purchase optional journal subscriptions (*Foundation, New York Review of Science Fiction, FEMSPEC, Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts,* and *Locus*). To purchase these optional subscriptions at the reduced SFRA rate, all you need to do is include these items in your cart along with your SFRA membership. Of course, if you prefer the good ol' paper method, you can download the paper membership form under the "Membership" tab.

By making online subscription available to members, we are initiating the first step in the transition to a Web-based membership database. This should make finding like-minded members and communicating with them much easier. All members on the Web site now have a profile space where they can insert a few words about themselves, as well as a section for interests in science fiction styled as tags. If you are unfamiliar with tags, they are short descriptors generally used to organize information. Here, you are using the tags to describe yourself, so that each member who enters "Philip K. Dick" as an interest becomes part of a group. If you enter your profile and click on one of these tabs, it will pull up a list of members with the same tag. Want to connect with and contact other members interested in William Gibson? This is one simple way to do so.

We are still thinking and talking about how we might use the Web site to make membership to the SFRA a more useful and exciting experience. If you have anything you'd like to contribute, please let me know.

SFRA Announces New Grants

Shelley Rodrigo

Historically, the SFRA had a Support a Scholar fund that was funded from general donations on the registration form and any excess funds that the organization might have. The majority of the time, these funds were given to scholars to help cover costs for attending the annual conference and/or subsidize membership fees. The 2007–8 Executive Board decided to develop more cohesive grant applications for two reasons: first, the organization had a large amount of money in savings; and second, historically, grants given were not organized, advertised, and decided on in a systematic or balanced manner; typically, people or organizations asked and the president, or the EC, decided whether or not to give them money. The 2009–10 EC is happy to announce four new grants to support SF *Scholarship, Travel* to the annual SFRA conference, SFRA *Membership,* and SF *Organizational* support.

The new grant process includes calls for proposals as well as submission and blind evaluation processes (only the secretary of the organization will match names with proposals). Please check the Web site for more detailed information about grant procedures and deadlines. And although the organization still has robust savings, please realize that conferences will probably get more expensive and folks will continue to apply for these grants; therefore, do not stop giving to the SFRA Support a Scholar fund each year when you renew your membership!

2009–2010 Award Committee Personnel

Lisa Yaszek

SFRA announces the following committees for next year's awards and thanks their members for agreeing to serve. **Pilgrim Award:** Elizabeth Hull (chair); Gary Wolfe; Marleen Barr. **Pioneer Award:** Larissa Koroleva (chair); Sherryl Vint; De Witt Kilgore. **Clareson Award:** Doug Davis (chair); Paul Kincaid; Andy Sawyer. **Mary Kay Bray Award:** Patrick Sharp (chair); Jason Ellis; Susan George. **Graduate Student Paper Award:** Jim Davis (chair); David Mead; Alfredo Suppia.

Meeting Minutes

Shelley Rodrigo

SFRA Executive Board Meeting
Date: June 12, 2009; 10:38–11:05AM
Atlanta, GA

Attending:
Lisa, Yaszek, President

Ritch Calvin, Vice President
Shelley Rodrigo, Secretary
Donald M. Hassler, Treasurer
Adam Frisch, Immediate Past President
Craig Jacobsen, Coeditor, *SFRA Review*
Karen Hellekson, Coeditor, *SFRA Review*

I. Awards and Grants

A. Status of 2010 Award Committee Replacements (Lisa)—Have just begun looking for new members; at the business meeting discussed that we have streamlined all the committees to a 3-year rotation. All committees need one new member this year.

B. Status of organizational SFRA Grants (Shelley)—updated based upon comments from members, generic email; will announce and pass out at the general business meeting.

II. SFRA Annual Meetings

A. SFRA 2009: Atlanta, GA (Lisa)—seems to be going well; everyone who preregistered is here and we've had a bunch of walk-ins. Looks like we might be coming out $1,000 or $2,000 ahead. 70 preregistered and at least 10–15 walk-ins; we have approximately 85 attendees thus far. Let's make sure to track exactly what is going on in terms of day passes, etc, so we can be sure to emulate advertising and registration offerings in the future. It appears that regional folks really want one-day passes.

B. SFRA 2010: Phoenix, AZ (Craig)—delivered second of three deposit checks to the resort; we've started leaning on people to participate on specific panels; talking about doing some preconference workshops/short courses on Thursday morning: intro to SF studies (targeted to students in places without SF scholars); digital SF texts (targeted to folks with a primary literature background); and teaching SF.
We're going to do four areas of "review" panels: print, television, film and digital media. Definitely Friday and hopefully Saturday lunches: international scholar lunch (Pawel Frelik) and if we can afford it a second lunch with a scientist. Organization needs to talk about Joan Slonczewski doing lunch presentations; they are usually well attended. Any ideas/innovative ways to get the journal editors to come and participate?

C. SFRA 2011: Poland (Craig email chat with Pawel, all is looking good)

D. SFRA 2012: Detroit (ask Steve Berman to say a few things on Sunday)

E. SFRA 2013: West Coast, maybe Patrick with support from other West Coast (California) folks. If he took it in 5 years, he would want to host it on his campus in a new conference center.

F. Status of the SFRA Conference Bible (Ritch)—Scanned all in and have in PDF file. We'll put it up on the Web in some form. Make sure to tell Dave Mead he doesn't have to worry about scanning.

III. Publications, Web Site, and Listserv

A. *SFRA Review*: Status of contingency plan (Lisa)— Jan Bogstad, the managing editor may retire in 2 years. Lisa talked with Jan about the current financial arrangements. The University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire, is currently paying

for printing and mailing and Jan's time. The cost of foreign mailing is becoming increasingly expensive. The organization needs to be prepared in the next 3–5 years to go digital (which will probably coincide with Jan retiring and the ever-shrinking budget). What will be involved by moving online; infrastructure for notifying people (e-mail and USPS notification); consider reducing cost of membership or save money for grants. The current editors signed up for an informal 3-year term, ending of 2010. We need to start recruiting; we need to identify necessary skills and call for editors.

B. *Status of SFRA Archive*: The University of South Florida is very close to being done. All 120 issues in first batch and has completed a template catalog, standard sized, etc. However, they still are missing a few issues. If anyone has spare copies of any vintage, send. They want to know where to send DVD archives; we decided on one to president and another to SFRA archives.

C. *Internet SF database*: Ritch has manually entered bibliographic information for each article back to issue #250 and needs access to the archive material to do more.

D. *SFRA 2008 Proceedings* (Karen): peer review is completed and going well. McFarland has made the offer to do yearly proceedings; however, is that a path we want to go down? Karen needs $200 for offsetting various expenses (printing, mailing, etc.). Would McFarland be interested in doing an SF series instead of proceedings? Would SFRA be interested in starting its own print on demand press?

E. New Web site costs (Ritch): The Web site design company sent the invoice for the final billing and the page looks like it is ready to go live and the new site is the live site. Matt Holtmeier will hopefully get it up any minute now! At this point it will look and act like old site; however, other capabilities will phase in. The store site is up and there is a link from the site.

F. We need to be asking our key journals to make sure they are sending someone to conferences and do "work."

IV. Organizational Membership (Mack)

A. Increasing Numbers: up to 347 (there are membership forms down at the registration desk).

B. What is the Point of Membership? What does membership get? (Shelley asked): Membership in professional organization solely focused on SF; bundled discounted journals; directory (trying to expanded indexed materials); substantial number of institutional members who renew regularly; supporting/participating in an academic community, the new grants; refresh our call for members/publicity materials.

C. Members Directory: build in trying to do more robust indexing of member interests through updated renewal forms which we'll pilot this year in online renewals through the Web site.

D. Should we do online elections? (Adam)— just get a sense of the membership at the meeting; consider if you want to run for office (put slate together at end of next year's meeting)

VI. Other Old Business

VII. Any New Business

A. Hal Hall—retiring in the next 2 years and is concerned about the future of his database; current plan is to turn over to Cushing library and have triple ownership with library and IAFA.

He does have a few librarians in mind. Is SFRA interested in doing more work and having more control over the database?

SFRA GENERAL BUSINESS
Meeting Minutes

Shelley Rodrigo

Date: June 14, 2009; 9:00–11:00 AM
Atlanta, GA

Called to Order: 9:02 AM
Adjourn: 10:22 AM

EC Attending:
Lisa, Yaszek, President
Ritch Calvin, Vice President
Shelley Rodrigo, Secretary
Donald M. Hassler, Treasurer
Adam Frisch, Immediate Past President

Number of General Attendees: 17 conference attendees

I. Awards and Grants

A. Status of 2010 Award Committee Replacements (Lisa)
We have five award committees and all are operationalized (3-year rotating positions); we are looking for replacements. Email Lisa with suggestions or if you are interested in serving.

B. Status of organizational SFRA Grants (Shelley)—These developed out of general support a scholarship; Shelley will make sure to "announce" and "advertise" as needed. The grants are:
1. Travel
2. Membership
3. Scholarship
4. Organization

II. SFRA Annual Meetings

A. SFRA 2009: Atlanta, GA (Doug): Including guest authors we had 90 people; about a dozen walk-ins; total conference costs approximately $13,500 and brought in about $16,000 (including money from institutions). The hotel gave us a great deal. Bringing our own technology saved lots of money. We would like to see some of the extra money going towards travel grants and the 2010 conference. Congrats and thanks to everyone.
Motion to thank conference organizers and program director; seconded.

B. SFRA 2010: Phoenix, AZ (Craig): Good shape! One more week for the low-low 2009 conference rate.

C. SFRA 2011: Poland (Lisa): We are on track and Pawel Frelik has a great deal of support.

D. SFRA 2012: Detroit (Steve Berman), proposal (introduced to Debby Randolph willing to work with as a cohost). Steve done some research on hotel rates; look into support for local SF Association; try to get some support from cohost institutions. Looking into local/regional writers, will work with Ed Carmien and the SFWA.

E. SFRA 2013 and beyond: Patrick Sharp and some colleagues are committed to making a conference happen in Los Angeles. Possible outreach to SLSA.

F. Hopefully 2014 out of country; someone asked if Andy Sawyer ever hosted in Liverpool?

G. Status of the SFRA Conference Bible (Ritch): In the mid-80s each conference directors would write up a report of logistics & strategies; the booklet was passed along until early 90s and now there is a huge gap; Ritch scanned and we'll do a wiki for recent conference directors so we can more easily update. We need to streamline conference fiscal processes including using PayPal.

III. Publications, Web Site, and Listserv

A. *SFRA Review*—going fine; remind everyone that Karen H. and Craig J. are halfway through their 3-year term; continue to recruit folks for 101 and One Course features. The SFRA Review is being partially underwritten by University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire, and if that is withdrawn it is no longer affordable to print. Jan Bogstad will be retiring in a couple of years; therefore, we are looking at different models and that the current paper-based model will probably not last beyond 5 years. Question: if we went digital would we go back to six a year? Open call for new hosts or transition to digital media (possible ad-hoc committee if we are seriously going that way)

B. Status of SFRA Archive (Lisa and Karen): Leslie Swigart is in charge of the project of digitizing all back issues to be archived at Florida, and everything will be online there (except *Directory* issues). The permanent URLs should be going up in the next two weeks. Could we sell a DVD of the entire archives?

C. *Internet SF database*: (Ritch): http://www.isfdb.org is a great resource to look for authors, publications, and reviews. The SFRA Review was not indexed; Ritch has begun the process of entering all the reviews (done back through #250).

D. *SFRA 2008 Proceedings* (Karen): Just got back from blinded pair review; the proceedings are having difficulty with internal coherence with topics, etc.; McFarland has offered to do annual proceedings.

E. New Web site (Ritch): We have a new Web site coming online; we have contracted with a company to redesign and host; the switch will be flipped very soon; look the same but there will slowly be added new features (blogs, wikis, online membership forms, etc.). We'll be doing a pilot of online membership renewal; however, we are figuring out balanced our traditional processes with digitizing processes.

IV. Elections

A. One of the questions is to hold our elections online; candidate statements are there and can easily follow-up with the act of voting; not worrying about logistical concerns (only one person vote, etc.); unanimous support for an online voting option. We think we'd get a lot more overseas votes if we have online elections.

B. We are always looking for candidates; email Adam if you are interested in serving. Request not to use rhetoric of "I was talked into running; however, I'm not interested."

V. Organizational Membership (Mack)

A. For the last couple of years we've seen a gradual upward trend; 2008 at about 346 members (stopping in approximately August); 2009 we are already at 347; one of these years we'll reach 400. It's the highest our numbers have been in decades. We are going increase the payment we make to the regular journals $1 per member per journal (*SFS and Extrapolation*) to cover the increasing cost of mailing. Currently, we can absorb this in our budget without increasing the cost of membership.

B. Request about adding another pass through journal. We have put adding additional journals online until we have an online membership renewal system that can more readily have a database track everything.

C. Request to track data about the membership; not seeing us get new librarians, archivist and bibliographers. We put Hal Hall on this issue. Everyone recruit! We might not have as many scientist as well.

VI. Other Old Business

A. Mack reminds us that during this period of transition toward electronic renewal of membership and an electronic *Directory*, members must continue to watch for physical mailings through the post as well as to be sure they have some form of the renewal form on file with the officers.

VII. Any New Business

A. Hal Hall's database: The Science Fiction and Fantasy Database (http://sffrd.library.tamu.edu/); Hall will be retiring and not know what will happen with/to the database. His ideal is to having Cushing Library keep it and have cosponsored with IAFA and SFRA. What would the costs be? Ask Hal what the actual costs of hosting it. The idea of the association owning intellectual work is a good thing. The concern is if we own it and there are problems, does the organization take that bad rap. It does already have the ability to make corrections and additions. This also comes back to recruiting librarians and bibliographies. Ask people to take ownership of specific journals (to update, edit, etc.). Possibly talk to current members (Andy in the UK, etc.). Even maintaining the architecture that the data is in is a huge job in itself. Definitely people agree that SFRA has a say. Try to get some institutions working collaboratively. Another issue is whether or not we would want to collaborate with IAFA—at minimum it is complicated to collaborate with another organization.

B. John Clute's encyclopedia will soon be going online (possibly another membership benefit or pass through subscription).

C. History of the Organization: We need someone to write a history (founding member is no longer with us, earliest events are falling behind); Oral history; some year someone followed around for a few years; could imagine Bill Hardesty take under consideration. Possibly Story Core (histories); students with media skills; ethical, IRB, etc. David Gregory is a new member is writing a dissertation on the SF community.

D. Facebook: Patrick Sharpe has offer to run the Facebook page. And do we need to have a concerted social media effort. Start an ad hock meeting on Social Media.
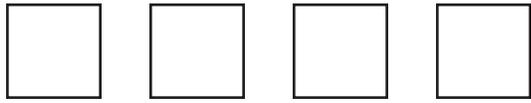
2008–2009 SFRA AWARDS

Remarks for Pilgrim Award

F. Brett Cox

One of the many gaffes of which I am habitually guilty is failing, in social situations, to introduce one friend to another under the mistaken assumption that they've already met. This occasion is far too momentous for me to take that risk. My impulse is to say, truthfully, that this year's Pilgrim Award winter needs no introduction. But on the off chance that any of you have not met him, permit me to introduce you.

Brian Attebery is professor of English at Idaho State University, where he teaches courses in American literature, American Studies, folklore, and, of course, the literatures of the fantastic. He is the author of *The Fantasy Tradition in American Literature: From Irving to Le Guin,* published by Indiana University Press in 1980; *Strategies of Fantasy*, published by Indiana UP in 1992; and *Decoding Gender in Science Fiction*, published by Routledge in 2002. He coedited *The Norton Book of Science Fiction*, published in 1993, and wrote for that indispensable volume a teacher's guide that remains perhaps the single most useful such instrument I have ever encountered. He has also published articles and reviews too numerous to mention, and in 2006, a short story in the prestigious online magazine *Strange Horizons*. And, as if all that weren't enough, he currently serves as the editor of *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts.*

Brian's three full-length books clearly demonstrate the breadth of his knowledge, from his deep awareness of the traditions of American literature that inform much of the science fiction and fantasy work that all of us in this room have devoted ourselves to, to the theoretical sophistication that can, and should, be brought to bear on the literature of the fantastic, to his unceasing testimony to the crucial role of gender in the study of literature. They are one and all important books, influential books, indispensable books. For three decades he has been fully engaged not only with the texts of the fantastic, but with its communities; he has been a regular and welcome presence at not only SFRA but also ICFA, Wiscon, Readercon, and other conventions and conferences. Brian understand not only what we do, but who we are.

I can only add that the Pilgrim Award committee was in a state approaching shock that Brian had not already been recognized for his career achievements. So I take the greatest pleasure, both professional and personal, in soothing our jangled nerves by presenting the 2009 Pilgrim Award for lifetime contributions to science fiction and fantasy scholarship to Brian Attebery.

Remarks for Pilgrim Award

Ursula K. Le Guin

[The following remarks by Ursula K. Le Guin were also presented at the 2009 SFRA Awards ceremony.]

Our field of writing and scholarship is wondrously lucky to have a Brian Attebery working in it—a brilliant and passionate advocate, a careful and original thinker, and a man of peace.

Science fiction fosters a rather cantankerous breed of writers and readers, given to shouting at one another and resigning from things. And scholars are all too often given to intense territoriality and discreetly malevolent one-upmanship. Brian never plays any of these games or pays the slightest attention to them. He really doesn't. I've never been able even to get the least little bit of gossip out of the man. He just can't. His mind works differently. It sees likenesses not differences, wholes not fragments, sees the shape intended or implied through the failure to fully attain it.

Science fiction and fantasy is, in its own strange way, still a genuine community of people, and Brian is the kind of man a tribe depends on, a nonjudgmental teacher with a true sense of what our tribal culture is, what it is we do and why we do it. His writings take advantage of what's useful in modern literary theory without ever wandering off into the trendy obscure; they are both unprententious and sophisticated, adventurous and accessible. My favorite of his books still is *Strategies of Fantasy*, but all Brian Attebery's strategies of thought and criticism are fruitful and intriguing. Surely nobody could better deserve the Pilgrim Award.

Pilgrim Award Acceptance Speech

Brian Attebery

Thank you to the SFRA, the Pilgrim Award Committee, and all the friends I have made over the years through my work on fantasy and science fiction. Let me start by taking you back through some of those years.

When I was a graduate student, just starting to work on my dissertation, I remember sitting in Robert Scholes's office at Brown University when his telephone rang. It was a long-distance call, so he excused himself and took it while I looked around and wondered if I would ever have so many books, an office that comfortable, or a job. Most of what I heard of the conversation was Scholes saying, "Yes, Darko…No, Darko." Afterward he explained that it had to do with something called the Pilgrim Award, given out by the Science Fiction Research Association—the first I had heard of the award. I don't think it was the year Darko Suvin got the award. They were discussing that year's winner: Brian Aldiss, maybe, or Tom Clareson.

At that time, I had never been to a science fiction conference. I had never met any science fiction writers, or any scholars of the fantastic except for Scholes and my adviser Barton St. Armand, an Emily Dickinson scholar with a side interest in H. P. Lovecraft. Aldiss, Clareson, and Suvin along with Delany, Russ, and Le Guin: all of them were just names in books or on the pages of *Extrapolation* and *Science-Fiction Studies* (which still had its hyphen). Yet I knew their voices.

These were people engaged in a fascinating conversation about the literature that most appealed to me: the literature of the possibly possible (SF) and the unapologetically impossible (fantasy), rather than the merely real. They were the inner circle. They were witty, illuminating, alarmingly erudite. They were doing something new and they knew it: their writing was filled with a sense of discovery and hope. They really were pilgrims in space and time. I wanted to join them, though I hardly felt I had anything to add.

Shortly afterward I gave my first academic paper, at the South Atlantic Modern Language Association. It wasn't particularly good. That didn't matter too much since it was up against a humor panel that included Art Buchwald and Mark Russell. Our session could have been held in a broom closet. At any rate, I was trying to show that contemporary writers like Le Guin and Zelazny were the true inheritors of the American romance tradition represented by Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville. Actually I still think that's true. It just isn't very interesting. It doesn't really offer a new way to read, which is ultimately what critical work is for.

Before I could think about new ways to read, though, I had to become aware of how I had been taught to read and why. That meant learning a lot of history: literary history, cultural history, history of criticism, history of teaching. Sometimes it meant assembling the history first, so that I could then learn it. The dissertation I wrote with Professors St. Armand and Scholes was a history of American fantasy. It was published as a book, which makes it look like a final product. I didn't realize at the time that it was really just Volume I, the groundwork for the kind of study I wanted to do once I figured out how to do it.

I also had to unlearn most of what I had been taught about reading, or at least to become aware that my ways of reading were the product of particular social situations and historical movements. Since I was trained in a combination of New Criticism and F. R. Leavis's Great Tradition, both of which are very good at pretending to be universal, it took a lot of theoretical digging to expose and uproot my own critical assumptions. I'm still working on that project. I've been helped, over the years, by friends and colleagues at Idaho State University; by Seymour Chatman's NEH seminar on narrative theory, which gave me many of my digging tools; and by the community of scholars in fantasy and science fiction whose conversation still engages and challenges me.

From the very beginning, I have thought about writing. About the time I was sitting in Robert Scholes' office, I was also trying to figure out who my writing self was. I did a lot of experimenting with style and form, imitating this or that critic and listening to my own voice on the page. I realized that when things were really working well, my writing self was smarter than I was. Or, more precisely, that there was a language of scholarship, a set of rhythms and terms and rhetorical structures, that allowed me to make discoveries I wasn't capable of making on my own.

Over the years, I have had several crises of confidence and conscience: what am I doing and why is it worth it? Who cares about this stuff anyway? Each time, my way out of the crisis has been through writing and thinking about writing. I really should print out a set of Rules for Writers and frame it over my computer, since I keep coming back to the same realizations about my work. The discoveries are nothing earthshaking. I'm sure lots of people have discovered them before, but they are central to what I am trying to do as a scholar, and they are the sort of thing that we all have to discover for ourselves, on our own personal journeys.

Discovery number one: my real work is writing. One of the major perks of working on fantasy and science fiction is getting to meet authors whose works we study and teach. Thanks to Robert Scholes, who suggested my name to an editor, one of my first scholarly gigs was to write an encyclopedia entry on Ursula Le Guin—up until that time, just one of those distant, Olympian voices. She was nice enough to allow me to come to Portland to interview her—and thereby to begin a thirty-year friendship. At the first SFRA conference I ever went to, in Rolla, Missouri, I got to hang out with Suzette Haden Elgin and other SF writers. Over the years at SFRA and the International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts, I have met most of my other idols, including Gene Wolfe, John Crowley, Roger Zelazny, and too many others to name. That's all wonderful, but it also tends to generate writing envy. You probably know the feeling: you're surrounded by creative people, and you're just a hanger-on, a wannabe, a parasite. People hear that you do something with science fiction and they ask, "What have you written?" And they don't mean "Which scholarly journals have you published in?"

My discovery came when I thought about my days. What do I spend most of my time doing? I do a lot of things—read, teach, edit, sit in meetings—but they almost all depend on the act of putting words together on a screen or a page. That's my primary work. I write. If I spend most of my time and energy writing, I *am* a writer, and I'd better pay attention to the craft of writing.

If you think about the list of Pilgrim Award winners, it includes about as many fiction writers as academics, from early winners Damon Knight and Jack Williamson (who was both) to last year's honoree Gwyneth Jones. I don't think this is an accident. They bring to SF criticism not only an awareness of the inner workings of fiction but also an ability to express ideas in lively and elegant prose. Essays are different from fiction, but good sentences are good sentences: specific, concrete, verb-driven, grounded in experience, anchored in the senses. There is no reason critical writing can't be entertaining. Nobody actually forbids us to develop personal voices, to tell jokes, to generate suspense, to make verbal music. These writerly techniques, I would claim, are not mere ornaments but enablers of thought. A pun can be the germ of an idea. (I take great pride in having once, in a scholarly work, described uncanny moments in fiction as "unheimlich maneuvers.") I actually learned a lot about writing criticism from poets—Donald Hall, Randall Jarrell, and William Stafford. They showed me that all writing is discovery; all writing is creative; all writing is autobiography in that it traces a journey and an evolution of the self. And all writing is hard work. If the writer doesn't do the work, the reader has to.

This is a painful truth for someone who is basically lazy. That's also my second realization: that I hate to write and will do almost anything to avoid it. The process is slow and uncomfortable and just plain difficult. If I'm going to get anything done—and I love having written even more than I hate writing—then I had better care passionately about what I'm writing about. I have

to feel that I might make a difference somehow, somewhere. Luckily, the issues I care about are deeply embedded in the literature I love. Both science fiction and fantasy have powerful things to say about perception, belief, identity, language, tradition, change, and imagination. I care a great deal about those things and about the genres that do most to remind us of their importance. If I ever start to lose my passion, I can always go read one of those smug cultural commentators who periodically dismiss SF or children's literature or fairy tales. You know, the ones who think they are too grown up for anything so enjoyable, or anything that takes us outside of the daily round of work, gossip, desire, and betrayal, which is to say, the literary mainstream. You see, even thinking about those commentators, I get passionate. I get another paragraph written.

Oddly, some people mistake passion for political correctness, a term that is far past its sell-by date. I'm not sure if those people think we are not supposed to care about injustice or about listening to different perspectives—or if they're just not very careful readers. I suspect the latter, since most of the negative comments I have received came in response to the anthology which Ursula Le Guin, Karen Fowler, and I put together, and most of the criticism showed no evidence that the complainers had read the stories or indeed anything past the introduction and the table of contents. Both the experience of editing the *Norton Book* and the reactions to it—negative and positive—have strongly affected the direction of my subsequent critical work. I have been more aware of what is at stake, and where my true passions lie.

My third discovery about writing is that it only works when I force myself to ask the hard questions. That's especially true when writing about something I care deeply about—passion has to be tempered and tested by critical thought. Otherwise it does become a mere exercise in political or aesthetic orthodoxy (and I think aesthetic correctness is more harmful than the political variety). When I look back at my early papers, like the one on science fiction and nineteenth-century romance, the problem is not that they're badly written or that they misread the material. It is that they don't probe deeply enough into their own—which is to say, my own—assumptions and reading practices. I didn't ask hard enough questions.

But what exactly is a hard question?

Well, that one is.

I believe that when we study literature, we are never studying just the literary work itself. Instead, we're examining our own interaction with that text. That is difficult because it means bringing to consciousness the very structure of consciousness, which is the business of theory. Psychological theory, political theory, feminist theory, semiotic theory: these all have to do with making the invisible patterns of thought and culture more visible, so that they can be challenged.

Sometimes I will be in the middle of writing about a story, when the Theory Fairy peeks over my shoulder and asks something like, "But what exactly *is* a character?" "What does fantasy reveal about the basic fabric of storytelling?" "If a concept like androgyny changes depending on the direction one looks from, what is its meaning?" These are "Whew!" questions. They're the sort of questions that make you question pretty much everything you've learned about literature and society and your own sense

of self. They're big questions: you know you're not going to answer them fully even in a book-length project.

Here are two quick ways to recognize a hard question. First, if you ever hear yourself saying, "Somebody ought to explain this or that," you have probably just posed a hard question, especially if you look around and can't find anyone else stepping forward to be that somebody. You read a study, for instance, of the way fiction depicts consciousness, and you think to yourself, "But what about shared consciousness or telepathy? How does that relate to narrated thought? I wish somebody would write about that." Bingo. You've just asked a hard question.

Second, a hard question is one that makes you take up a whole new field of study. When I was writing *Strategies of Fantasy*, I knew I wanted to examine the hybrid form of science fantasy, and I knew that science fantasies often turned out to be funny— Fletcher Pratt and Sprague de Camp's Harold Shea stories, for instance, which mix magic and logic with wonderfully comic results. In order to say anything about science fantasy, I had to spend a couple of months coming up to speed on theories of humor. A lot of what I learned never made it into the chapter on science fantasy, but I had to know the range of possibilities before settling on the one that worked, which was Arthur Koestler's concept of cognitive dissonance. Once I hit upon that idea, I had a key to the stories I was investigating. It wasn't just that they fit the pattern but that the pattern itself was significant. By being funny, these stories said something rather profound about the ways we cope with the unknown.

I have had to reeducate many times to meet the demands of this or that hard question. I have acquired a dilettante's knowledge of nanotechnology, the struggle for Aboriginal rights in Australia, psychological studies of gender formation, evolutionary biology, theories of metaphor, Native American storytelling, environmental ethics, the neurobiology of happiness. I've forgotten a lot of what I learned for particular projects, but I think each minicourse of study leaves a mark on me—each changes the way I see the world and the mirror worlds of literature. It's also the fun part of the job.

Not so much fun is confronting myself. The hardest part of hard questions is that they turn back on the questioner: they're double-edged blades. I think writers of fiction all know this: that if you are going to write a story about, say, violence, you are going to end up confronting all your own memories and fears and denials of violent impulses and behaviors. The same is true of good scholarship. You can't write about gender without examining your own desires and experiences and constructed gender identity. You can't write about fantasy and myth without questioning your own mythic beliefs. At some point, the hard question is going to be "Who are *you* to write about this?" and if you can't come up with a good answer, you probably won't finish the project. If you are lucky, that last hard question morphs into something more productive: "Who are you *when* you write about this?" In other words, what does the question tell you about yourself? What I often find, when I probe, is that myself—my writing self—is not any one thing, but an amalgam of many voices and many interactions.

The last of my discoveries, and the most comforting, is that we don't have to do all that hard work alone. I said near the beginning that a critical language can sometimes be smarter than

the person who wields it. The only way that is possible is if writing arises somewhere other than in the limited self.

In Greg Egan's story "Reasons to Be Cheerful," the main character has had diseased parts of his brain replaced with prosthetic tissue, which then must be programmed. Rather than impose a personality on him, psychologists create a composite identity from the memories of "4,000 dead men" (226). It is up to him to construct a coherent self from all those contradictory impressions and impulses. The character finally decides that "Everyone had to carve a life out of the same legacy: half universal, half particular; half sharpened by relentless natural selection, half softened by the freedom of choice" (227). Egan's story is a remarkably apt parable for writers. We are all composite beings, especially when we communicate.

Language comes in a box labeled "Some disassembly required." Before we can construct sentences of our own, we have to take someone else's sentences apart, and the words still retain the dents and nail holes from earlier constructions. They want to go back into the patterns they once had, which means that we are always echoing influences. We all start out as ventriloquists' dummies.

My first conference paper was a pastiche of critical voices that I found compelling, which explains how the American Renaissance imposed itself on science fiction of the 1960's. Over time, though, F. O. Matthiessen's and Daniel Hoffman's turns of phrase have been supplemented by discourse structures borrowed from Scholes, Chatman, Mikhael Bakhtin, Jane Tompkins and others, to the point where I begin to recognize my own critical voice in the mix. It's still their language, but I think it has become mine as well.

The most important thing about conversations, of course, is that they aren't monologues. It takes other people to show us who we are. We need other, contrasting voices to teach us how we sound. Even as I stand here talking, I'm also listening, watching for cues and reactions, and responding to things I've heard other Pilgrims say over the years. In that category, I include a lot of people whose scholarly journeys haven't yet been recognized by the SFRA with the official pilgrim's cockle shell. (I learned about pilgrims and their cockle shell badges, by the way, not from Chaucer but from the great fantasist E. Nesbit.) The great discovery I made so many years ago in Professor Scholes's office was that I was not alone, that there was a community of people dedicated to exploring the literature of the unknown and the impossible, and I might be able to get together with those others and talk with them. Better yet, that I was always in conversation with them, no matter where I happened to be, in Providence, or Atlanta, or Rolla, Missouri, or Pocatello, Idaho.

That last discovery is the one that allows me to write. I can face the terrible blank page as long as I know my fellow explorers are out there listening, ready to say "amen" when I'm right, to correct me when I'm wrong, and to take my bits and pieces of ideas and develop them into new and grander structures of thought and writing. So thank you all once again, not just for the award but for accompanying me on my pilgrimage and sharing tales as we go.

Remarks for Pioneer Award

Chrissie Mains

The Pioneer Award is presented each year to honor the writer of the best critical essay-length work published in the previous year. Past winners, including Veronica Hollinger, Roger Luckhurst, Brian Stableford, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr., and many others, have made substantial and significant contributions to the study of science fiction and fantasy. The names of other winners may be less well known—at least for now—but all have been recognized by the SFRA for writing that provokes thought and challenges ideas. This year, the Pioneer Award Committee faced a difficult and daunting task in selecting the award-winning article for 2008.

It was, simply put, a very good year for SF scholarship. Aside from the consistently excellent articles published by *Extrapolation, Science Fiction Studies, Foundation, JFA*, and other journals regularly publishing articles on science fiction, the committee had to find time to read articles published in new journals such as *Science Fiction Film and Television*, in special issues such as the *Yearbook in English Studies*, and in several anthologies published this year, including *Queer Universes* and *New Boundaries in Political Science Fiction*, among others. We had a lot of reading to do, much of it of outstanding quality, and it took some discussion to come to an agreement on a single work.

But in the end, we agreed to select Neil Easterbrook as the winner of the 2008 Pioneer Award for his article "'Giving an Account of Oneself': Ethics, Alterity, *Air*" published in *Extrapolation* 49.2. Neil's article on the award-winning and critically acclaimed novel by Geoff Ryman deals with both challenging theoretical concepts and a challenging work of SF literature in an engaging and accessible voice. Neil's analysis of the novel, in the view of one committee member, "unfolds from mundane to operatic grandeur, mirroring the movement of the novel itself," resulting in a fresh look at ethics as both process and an account of the selves of characters and readers; the article represents a fine example of original scholarship which expands the limits of knowledge in general and of "self-knowledge," the ultimate purpose of any research. Another committee member calls Neil's article "a consummate example of the qualities of the best SF scholarship…equally adept at engaging the complex philosophical history of ethics as at providing a nuanced reading of a complex and timely novel." And the third feels that Neil's article "wonderfully demonstrates the potential of literary criticism in general and SF scholarship more particularly not only to analyze and interpret compelling works of literature and cultural critique but also to explain that literature and the world to all kinds of readers, from scholars to students."

The committee—Larissa Koroleva, last year's winner Sherryl Vint, and chair Christine Mains—would like to heartily congratulate Neil, not only for this particular accomplishment for which he is being recognized tonight, but also for his past and future contributions to the criticism and teaching of science fiction. We all regret that none of us is able to be there to honor him in person.

Pioneer Award Acceptance Speech

Neil Easterbrook

Let me begin with the four greatest words someone in the audience at a banquet can ever wish to hear: *this will be short*.

Allow me to say three things.

Thing one. Thank you thank you.

Thing two. Like every one of you, I'm just grateful to find out that somebody somewhere found something I'd written of some interest. And to find out that somebody somewhere thought something I'd written marginally stronger than other things that others had written is extraordinarily gratifying.

But, and I now address the selection jury, *just what were you people drinking?* You notice that not one of them had the courage, not even the *dutch courage*, to show up here in Atlanta to defend the choice.

More seriously, the award makes me recognize how lucky I am, and the sheer contingency of the occasion. Because so much really good work is being done now, and in journals and books that are outside our core—of *Science Fiction Studies*, *Extrapolation*, *Foundation*, *JFA*, *Paradoxa*, *Utopian Studies*, *SFRA Review*, *Science Fiction Film and Television*, *Vector*, *Configurations*—jeeze, just considering the core journals, it is increasingly likely that this sort of fortuitous contingency will only metastasize. One of the judges told me that the short list was 17 essays, and my very sincere response was "why so few?" To repeat: there's lots of astonishingly good work now being produced by our community.

My essay just happened to come out in a journal and at a time when the sorts of things I was doing appealed to the jury, who this year just happened to be Chrissie Mains, Larissa Koroleva, and Sherryl Vint. Some of our colleagues write wonderful essays, but go their entire careers without such singular notice, and what a shame it is that they just happen to fall between the cracks. So I recognize how contingent such an award is, and I'm humbled to be included on the list with very distinguished past winners.

Thing three. I owe individual thanks to many people. For instance, to my older brothers Gregg and Frank. (*The bastards*.) They set an impossible standard of success. But couldna done it without 'em. (*The bastards*.)

Within the community of SF scholarship—:

First to Wendy Pearson and Susan Knabe, who included me in the special issue of *Extrapolation* devoted to Geoff Ryman;

To the nefarious cabal of Greencastle—Rob Latham, Art Evans, Joan Gordon, and especially Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr. and Veronica Hollinger;

To the folks now running *Extrapolation*, including Javier Martinez, Andrew M. Butler, and Mike Levy;

In several books and now for *Science Fiction Film and Television*, to Sherryl Vint and Mark Bould, who have encouraged me enormously, tolerating my delays and still taking everything I've written for them, and only occasionally telling me that this or that paragraph was *rubbish*;

To Fred Erisman, my colleague at TCU, who first urged me to join SFRA.

Many, many others have graciously befriended me at these conferences. Take Brian Attebery. First time I met Brian we were on a panel together, with Veronica, at ICFA. In my paper, called "9anxieties@sfcrit.edu", and following Sturgeon's law, I pretty much denounced 90% of SF criticism as a self-indulgent, incompetent fraud. Rather than calling me what I deserved, *an ignorant and arrogant little prick*, Brian warmly engaged me in conversation, talked me down from the window ledge—drew me out rather than called me out. That's the kind of convivial generosity I've experienced in the community of SF scholars, a community I'm now proud to be within—to carry the membership card, wear the decoder ring, and know all the secret handshakes.

But there's one last person I need to thank. His work and his influence have been profound, but he's always the man behind the curtain, too humble take any credit. One specific person drew me to this community, engaging my interest first by inviting me to ICFA and by then introducing me to everyone he knew, and he knew everybody, and that got me to SFRA; I owe Len Hatfield the deepest gratitude.

Thanks again.

Remarks for Clareson Award

David G. Hartwell and Doug Davis

Hal Hall is one of the founding scholars of the SFRA, and of them, one of the few leading bibliographers who compiled the history of SF criticism and of book reviewing. Hal has won numerous awards for his contributions to both library and science fiction publications, and we are delighted to present him tonight with another award, a career achievement award that honors his life's work in the service of science fiction scholarship.

One of the goals of scholarship is to leave a legacy upon which future scholars can build. Hal has met this goal doubly; as a curator, bibliographer, and indexer, he has worked diligently and tirelessly to celebrate and preserve science fiction's past and present. Hal has compiled valuable indexes of the field, including the science fiction and fantasy reference index, the science fiction book review index, and the science fiction research index. He is the Curator of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Research Collection of the Cushing Library at Texas A&M University. The science fiction and fantasy research collection contains not only hundreds of feet of original author manuscripts but also over 20,000 monographs and 10,000 periodicals covering five hundred titles, including over ninety percent of the American science fiction magazines and almost 90 percent of the British magazines published prior to 1980. The history of the field has been in safe hands.

And so has its future. The other half of Hal's legacy is virtual and digital. Hal has become one of the most important librarians in the SF field, and was the first to support Internet initiatives in the promulgation of bibliographic information about SF, fantasy, and horror. To complement his own efforts, he arranged to become host for the Science Fiction and Fantasy Research

Database, which is available online (http://sffrd.library.tamu.edu/). And so Hal became a nexus for all contemporary information about SF bibliography, both of fiction and of secondary literature. This is of course an ongoing process, but it is the best we have, and it keeps getting better.

After Everett Bleiler, and along with Neil Barron, Robert Reginald, L. W. Currey, Hal is of the great second generation of SF bibliographers (the first professional generation) who first told us what was there, who delineated the literary history of SF. Without him, we would be shallower and know less about SF. He is one of the giants upon whose shoulders we stand, who himself is still standing. It honors us to give him the Clareson Award for lifetime service to the field of science fiction studies.

Clareson Award Acceptance Speech

Hal Hall

Thank you to the SFRA, the award committee, and my colleagues here. It is unexpected, to say the least. To be honored in Tom Clareson's name is to be doubly honored. Tom was my friend, mentor, and colleague, and a gentleman of the first order.

He encouraged me to step onto the path that lead me to a career in the bibliography of science fiction, first in indexing science fiction and fantasy book reviews, and later to tackle the history and criticism literature. Little did I know where that would lead. Had someone told me there were 85,000 history and criticism items to track down, I would have been daunted. Nor, in 1969, did I expect the pilot issue of *Science Fiction Book Review Index* to result in listing 100,000 book reviews.

I am reminded of the running commentary with Neil Barron. When I presented him with a bibliography of 4,000 history and criticism items, Neil commented that surely that was almost all. "Less than half," I suggested. Later, when the number hit 20,000, Neil noted, "That has to the majority," to which I replied, "Less than half." Now I would tell Neil that I was an optimist — there are thousands more items related to the history and criticism of SF and fantasy to be located, in more languages than I can identify, much less read.

The database has moved to a new platform, and new software recently, and is now housed in the Texas A&M University Institutional Repository, a move that is intended to ensure availability and the potential of continued updating even after I cease to be an active contributor. With any luck, I will hang around long enough to revise many of the entries to be more uniform. Editorial decisions reached 35 years ago, designed for a printed book format, are no longer the preferred choices for a searchable online database. After that is done, a combined version of the book review indexes lurks in the back of my mind.

Finally, I am honored to be included in the company of previous Clareson Award winners.

Thank you.

Remarks for Mary Kay Bray Award

Ritch Calvin

On behalf of this year Mary Kay Bray Award committee, Patrick Sharp, Jason Ellis, and me, I would like to present this year's award for the best review, review essay, or extended essay in *SFRA Review* to Sandor Klapcsik for his review of *Rewired: A Post-Cyberpunk Anthology*, edited by James Patrick Kelly and John Kessel. The 2008 volume of *SFRA Review* presented us with quite a few very good selections, and we had a number of very strong contenders. However, we were able to settle fairly quickly upon Sandor's review. As members of the committee wrote, we were "impressed by the amount of knowledge he demonstrated in his review, and the way he was able to weave that knowledge into" the review. And, that he "seamlessly weave[s] a deep knowledge of cyberpunk into the review."

So, on behalf of the committee, I am very pleased to present the 2009 Mary Kay Bray Award to Sandor Klapcsik.

Mary Kay Bray Award Acceptance Speech

Sandor Klapcsik

I would like to express my gratitude for the Mary Kay Bray Award and the congratulations e-mails. I also feel obliged to thank my mentors in the United States and the United Kingdom. First, Mr. Andy Sawyer, whose SF Archives in Liverpool serve as a bridge between the two continents for science fiction scholars. Second, Mr. Gary K. Wolfe, whose reviews are models to follow. Third, Mr. Donald E. Morse, who first made me believe that I could study and write papers in the United States. And fourth, Mr. Michael Levy, whose advice and friendship helped me a lot while I was a Fulbright fellow at the University of Minnesota.

An extremely important thing that I learned in the United States is that the official sponsors should also be mentioned. In this case, it is the Fulbright Program, and the Zoltai Foundation in Minneapolis that I have to thank.

It is a great honor to win this prize, especially for a not-yet-doctor, not-quite-English-speaker like me. I am really happy that you liked my review—I enjoyed writing it.

I hope you are having a wonderful conference in Atlanta, and hopefully I can see you all in 2010—or, if the conference is held in the European continent, in Poland 2011. Thank you.

Remarks for the Graduate Student Paper Award

James Davis

The main mission of the SFRA is to promote scholarship in the field of science fiction, and a major component of that mission is to encourage graduate students in the field. Toward that end, SFRA provides travel grants to assist graduate students who wish to attend the annual conference, and presents annu-

ally the Graduate Student Paper Award for the best student paper presented at the previous year's conference, as judged by the members of the committee.

The 2009 winner is David M. Higgins, a doctoral student at Indiana University. David's paper, "The Imperial Unconscious: Samuel R. Delany's *The Fall of the Towers*," examines the political nature of Delany's trilogy. It was chosen unanimously by the members of the committee, who all cited its depth of research, originality of ideas, and clarity of presentation. The award consists of a certificate and a check.

Because of a family emergency, David could not be here this evening to accept the award. Accepting the award in his place is De Witt Kilgore, his advisor at Indiana University.

Graduate Student Paper Award Acceptance Speech

David M. Higgins

I'd like to thank the association and the awards committee very much for this honor, and I'm deeply sorrowful that I can't be there in person to accept the award this year. My paper, which was about Samuel Delany's series *The Fall of the Towers,* was a great joy to write, and I'd love to encourage anyone who is interested to check out Delany's early writing, which is often neglected by those who focus on his later works. And congratulations to all of this year's others award winners!
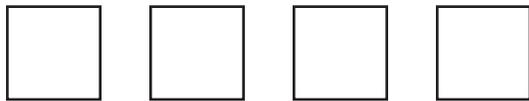
Feature: 101
Mundane SF 101

Ritch Calvin

What Is Mundane Science Fiction?

Much like cyberpunk, mundane science fiction is a form or subgenre of science fiction that is practiced by a small—though growing—number of science fiction writers. Just as the origins of (or codification of) cyberpunk can be placed with the publication the *Mirrorshades* anthology by Bruce Sterling, wherein he sets out the tenets or characteristics of cyberpunk and argues for the validity of the genre, the origins of (or codification of) mundane science fiction rests with Geoff Ryman, who "founded a small group of writers called the Mundanes" (Ryman, "Take" 1). The need for and the characteristics of mundane science fiction were codified in "The Mundane Manifesto" by Ryman and the Clarion West 2004 class of writers. They state in the opening line of the Manifesto that they are "pissed off and needing a tight girdle of discipline to restrain our sf imaginative silhouettes" (Ryman, "Mundane Manifesto" 4).

The Manifesto

"The Mundane Manifesto" was originally posted online, though it, contrary to all common wisdom about information made available on the Web, seems to have completely disap-

peared from cyberspace; only fragments of it remain. For example, a summarized version of it can be found at Wikipedia. com. Nevertheless, the Mundane Manifesto is reprinted in June 2007 issue of the *New York Review of Science Fiction* (#226). The Manifesto is composed of four main parts. Part 1 asserts, in nine statements, that many of the familiar tropes, techniques, and technologies of science fiction are unrealistic, and therefore, should be avoided. The mundanes hold that faster-than-light travel, hospitable planets, intelligent aliens, interstellar trade, communication with alien species, and alternate universes all remain too far-fetched, too unrealistic to be of interest. Furthermore, the belief in, advocacy of, and employment of these devices lead us to turn away from—to escape from—the importance and immediacy of crises here on planet Earth. As they conclude, "the most likely future is one in which we only have ourselves and this planet" (4). Although "mundane" is often taken to mean "banal" or "ordinary," it also denotes "of the world" (Ryman, "Geoff"; Kelly). Part 2, then, begins a list of "Stupidities" that have been created due to the improbabilities committed in part 1. The Stupidities include "alien invasions," "flying saucers," "devices that can translate any language," and slipping into alternate realities that differ from our own by small degrees. Part 3 acknowledges that the Stupidities have entertained and delighted many millions of readers and viewers; however, the mundanes assert that the destruction of those same Stupidities will be equally entertaining. Furthermore, they offer an "imaginative challenge" to science fiction authors to work from the standpoint that "Earth is all we have" (5). They contend that the (re)turn to the here and now will compel writers and readers to (re)awaken to the wonder and diversity of the Earth and to the dangers it currently faces. Lest the writer or reader think that such a move would eliminate the science from "science fiction," they argue that "robotics, virtual realities, enhanced genomes, nanotechnology, quantum mechanics" are all fertile grounds for mundane SF. Finally, part 4 sets out a number of "promises" by the mundanes. In these promises, they vow to create "a collection of mundane science fiction" that does not commit the "Stupidities" of science fiction, but to also have the freedom to write (stupid) science fiction, if they should choose to.

The Movement

Following the creation of the Manifesto, Ryman and others set out to make the case for mundane science fiction and to make it more visible. One strategy was to create a blog, *Mundane-SF* (http://mundane-sf.blogspot.com), which is subtitled, "Reviews and Science News (Caveat Lector: We Will Transform the Way You Think about SF)." Between November 2004 and June 2008, the blog was updated regularly. The posts by the five regular contributors to *Mundane-SF* consist of current science news (including news of the singularity, the antithesis of Mundanity); promo information on Ryman, mundane writers, and, especially, *Interzone* #216; analyses of the contents science fiction magazines, including *Analog, Asimov's, F&SF,* and others; and finally, defenses against attacks on mundane SF.

The Controversy

It should also be remembered that the trajectory and aims of mundane SF are not entirely new. For example, in 2000, sociologist Wayne Brekhus published "A Mundane Manifesto," in which he "calls for analytically interesting studies of the socially

uninteresting." Brekhus continues, "I argue that the extraordinary draws disproportionate theoretical attention from researchers. This ultimately hinders theory development and distorts our picture of social reality. This manifesto paves the way for an explicit social science of the unmarked (mundane). It is hoped that a similar manifesto can be written for the humanities." Finally, he suggests, "Although there are many deviance journals to explicitly analyze socially unusual behavior there is no *Journal of Mundane Behavior* to explicitly analyze conformity." Thus, well before Ryman does so, Brekhus argues that the focus on the "extraordinary" shifts our focus away from the "ordinary" and, ultimately, blinds us to the immediacy of the here and now. Instead, he calls for an explicit turn to the immediate and the mundane.

Furthermore, an SF Web site called *Futurismic: Near Future Science Fiction and Fact since 2001* (http://futurismic.com) also rejects out of hand many of the traditional forms of SF. The blog, like *Mundane-SF,* features science articles and essays on the effects of scientific discoveries on the human condition. According to the author guidelines, *Futurismic* rejects all fantasy, horror, and space opera, as well as offworld SF, distant futures, aliens, alternate histories, and time travel. Instead, they explicitly seek "mundane sf, post-cyberpunk sf, satirical/gonzo futurism, and realistic near future hard sf." So, as Abigail Nussbaum suggests, the changes demanded by the mundanes and occurring within other media are "aesthetic rather than ideological. […] The Mundane SF manifesto […] isn't spearheading a new movement in SF so much as describing a change already in effect and attaching ideological significance to it."

In the midst of these precursors and in the midst of larger changes, Ryman and the Clarion West writing class of 2004 produced their Manifesto. Just as cyberpunk, *Mirrorshades*, and Gibson and Sterling created a controversy, so too have mundane science fiction, *Interzone* #216, and Ryman. After the Manifesto was published, critics and criticism were swift and ranged from the well considered to the vitriolic. One of the first individuals to produce an extended commentary was Ian McDonald on his LiveJournal blog. There McDonald engages in a point-by-point response to the Manifesto, largely agreeing with many of the tenets (with occasional quibbles). His fundamental objection, however, much like Nussbaum's, is that a great deal of very good work (in a variety of media) is already being produced that fits the criteria of Mundanity, without any awareness of or need for a Manifesto. Similarly, in his column in *Asimov's Science Fiction*, James Patrick Kelly agrees with many of the tenets of mundane science fiction (MSF), but ultimately finds that too many of his favorites books and stories fall outside the tenets of MSF.

Rudy Rucker, on the other hand, is less sympathetic to the movement. Rucker produced his own "Transrealist Manifesto" in 1983, wherein, like the mundanes, Rucker rejects the "escapist" tendencies of science fiction. Instead, he argues for transrealism, in which "a valid work of art should deal with the world the way it actually is" ("realism"). However, Rucker argues that the "Stupidities" of science fiction, namely "time travel, antigravity, alternate worlds, telepathy, etc.," "are in fact symbolic of archetypal modes of perception, and, therefore, necessary components." In his rebuttal of the mundanes ("To Be or Not to Be"), Rucker also engages in a point-by-point refutation of the "implausibility" of FTL travel; he ultimately suggests that

he is the antithesis of Mundanity. While writing a time travel novel well might be difficult (and too often falls into implausible traps), instead of rejecting it as an SFnal trope, Rucker "prefer[s] to continue searching for ways to be less and less Mundane" ("To Be" 19).

Nevertheless, the intent and purpose of the Mundane Manifesto was not the same as Martin Luther nailing his theses to the church door, nor the same as Karl Marx's *Manifesto*. In fact, Ryman says that the Manifesto was "jokey" ("Third" 5)—though this was said three years later and after a great deal of vitriol—and never intended to be a "serious" statement, even though he considers writing fiction a "serious game" ("Third" 5). According to Ryman, if writers take up the challenge of Mundanity, if they are willing to adhere to its tenets and reject Stupidity, perhaps "something new [will come] out of it" ("Third" 5).

The Texts

The characteristics defined as mundane SF have long been around. In other words, SF that dealt specifically with planet Earth and the here and now existed long before the Manifesto. For example, Judith Merril's 1948 story, "That Only a Mother" focuses on a mother's love for her child and the near-future effects of radiation; Ann Warren Griffith's 1953 story, "Captive Audience," although set in 1984, extrapolates from advertising strategies, especially for women in the domestic setting. Furthermore, mundane science fiction also shares many characteristics with cyberpunk, postcyberpunk, and near-future science fiction. Istvan Csicsery-Ronay suggests that cyberpunk "reverses the 'expansive mode' of a science fiction heading into outer space 'to show that human consciousness can contain the future'" (Botting 121). For example, William Gibson's novels depict a "near future urban" (Botting 121) landscape, and Bruce Sterling's *Schismatrix* represents (some of) the near-future effects of global capitalism. Not all cyberpunk, however, would fulfill the criteria of Mundanity. "Mozart in Mirrorshades" (1984), by Sterling and Lewis Shiner, postulates an alternative past reality and therefore would be excluded.

With both the British and the American New Wave, a core group of writers, publications, and texts could be identified. Certainly, people argued over that core, and some individuals and texts were included over protests and denials. Similarly, with cyberpunk, and core set of writers emerged over time. Again, some individuals were included by association, and some individuals denied their inclusion, but Sterling, Gibson, and Rudy Rucker (among others) were taken as givens. *Mirrorshades*, *Neuromancer*, and *Wetware* were considered canonical.

In the case of mundane SF, however, the core and the canon are less clear. The signers of the Manifesto, with the exception of Ryman, are anonymous. *Mundane-SF* lists a numbers of writers who may have "accidentally" committed mundane SF. They include Brian Aldiss, J. G. Ballard, Gregory Benford, Michael Bishop, Pat Cadigan, Philip K. Dick, William Gibson, Gwyneth Jones, Nancy Kress, George Orwell, Kim Stanley Robinson, Bruce Sterling, Michael Swanwick, and Gene Wolfe (though it should be noted that all of these writers have also produced nonmundane works). The list also includes "newer" writers, including Ted Chiang, Cory Doctorow, Maureen McHugh, and Geoff Ryman. While many of these writers are associated with

earlier movements, at least some of their work fulfills, to varying degrees, the characteristics of MSF.

Developing a canon of mundane SF is also difficult. Certainly, *Interzone* #216 is intended to be a foundational text. In his introduction to the issue, Ryman reiterates and clarifies his vision for mundane SF. In her analysis of the special issue, Niall Harrison examines each of the stories therein and determines that on the whole, *Interzone* #216 does not make "a convincing case for mundane sf." According to Harrison, if mundane SF is intended to "reinvigorate our thinking about the future," then, ironically, *Interzone* #216 "isn't so much about looking forwards and thinking about change as it is about coming to terms." Nevertheless, *Interzone* includes stories by veterans such as Ryman, Élisabeth Vonarburg, and Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, and relative newcomers Lavie Tidhar, Billie Aul, R. R. Angell, and Anil Menon.

One of the features on *Mundane-SF* was called "mundane-spotting," in which "frankh" would—sporadically—examine the short new fiction published by SF magazines and read them for Mundanity. From "his" "mundanespotting" posts, a list of mundane writers (whether intentional or accidental) emerges, including John McDaid, Michael Burstein, Jeffery Kooistra, Susan Palwick, Bruce McAllister, J. R. Dunn, Jeff Carlson, Carl Frederick, A. R. Morlan, Greg Rollins, S. L. Gilbow, Jay Lake, G. D. Leming, Wil McCarthy, Charles, Midwinter, David Marusek, and Jason Stoddard. A number of established writers appear as well, including Maureen McHugh, Gwyneth Jones, Ben Bova, Jack Dann, Nancy Kress, Bruce Sterling, and Elizabeth Bear.

Finally, a number of novels fit into the mundane classification. In one of the earlier examples of MSF, and certainly written well before the Manifesto, is Maureen McHugh's 1999 novel, *China Mountain Zhang.* Nussbaum, commenting of several recent MSF novels, writes, "they take place on or around Earth, in societies largely the same as our own, and their scientific MacGuffins are suitably 'believable.'" The blogger Mandolin suggests that McHugh employs "many fascinating science fictional elements—future homophobia, America's loss of primacy as a global power, the colonization of Mars, people who can use technology to have flying races" that "function as the background in service to the main characters' more mundane problems. How can people learn to be happy with each other? How can a gay man, isolated and displaced, find his place in the world? The backdrops are Mars and a decaying future, but the problems are timeless." While much of the novel is Earth centered, the subplot of a Mars colony would compel MSF purists to discount the novel.

In 2004, or 0001 in the Year of the Manifesto, the mundane progenitor published *Air; Or, Have Not Have*. Although it is often categorized as such, Ryman himself contends that *Air* should not be taken an example of MSF. In an interview with Carolyn Hill, Ryman says that *Air* was begun before the articulation of the Manifesto (qtd. in Chiang 211). Instead, he calls it "Mundane fantasy" (211). Nevertheless, the novel does adhere to many of the MSF tenets. It examines the impact of a new technology on a small, remote village. While the novel does appear to be near future, and while it does appear to be Earth-based, the "Air technology" offered in the novel is not scientifically based, thereby rendering the novel outside the realm of MSF.

In Elizabeth Moon's novel *Speed of Dark* (2003), she examines notions of normalcy and modes of seeing the world. In a near-future setting, her protagonist is an autistic pattern recognitionist (shades of William Gibson). When a new technology enables a "cure" for autism, the protagonist ponders the effects on his self, his identity, and his way of apprehending the world. As the blogger Nyssa notes: "Moon's novel shows that there are many situations and issues that are relevant to our lives that can be explored. Even though Mr. Crenshaw is a cardboard cutout of the greedy businessman who has no regard for human life, the fact remains that people like him exists in reality who can cause real harm to real people."
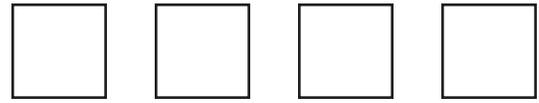
Ian McDonald's *River of Gods* was first published in 2006. Set in the near future (2047, one hundred years after Independence), the novel posits the genetically engineered as part of a separate caste. In India, they struggle over access to natural resources (water) and struggle against the development of full AIs. In all of these elements, the novel seems to fit into the criteria of MSF. McDonald calls it "accidental" MSF, in part because he wrote the novel without any awareness of such a movement or manifesto.

In 2007, Charles Stross published his novel, *Halting State*. According to an interview on SciFi.com, Stross contends that "the novel started off as a piece of stunt writing, but he found it fit in within the 'mundane' definition of SF" (Adams). Stross continues, "That is, [it's] only got one piece of not-currently-existing tech in it, and it's one in which large amounts of research money [are] being spent right now because it is actually possible" (qtd. in Adams). Also set in the near future (2012), the economic machinations and power struggles are all too familiar, and the technological innovations are all predicated on current scientific research.

Geoff Ryman makes it clear the he and the mundanes never intended for MSF to completely supplant SF. In the original Manifesto, they pledge "Not to let Mundanity cramp their style if they want to write like Edgar Rice Burroughs as well" (Ryman, "Mundane Manifesto"). Rather, the Mundane Manifesto sets out a number of strategies and criteria that signal a (re)turn to Earth and to the here and now. In this, MSF shares traits with both the New Wave and cyberpunk. MSF taps into the political, social, scientific, and literary zeitgeist and creates a set of aesthetic criteria (though I would disagree with Nussbaum and suggest that the aesthetic is grounded in ideology). The extent to which Mundanity affects the larger field of SF remains to be seen. After all, the mundanes themselves vow "To burn this manifesto as soon as it gets boring."

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Fiction Reviews

Rift in the Sky

Bruce A. Beatie

Julie E. Czerneda. *Rift in the Sky: A Novel of The Clan Chronicles*. New York: Daw Books, 2009. Paperback, viii + 419 pages, $24.95, ISBN 978-0-7584-0560-1.

Anyone who picks up this book in a store or library with no prior knowledge of the Clan Chronicles will find the going hard, as I did. Only after about the first quarter of the book did I finally begin to understand something of the backstory of the races and individuals involved in this story, and to get some idea of where the action was going.

This book is the conclusion of Czerneda's "Stratification" trilogy, itself the prequel of her "Trade Pack Universe" trilogy (of which the first, *A Thousand Words for Stranger*, 1997), was her first book. The "Author's Note" at the end (which I didn't read till the end) offers some helpful information) promises a final "Reunification" trilogy. The nine volumes together will tell of three generations of a near-human, psychically gifted race and its movement from an "outworld" shared with two totally alien and sometimes hostile races, to a galactic civilization apparently dominated by humans.

In spite of the problems facing an unprepared reader, once one figures out the situation and the (possible) meaning of Czerneda's esoteric vocabulary (presumably defined in the earlier novels), her overuse of italics, and the oddities of her style, it isn't a bad story. Had I not accepted the task of reviewing the book, I would have abandoned it after the first few chapters, but by the end I was enjoying it.

A quick Internet search (deliberately not undertaken until I'd written the comments above) reveals that Czerneda, a Canadian, has published thirteen novels—four trilogies (including two unrelated to each other or to the two noted above), an independent novel; she has edited thirteen anthologies and published some nonfiction, including a book on using SF in the classroom According to her own Web site, she is "formerly a researcher in animal communication, [and] has also written non-fiction, from biology texts to the use of science fiction to develop literacy. She currently lives at the edge of a forest with her family, enjoying rocketry and canoeing whenever there's time."

Cyberabad Days

Karen Hellekson

Ian McDonald. *Cyberabad Days: Return to the India of 2047*. New York: Pyr, 2009. Paperback, 280 pages, $15, ISBN 978-1-29102-699-0.

In this anthology of seven short stories set in a coherent future India, McDonald applies SF tropes to Indian mythology

while contemplating current topics such as global warming and water shortages, and in large part succeeds. Six of the stories were originally published in magazines or anthologies and date from 2005 to 2008. One long story was written specifically for this volume.

Setting and theme link them together, creating in aggregate a well-thought-out, beautifully articulated future world. A short introduction by Paul McAuley, "America Is Not the Only Planet," focuses on the globalization inherent in McDonald's texts and notes that McDonald, a British writer, has from the first attempted to range wide, from Mars to Africa. Yet the ancient history of India runs through all of these stories, even as characters undergo body reforming, place hardware in their heads, and in other ways link their bodies to the machine. Cars have aeais, but aeais may also appear as people. Women's hands form traditional mudras, now keyed to evoke a reaction from a machine. Everyone wears a lighthoek coiled behind an ear, granting them access to a shared virtual world. Everywhere there is the body, and the machine, and their intersection.

Several stories are told from the point of view of children. In "Sanjeev and Robotwallah," a traditional boy longs to be a badmash, a robot-boy, although it's clear his hero worship is misplaced; and in "Kyle Meets the River," a privileged boy briefly escapes his world, only to be unceremoniously brought home, the gap between the haves and have-nots distressingly unbridgeable. Several stories focus on duty related to marriage. In "The Dust Assassin," a privileged girl loses her family in a water war, only to find herself engaged to be married to the heir of the family that destroyed her. In the amusing "An Eligible Boy," a young man seeks the advice of an aeai matchmaker to find a wife. Parents have overwhelmingly chosen to bear boys, thus leaving girls to marry in short supply, and subtle strategy is required to find a bride—although it turns out that brides require strategy just as subtle. And in "The Djinn's Wife," a beautiful dancer falls for a djinn, an aeai, and marries him in a media firestorm, only to discover her duty is to betray him, for he has gone rogue, his intelligence too advanced to be borne, and he must be destroyed by the Krishna Cops.

Two stories deal with people outside humanity, either by nature or by design. The "goddess" of "The Little Goddess" becomes so because when she is quite young, it's discovered that death amuses her. After several years, she is cast out, and she finds herself unmarriageable, with potential bridegrooms not nearly desperate enough to marry someone with such a history. She begins smuggling aeais, permitting their consciousness to be placed inside her head, only to be left holding the bag during a sting operation seeking to rein in the aeais' greatly increasing autonomy and consciousness. In "Vishnu at the Cat Circus," the only original story in the volume as well as the longest, the titular hero, a genetically altered man, tells a stranger all about his life: his slow, long-lived struggle to adulthood, his decision to become a eunuch, his eventual withdrawal from the larger world. But Vishnu plays a crucial part in the division of the aeais' universe from our own. Humans increasingly decide to download themselves as data to become bodhisoft, with life in the real world merely a rehearsal for this transcendence. Vishnu needs to close the door on this other universe and restart the cycle.

The joy of this universe lies in its teeming life, the potential in this mass of humanity. The pervasiveness of technology links

humanity together even as it spawns a form of intelligent life that seeks to transcend our world. McDonald makes Indian mythology and practice literal by attaching it to the technological: one can literally attain transcendence by becoming bodhisoft; an aeai can share consciousness with a human, peering out of a technologically emplaced literal third eye. Yet gods and goddesses are recognized inside humans, creating a riotous mix of human, divide, and machine.

Conspirator

Janice M. Bogstad

C. J. Cherryh. *Conspirator*. Book 10 in the Foreigner series. New York: DAW, 2009. Hardcover, 384 pages, $25.95. ISBN 978-9-7564-0570-0.

Devotees of either Cherryh or her Foreigner series will be delighted to know that the intrepid Bren Cameron has yet another adventure in him. It looked like the series would end with what was being called the "third" trilogy, until this volume was announced.

The tenth book in what seemed previously to be a nine-book series, Cherryh's *Conspirator* continues the adventures of Bren, human translator to and close confidant of Tabini, ruler of a planet to which beleaguered humans migrated from space centuries earlier. These novels are all adventure stories, with a very Japanese–Edo period feel to them (add space stations, clashes over advanced technologies, and multiple alien races) with assassinations and coups abounding. In this case, the dynamic trio of Bren and Tabini's grandmother and son (Ilisidi and Cajeiri), who were central to the last two novels, are reunited, although in fact, their adventures take place separately and the very dynamic Ilisidi reduced to stereotypical bit parts until she drops a political bomb at the end of the story (an end that is manifestly another beginning).

These last four are being represented as two and two (*Destroyer* and *Pretender, Deliverer* and *Conspirator*) but this is probably totally a marketing convenience and Cherryh clearly has more stories to tell, more plots to reveal and more plans to delight the readers in yet another far-future universe. Before I go into more detail, let me admit that I am hooked on these books, despite the predictability of yet more unfortunate decisions by the now eight-year-old Cajeiri, and the plethora of point-of-view shifts, this time between advisor Bren and young Cajeiri, that would doom a volume by a less experienced author.

Plots for all novels in this series involve some sort of adventure, capture, escape, alien first contact, court intrigue and power politics, and this novel is no exception. While Bren's interior monologues about his duties, strategies, experiences and feelings are present as usual, an increasing amount of the plot focuses on the precipitous and ingenious acts of Cajeiri, who puts himself into danger and must be rescued not one but three times. Well, it should be admitted that he rescues himself the third time, but that's where the court intrigue and power politics come in. And these are related through his point-of-view narrative, including, again, lots of interior monologue as he strategizes his next steps in each crisis.

Part of Cherryh's charm is the mix of downright shoot-'em-up adventure with complex political maneuvering. This particular offering in the series is so steeped in political intrigue that some of it spills over into an appendix where the author explains how the 'opposition' houses got to be that way and maps the geography which contributes to their disaffection.

In *Conspirator*, the story of leader Tabini's coup from two books ago is carried forward with several attempts on the part of powerful southern lords to once again destabilize his rule. By this time, the reader is so used to plots which hinge on kidnapping and assassination (an institutionalized practice, complete with its own guild of enforcers, some of whom work for Bren and Tabini) that we know enough to consider each such action as part of a much larger strategy, one we, along with Bren and Isildi, and their accomplished security forces, will eventually work out. The plot starts calmly enough, with Bren back from the stars, established in the residence of an Atevi lord in the capital of their planet. But within the first chapter, he finds himself forced to leave the capital for his newly awarded country estate in the South of the Atevi mainland, exiled by the imminent arrival of that lord to the capital.

Thus the story is enlivened by two rebellious acts on the part of Cajeiri, who first refuses to be confined to his father's palace, and then even to Bren's estate on the Southern coast of the atevi continent. Cajeiri, disgusted with the strictures put on the royal son in his father's care, and fearing what will happen when is grandfather Tatiseigi (on his mother's side) and grandmother, Ilisidi,(on his father's side) join the family in the capital, decides to take French leave and go to stay with his friend Bren for a promised fishing trip. Since he IS Tabini's son, he is in great danger when outside the care of adults and his first adventure is to be rescued from this ill conceived trip. His second is to grow impatient with the grownups on the day they are to go boating and take a small boat out himself, along with his bodyguards in training. This necessitates a day-and-night-long "boy" hunt on the waters of an inlet that lead to the sea. He is rescued only with the help of a neighbor, Baiji, another player in the power politics to come, and the nephew of lord Geigi who is minding his estate for him while Geigi is off at the new space station. Baiji has not been idle while Geigi was gone, and has gotten himself in a bit of trouble. His assistance with the rescue of Cajieri pulls Bren and the boy closer into the plots that surround him, so that Cajeiri third and only self-rescue is from the very southern lords who take over Geigi's estate and intend to take over the country. That we see his as yet juvenile perorations on the events as he and his friends manage to elude their erstwhile captors adds spice to the story—and his ingenuity is praised often in the same conversations where is failings are detailed and punishment discussed.

Cherryh is also very good at adding details convincingly to the story which bring in the entire history of human contact with their Atevi landlords. In the course of this story, she makes reference to the humans' first landing, their catastrophic war with the Atevi, old disagreements which ceded humans the island of Mospheira but also left a lasting wound with the Edi and the Gan clans who previously in habited it.

This is not Cherryh's best novel, and it isn't even the best novel in the ten-book series, but it still rises above most science fiction series novels in its exposition on truly alien races and its pursuit of the possible outcomes of putting together two such disparate races as humans and Atevi. It plays on Cherryh's strength in articulating the alien, even if at times her examples (Bren's concerns about how to understand and define his relationship with Atevi lord and bodyguard alike take center stage) can seem repetitious. I would not recommend starting the series with this novel, but I predict that if you start the series you will read all the way to this novel. Together, they are vintage Cherryh science fiction.

Wireless

Sandor Klapcsik

Stross's writings have established his fame as an author who can effortlessly combine various subgenres of SF. His latest short story collection proves just as versatile.

Wireless is considerably different from his previous collection, *Toast*. Those stories rather resembled third-generation cyberpunk, post-Singularity literature and "blogpunk" (Broderick 11): infodump narrations featuring computer geeks, sysadmins, who often try to save the world, or at least make a better place of it. In his interviews, Stross intends to distance his writings from the dominance of Singularity (Kleffel 55; Haméon 5). In *Wireless*, the blogpunk theme and mode of writing are only represented in "Unwirer" and "MAXOS." The former is a collaboration with Cory Doctorow, a story that could be read as a sequel to *Little Brother.* (Stross's afterword defines it as alternate history, but its setting evokes the near future dystopia of a police state.) "MAXOS," a pseudo-article previously published in the scientific magazine *Nature*, is saturated by info-tech jargon, while it problematizes the conventional SF element of first contact: Stross's alien message replicates a symptom of present-day computer culture.

Most stories of *Wireless* draw on versatile, often long-established conventions, such as the folktale, the Faust myth, satire, time travel stories, space opera, alternate history, spy fiction, lovecraftian horror and so on. All in all, they can be characterized only by the umbrella term SF.

Nevertheless, certain themes have remained intact from his previous collection. The clash between unimpeded information flow and irritating paper work is still a crucial idea in Stross's oeuvre, materialized in the introduction of *Wireless*. Stross targets the sympathy of the audience by associating his writing method and working environment with the 9 to 5 worker's office hours, and by attributing the alienation of the writer from their audience to the long editing process of novels. "You" and "I" both work in an office, indicates Stross, doing the treadmill and struggling with tedious paper work; the short story provides the only means for speedy communication between us, since the texts "push the reward-feedback button much more frequently [and rapidly] than novels."

The clash between information gathering and bureaucracy is frequently experienced by Stross's secret agents. As James Schellenberg argues about *The Atrocity Archives*, Stross's bureaucrat-spies "show what a bafflingly ordinary and boring person might do in extraordinary circumstances . . . they rise

above and beyond the call of duty, with every inspirational cliché intact—cubicle dwellers of the world, rise up!" Apropos, *Wireless* includes "Down on the Farm," a new Laundry spy story, portraying the conflict between field agents and HR management, theoretical thaumaturgists of mathematical magic and the bureaucrats of the NHS trust. The retro feeling of cyberpunk becomes tangible here when an early IBM computer, a 1602, and an old-fashioned manual typewriter of the late 1950s, an Imperial 66, are manifested, the latter evoking Scott Bukatman's essay on Gibson's typewriter.

Spying plays a crucial role in two of the volume's well-researched alternate histories as well, in "Missile Gap" and "A Colder War." The former is a Locus Award–winning novella, featuring the embodiments of Carl Sagan, Yuri Gagarin—who is on a mission similar to that of Captain James T. Kirk—and Gregor Samsa, on a discworld. Due to a twist at the end, a second reading of the story will be considerably different from the first; what is more, major parts of the plot will remain unrevealed even after further rereadings of this masterly woven narrative.

The latter story evokes both his own Laundry novels and Neil Gaiman's "A Study in Emerald," since, as is revealed in the afterword, Stross has created a tribute to H. P. Lovecraft's universe, especially his "At the Mountains of Madness." "A Colder War" becomes a meticulously detailed alternate history, a re-envisioned version of the 1980s, in which the unsuccessful re-election campaign of Jimmy Carter, the aggressive foreign policy of Ronald Reagan, the fiasco of Lt Colonel Oliver North, as well as the Chernobyl disaster and the Lebanon Hostage Crisis, turn into side effects of a confrontation between mankind and the Shoggoths.

"Rogue Farm," my favorite piece in the collection, evokes the atmosphere of a postapocalyptic state in the second half of the twenty first century, when Britain becomes heavily underpopulated. The increasingly scarce population is probably not brought about by war—even though Maddie, the female protagonist is a combat veteran. Instead, the population decline may be the result of cyberpunk visions and nightmares, the increase and partial loss of high-tech inventions, and the conflict between biotech and information technology.

We are a few decades after the Internet age, following the disappearance of self-replicating, robotic network terminals. Cars are rare or extinct, tractors are antique. This is the age of thriving "gene-hackery" and Larry Niven's exploding "stage trees," when farm animals are created by biofabricators and are herded by talking dogs who smoke marijuana in their spare time. To compensate for the effects of global warming and to avoid stress—originating from office work, of course—humans become green *literally*, start photosynthesizing and turn into rogue farms. The decrease of human fertility, however, remains a crucial problem, and a considerable part of the urban technology is in shambles: the Internet has collapsed, and the ruins of technologized consumer culture swarm the countryside. Nevertheless, EMP devices, jammers and surveillance systems are still widely used, and uploading personalities into computer files for backups comes across as an ordinary procedure even on farms.

The conflict between the rogue farm and Joe, who used to be "a software dude," evokes Bruce Sterling's Shaper–Mechanist confrontation. The narrator's description of the landscapes,

which become artificially uncultivated by bioborgs and rogue farms, also implies a conflicting interaction between biotech and information technology: "a supermarket trolley of precambrian vintage, its GPS tracker long since shorted out. The bones of the technological epoch, poked from the treacherous surface of the fossil mud bath. And around the edge of the mimsy puddle, the stage trees grew."

Stross's utilization of Scottish dialect is the most noticeable in "Snowball's Chance," an enjoyable but not quite flawless story. The setting, the near-future ice age in Scotland is neatly described: the extreme climate results from humanity's shield against global warming. The atmosphere is enhanced by contemporary references such as the use of the Euro, an existing Scottish brewery, and, of course, bureaucracy. The satire is tangible when the devil's contract is written in present-day juridical jargon (but he is required to reveal the fine print), discrepancies are solved by the head office and senior management, the conversations are monitored for compliance, and so on. The story, however, ends disappointingly: if the supernatural forces create a carefully detailed contract that enlists several restricting conditions, it should definitely exclude a wish that leads to further wishes.

I have found the collection's last two stories slightly less entertaining. Both of them evoke planetary romances: "Trunk and Disorderly" is a satirical tale that flashes the setting of *Arabian Nights* on Mars, while "Palimpsest" is a time travel novella featuring numerous, tribal and strictly hierarchical civilizations in the course of history (a time opera?), which is frequently interrupted by long scientific descriptions and spy story tropes. The story details the protagonist's surprise at the "lies" in the major historical archives of the time police, since the library documents timelines that never happened—should that strike either him, an experienced time traveler who has supposedly killed his own grandfather, or a present-day reader as an astonishing and original idea?

Stross's introduction to his latest collection celebrates the domination of the short story form in the history of SF. This is in sharp contrast with the forward of *Toast*, which emphasized the temporary nature of the texts (Stross 10). The new intro raises the reader's interest and expectations, which will mostly be fulfilled in *Wireless*. Almost all of the stories could be read before either online or in print sources ("Palimpsest" is the exception), and "A Colder War" appeared in *Toast*. "Rogue Farm" has also been adapted into an animated film by Mark Bender and Garry J. Marshall. The collection, therefore, does not give something unexpected and totally fresh for his fans—not in this sense. The originality of ideas, however, is remarkable in most of the stories; the storytelling and characterization is frequently alluring. Thus, *Wireless* verifies the significance and versatility of Stross's oeuvre in contemporary SF.

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The Best of Gene Wolf

Amy J. Ransom

Gene Wolfe. *The Best of Gene Wolfe: A Definitive Retrospective of his Finest Short Fiction*. New York: Tor, 2009. Hardcover, 478 pages, $29.95, ISBN 0-7653-2135-1.

If you know Gene Wolfe for his epic novels like *The Wizard Knight* (2004) or the now-classic *Book of the New Sun* (1980–83), his mastery of the short form might come as a surprise. This collection, chosen and designated by Wolfe himself as his "finest" and "best," reflects his great versatility as a stylist, introducing me not to *an*other side of Gene Wolfe, but to a great variety of other sides. He applies here his well-known disrespect for conventions to just about every genre in the book. But frankly, such violations make reading Wolfe both fun and challenging; I continually asked, "What is he doing now?" And in the end, I felt like the boy in the opening story, "The Island of Dr. Death and Other Stories" (1970), who declares, "I don't want it to end" (23).

This hefty tome contains thirty-one previously collected stories ranging in length from a 1-page short-short to several nearly 50-page novellas, including "The Death of Dr. Island" (1974 Nebula and Locus awards), "The Fifth Head of Cerberus" (1972 Nebula nominee), and "Seven American Nights" (1978). Each offered with an afterword tidbit by Wolfe and arranged in chronological order, these stories represent, as the subtitle suggests, a retrospective of Wolfe's career. They run the entire gamut of science fiction and fantasy genres, subgenres and hybrids, with some detective tales and a few cruel or whimsical mainstreams thrown in to boot. Thinking that readers of this review would like to know perhaps just how many "science fiction" and how many "fantasy" stories the collection offered, I started a "simple" table to tally the votes. I ended up with a tangled mess of subheadings, arrows, footnotes, and question marks, so I stopped trying to classify and just enjoyed the banquet. Ranging from the supernatural horror of "The Tree is My Hat," the futuristic horror of "The Hero as Werwolf," to a Bradbury-esque science fiction in "The Toy Theatre," through the postmodern religious allegory "Game in the Pope's Head," to the SF inspired by E. T. A. Hoffmann of "The Marvelous Brass Chessplaying Automaton," there is something for everyone, except perhaps the hardcore fan of hard SF.

In those texts that can be called science fiction collected here, it seems clear that for Wolfe (as for the Bradbury of *The Martian Chronicles*, or the C. S. Lewis of the *Out of the Silent Planet* trilogy) outer space and the far future offer the possibilities of estrangement for social, religious, and other forms of commentary on the present, rather than themes to explore in and of themselves.

What is *not* missing is the "sensawunder." A number of texts deal with childhood, toys, games, and the power of stories to free us from the burden of everyday life, revealing Wolfe's sheer delight in the power of the imagination and his ability to share it with his readers. Wolfe's sense of awe and wonder, as many know, also embraces a Catholic sensibility, revealed in several stories with religious themes, including two of my favorites that deal with hell, "Game in the Pope's Head" and "Bed and Breakfast." Not suprisingly, several stories consider the nature of humanity; loneliness and isolation also figure as recurrent themes in the collection. I admit that a couple of these left me cold ("Forlesen," a Kafka-esque homage to the man in the grey flannel suit) or just plain confused ("The Eyeflash Miracles"). I also missed an element central to Wolfe's novels: the richly developed characterization of Severian and Sir Able of the High Heart makes their stories so compelling. And yet, his skill at painting characters and building universes appears perhaps all the more clearly here in that, in the space of a few pages, Wolfe creates worlds nearly as vivid, telling his story in a wide range of voices.

The volume's pedagogical interest, I think, is twofold. For creative writing courses, a number of these texts might be used as models or studies in various fiction techniques, and Wolfe offers pointers on his own approach to writing in a number of the afterword pieces. Then, for *advanced* courses in genre studies, this volume offers a wealth of hybrid forms for analysis. Although little academic study has been done, Wolfe stands out as a major figure in contemporary science fiction and fantasy and such a capstone volume may indicate that the time is ripe for "Wolfe studies" to begin appearing. Like a greatest hits album, *The Best of Gene Wolfe* offers an easily accessible sample of a significant corpus and should adorn any library that does not already hold his earlier story collections.

Nonfiction Reviews

Black Space

Amy J. Ransom

Adilifu Nama. *Black Space: Imagining Race in Science Fiction Film*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008. Paperback, 200 pages, $24.95, ISBN 978-0-292-71745-9.

Although race representations have been integral to the genre since Georges Méliès's *A Trip to the Moon* (1902) depicted moon men as black "savages," discussions of race in books on science fiction film appear few and far between. While there are many studies of race in film, and these often include discussions of SF films,[1] important works on SF film largely ignore the question of race.[2] To my knowledge, Adilifu Nama's *Black Space: Imagining*

Race in Science Fiction Film, therefore, fills a significant gap in the scholarship by providing the first book-length survey of the intersection between race and SF film.[3] Furthermore, Nama does so with style and grace, using a discourse that is both scholarly and accessible, making this a good text for an upper-level undergraduate or a graduate-level course.

Rather than simply labeling films as "racist" or not, Nama examines "the cultural politics" of representing race "not only in SF cinema but alongside the sociohistorical place that blackness has occupied in American society" (2). His cultural studies approach avoids the esoterism of those heavily steeped in poststructuralist theory while offering more analytical depth than often found in film studies approaches concerned with production history and the business of film. Nama accepts the paradigm for SF studies that "SF film is also a powerful lens by which to observe the collective racial desires, constructs, fantasies, and fears circulating throughout American society" (2). He makes clear that, as the title suggests, by "race," he primarily means blackness, more specifically, "the symbolic discourse with the multiple racial discourses and ideas surrounding black racial formation, past and present, that are circulating in American culture" (4).

Nama provides a historical overview in chapter 1, "Structured Absence and Token Presence," which reaffirms the general perception that black characters and actors have, until recently, been nearly absent from SF films, although the race question has not, as his reading of *The Time Machine* (1960) demonstrates. The subsequent five chapters each focus on a particular subtheme related to the representation of race: "Bad Blood: Fear of Racial Contamination," "The Black Body: Figures of Distortion," "Humans Unite! Race, Class, and Postindustrial Aliens," "White Narratives, Black Allegories," and "Subverting the Genre: The Mothership Connection." These include analysis of such topics and films as anxiety about interracial sexuality and racial purity in *The World, The Flesh, and the Devil* (1959) and *The Omega Man* (1971), and the alien as a figure of blackness in *Enemy Mine* (1985) and *Predator* (1987). In these cases, in spite of the inclusion of black characters (and, by extension black actors), Nama sees SF film as reinscribing contemporary dominant ideology about race as a source of anxiety. He then reads films like *Rollerball* (1975), *Alien* (1979), *Robocop* (1987), and *They Live* (1988) as offering "a counterimpulse…radically critical of the established economic order," which presents "racial cooperation as a necessary stage in mounting an effective challenge to economic elites and the institutions they control" (97). He offers nuanced readings of several films, such as *Alien Nation* (1988) and *Minority Report* (2002), "against the films' preferred or intended messages" of acceptance that, according to Nama, hide "draconian racial politics" (143). In contrast, Nama interprets the inclusive casting and the heavily African Americanized human society of Zion in *The Matrix* films (1999–2003) as offering a clear counternarrative of race to mainstream audiences. Finally, his concluding chapter examines SF tropes in African American popular culture, including the role of the blaxploitation-era *Space is the Place* (1974) and the funk musician George Clinton in the development of afrofuturism.

Black Space is not an exhaustive, encyclopedic examination of every SF film that features a black central character,[4] nor does it trace the development of race representations in SF film from its roots. Nama admits that his interest lies "in the nuclear age of post–World War II America," in which "SF cinema truly began to take shape" as a genre (13), and he provides a solid survey of that era, with particular attention to films since 1970. The work offers an index and a relatively thorough bibliography, although I would have liked to see references to key works like Richard Dyer's *White* (1997) or anything by Donna Haraway. I highly recommend Nama's work for both its readability and its topicality. Race continues to be a central tension in U.S. society, and SF has been and will be a vehicle for the expression of race anxiety as well as for exploring ways to resolve those tensions as the reality of a postwhite world approaches ever nearer. Indeed, the number of SF films released since 2004—that year's *I, Robot* is the most recent film included in Nama's study—and particularly those starring Will Smith indicate the need for studies that continue to examine how SF film represents race.[5]

Notes

1. To wit: Ed Guerrero's *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film* (1993), Hernán Vera and Andrew M. Gordon's *Screen Saviors: Hollywood Fictions of Whiteness* (2003), as well as Gwendolyn Audrey Foster's *Performing Whiteness* (2003), and Richard Dyer's *White* (1997) all offer discussions of SF–horror films within the larger framework of race representation in film.

2. For example, Vivian Sobchack's *Screening Space* (rev. ed., 1987) fails to even index race; J. P. Telotte's *Science Fiction Film* (2001) includes one indexed reference to racial discrimination as one of SF film's "general themes" (16), but which his genre study fails to treat. Gregg Rickman's otherwise excellent *The Science Fiction Film Reader* (2004) offers no essays with race as a central topic, although Rickman himself points out the obviousness of "negative Jewish, Asian and black stereotypes" in the *Star Wars* franchise (xxvii–xxviii). While a number of essays in Rickman's volume raise the question of race, they do not develop it; for example, Susan Sontag's seminal essay, "The Imagination of Disaster" (1965) reprinted in Rickman, refers to the Jewish question but not to civil rights; Robin Woods's reprinted review of *Blade Runner* (1985) examines the Other—but in reference to psychoanalytic theory rather than race studies (283), while Richard van Busack's essay on the *Planet of the Apes* refers briefly to Eric Greene's study of that franchise and its "racial allegory."

3. At least three books focused on particular film franchises do exist: Eric Greene's *Planet of the Apes as American Myth: Race and Politics in the Films and Television Series* (1996), Daniel Bernardi's *"Star Trek" and History: Race-ing Toward a White Future* (1998), and Micheal C. Pound's *Race in Space: The Representation of Ethnicity in "Star Trek" and "Star Trek: The Next Generation"* (1999).

4. For example, no reference is made to *Five* (1951, dir. Arch Oboler), and although Nama briefly mentions *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers* franchise, he does not discuss Forest Whitaker's role in its 1994 version.

5. Indeed, Nama's assertion that "Will Smith is a seminal figure in American SF cinema" (39), based the actor's roles in *Independence Day* (1996), *Men In Black* (1997) and its sequel (2002), and *I, Robot* (2004), appears nothing less than prophetic, given the release of *I Am Legend* (2007), *Hancock* (2008), and *Seven Pounds* (2008), with a 2010 project called *Monster Hunter*

announced on the Internet Movie Database, as well as a prequel to *I Am Legend* in development (http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000226/).

Bram Stoker's Notes for Dracula

Philip Kaveny

Robert Eighteen-Bisang and Elizabeth Miller, eds. *Bram Stoker's Notes for "Dracula": A Facsimile Edition.* Foreword by Michael Barsanti. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008. Hardcover, 342 pages, $65, ISBN 978-0-7864-34107.

"Every Picture Tells a Story," sang teen idol Rod Steward in 1971 in the title song of his number-one hit album by the same name. The same thing may be said about *Bram Stoker's Notes for "Dracula": A Facsimile Edition,* because what is a facsimile if not an exact reproduction of a picture, of text, a photograph, or even a legal document? In this case it is a series of pictures on nearly every page from handwriting to sketches, photographs and even typescripts of the creative process by which an author's series of ideas, images, experiences, and research are tracked. Nobody would contest that every book not only tells a story, but has its own story from the time that pen or pencil hits paper until it comes to existence as a mechanically reproduced written work of art through the process of publication and distribution. This book gives us strong reasons to be interested in the story of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* at the start of its existence.

Editors Robert Eighteen-Bisang and Elizabeth Miller, both world-class figures in the field of Dracula studies and the broader field of horror literature, have done a masterful job. They have compiled Bram Stoker's notes and research materials which were auctioned off two years after his death in 1912. I made an extensive search of responses to their book and I could find nothing but laudatory comments for their efforts in creating this unique and valuable resource to the growing field of Bram Stoker/*Dracula* studies. Even a cursory search of the MLA International Bibliography online indicates over 500 articles in the last fifteen years.

This book is a must for any university, college, public, or (particularly) secondary school library collection. *Dracula* is a high-interest topic, and this book offers students the opportunity to identify and interact with a facsimile of primary source materials—indicating to them that there is more out there in the world than Wikipedia.

This book is also a must for anyone working in horror, dark, or erotic fantasy. One of the many pleasures of this text is to read Bram Stoker's own holographic hand, his typescript, his notes, and even his humorous sketches of himself. I also think, within the limits of fair use, this facsimile is a resource for a working horror writer. I came to this conclusion when I was kept up for most of last night thinking about Bram Stoker's own (and much of the nineteenth century's) preoccupation with premature burial and his references to the "Munich House of the Dead," where corpses were discreetly displayed in repose on couches, with music and flowers, as observers walked among the dead looking for signs of life for a three-day period. This would make a wonderful time travel story—and, I would add, a wonderful name for a rock group.

As much as I enjoyed the documentary and almost artifact-like aspect of the text, it is the annotations that make the bones of the text come alive and, in a hermeneutic sense, raise the context and make contemporary the almost timeless modernity and adaptability of Stoker's *Dracula*. The advent of this study culturally situates Stoker's work in both late nineteenth-century Victorian Europe, and twenty-first-century global media culture.

The authors never claim what they cannot prove, and at the same time, they never close the door to someone (like myself) to use their work as a pointer toward some really big questions and future areas of scholarship. For example, one might ask how the blood-sucking undead corpse of Bram Stoker's Dracula becomes, more than 110 years later, transformed into the (forever seventeen-year-old) teen idol vampire hero Edward Cullen of the Twilight novel series and film, with its overwhelming popular reception by teens. In some conservative circles where even the Harry Potter books are off limits, these novels are acceptable. The short answer is that the Twilight franchise's Edward was there from the start because of the ambivalent nature of Stoker's project, as we can see in the summary in *Bram Stoker's Notes* of the physical characteristics of Count Dracula (299).

In the supporting biographical information, including photographs and sketches, some of them Stoker's own, one sees Stoker as a kind of theatrical impresario and London Lyceum manager for the great London actor Henry Irving (perhaps the model for the count himself). As one goes through the book notes and supporting material, one sees Stoker not so much as a writer concerned with the literary gestures of his day but perhaps, even intentionally in a contemporary sense, as a kind of a franchise builder, pointing toward the future with enough fungibility in his property Dracula to bridge the gap between literature folklore, and in the process becoming folkloric in its own right.

Part of what drives this progression is the powerful sexuality of the novel, which *Bram Stoker's Notes* takes us into. Mina describes the necessity of involuntary but compelling exchange of bodily fluids with the count almost in the same way former female pornography sex workers sometimes describe their work. I can only touch the surface of that thread here. However, *Bram Stoker's Notes* do cause one to look at Dracula through the lens used by Foucault's *History of Sexuality, Part II*—that is to say, in terms not of the forbidden set against the background of Victorian sexual repression, but rather as an exemplar of a Victorian obsession and medicalization, at least of female sexuality.

Everyone Loves Dick

Neil Easterbrook

Lejla Kucukalic. *Philip K. Dick: Canonical Writer of the Digital Age.* New York: Routledge, 2009. Cloth, xiv + 177 pages, $95, ISBN 0-415-96242-0.

A parallel phenomenon of the wide expansion of scholarly attention to SF in recent years has been an explosive interest in the work of Philip K. Dick. Perhaps best noted in this heightened evaluation has been the appearance of two volumes in the *Library of America* devoted entirely to PKD's fiction of the 1960s and 1970s, a nice antidote to the despair those of us who admire PKD's fiction have felt with each release of a Hollywood

adaptation. Where Hollywood apparently thinks Dick's value is restricted to how many chase scenes and explosions can accompany a "high" concept, most of us feel "our home-grown Borges" (as Ursula K. Le Guin has described him) offers a trenchant, unironically sober, and ultimately unrivaled critique of the present. Lejla Kucukalic's *Philip K. Dick: Canonical Writer of the Digital Age* is the latest addition to an increasingly robust assessment of PKD's fiction. Some evidence of that interest can be found in the MLA International Bibliography, which now lists 285 items; Hal Hall's SF research database lists 1,611 items. These days, it seems everybody loves PKD.

Yet much of the work on PKD is uneven. Kucukalic's book is a perfect instance both of that uneven scholarship and of the false first impressions many readers might glean from such works. Initially, the book feels merely like a modestly punched-up dissertation (and indeed it was, at the University of Delaware in 2006). A preface is followed by an introduction, which is followed by a chapter devoted to a quick biography of the writer; both introduction and biography exhibit traits of the infamous survey of the secondary literature that still marks many dissertations. The bio remains entirely superfluous, except perhaps for a dissertation advisory committee not already familiar with PKD or his work, as seems obvious from the acknowledgments page (ix). The book then develops as a series of five readings, each pairing a novel with a critical model: *Martian Time Slip* meets Foucault and Levinas; *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is paired with various texts by Norbert Weiner; *A Maze of Death* is matched with Rollo May's *Existence; A Scanner Darkly* meets Baudrillard; and *Valis,* while given no single point of contrast, finds its most salient connection with the physicist Hermann Minkowski (140–43).

Other aspects of the book give off equally bad vibes. There are, for example, quite an astonishingly large number of grammatical errors (mostly subject–verb agreement and missing articles), awkward diction, ambiguous passive constructions, and both sentence fragments and run-ons, all obviously unintentional. Spelling is occasionally erratic. Other infelicities of style mar the book. There are errors of documentation and of definition, almost all of which come from misrepresenting sources or leaping from one idea to another. I am cited half a dozen times, and though Kucukalic ostensibly thinks my reasoning sound (which I find flattering), I am presented as arguing things I did not argue.

Here's one more example, this time one that's much more precise. In the chapter concerning *DADES,* we find this endnote: "The force of necessity (*noos*) from Plato's cosmology expressed in *Timaeus,* the irrational streak eating away at the good god's creation" (159 n4). Set aside the fact that this is a grammatical fragment. This note is attached to the following sentence, a comment concerning the "existential crisis" in Deckard's world: "the force of death that is overpowering the world through the radioactive dust and garbage, represents both a physical and metaphysical trend" (70–71). With complete sympathy for the argument, I find the note as it stands simply unintelligible. Then there's the problem of accuracy. *Noos,* more often transliterated as *nous,* means mind or intellect itself. Like most words in classical Greek, it can take on other meanings, and so occasionally it will be rendered as *will,* but in *Timaeus* it is associated with the crafty Demiurge, the godlike designer of the cosmos, not with the forces of entropic decay. Necessity, in classical Greek,

is *ananke,* a word that Kucukalic does use later in the book (163 n24), but there she calls it "fate," whereas the classical Greek for fate is *moira.* Whether these errors are Kucukalic's (as I think them) or are down to PKD's spotty, irregular education (something less formal than driven by obsession and serendipity) is a matter for others to dispute.

Philip K. Dick is littered with such errors, almost all of which are factual rather than interpretative problems. Although the number and frequency of errors seems to diminish as the book continues, they cannot be ignored. Unfortunately, most readers would stop in the first two chapters; having seen some problems, they will go back to watching reruns of *Seinfeld,* giving the cat a bath, or scribbling their own smug little scholarly diatribes. These, certainly, were my first thoughts.

But a reader who carries through will find, at its core, a very interesting set of reflections on PKD. The book is best in its readings of *Martian Time Slip* and *A Maze of Death,* books not already discussed by a great amount of scholarly criticism. Some of the critical pairings are enlightening, and even when they ring false, Kucukalic's analysis suggests interesting ways that PKD's fiction might be understood. Scholars working on any of these five novels might benefit from reading Kucukalic's chapters. While there's no single thesis to unify the five readings, each contains some sharp observation, something one wouldn't imagine after just the first glance.

While *Philip K. Dick* is a much stronger book than a cursory scan might suggest, at the publisher's price—an utterly astonishing $95—this book cannot be recommended for library purchase.

A Hideous Bit of Morbidity

Jordana Hall

Jason Colavito, ed. *"A Hideous Bit of Morbidity": An Anthology of Horror Criticism from the Enlightenment to World War I.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008. Hardcover, 384 pages, $65, ISBN 978-786439683.

Jason Colavito's expansive anthology of horror criticism succeeds in the two primary goals he sets for his book. First, it provides a historical perspective of horror criticism from the 1800s through World War I. Second, it makes much of early horror criticism and other little-known sources within the genre available once more to scholars. If for no other reason than this, Colavito's collection is worthy of note and a place on library shelves.

As Colavito eloquently declares, "from *The Castle of Otranto* through the guns of August, horror literature was at the forefront of English letters (if not critical respectability)" (7). The sheer number and variety of sources he includes demonstrates this, and in choosing those sources, the editor is careful to provide a solid view of opposing critical and cultural responses to horror. He incorporates essays and articles of all-but-forgotten authors and critics, and critical powerhouses such as H. P. Lovecraft. Likewise, no author is featured more than twice in the anthology. This allows Colavito to accomplish a critical revival while giving a broad view of the entire scope of criticism that responded to the development and evolution of horror fiction. At the same

time, this limits the inclusion of some of the more significant works by leading scholars that often helped to shape changes in the genre and its critical reception. Nevertheless, as a result of the inclusion of so many out-of-print sources, the anthology's appeal ranges from students looking for an introduction to horror to specialists in the field.

Besides scholarly criticism are personal letters, articles from newspapers, magazines, excerpts from popular and academic books, poems, and advertisements, and a plethora of cultural sources useful to give an adequate portrayal of the popular reception of horror fiction. Likewise, the reprints of illustrations, photographs, and other images all demonstrate the gothic, Victorian, and especially Romantic style so dominant within the genre. And Colavito is very careful to preserve the integrity of the original sources, noting that only "obvious typographical errors" are corrected, retaining original spelling and syntax (11). Additionally, the range of opinions considers the art form from both cultural literary perspectives, high and low.

The editor gives a careful and remarkably sweeping overview of such a broad subject, and the sources are well organized to clearly represent the changes that occur within the genre between the 1750s and 1917. A good scholarly resource and historical, cultural study of the horror genre, *"A Hideous Bit of Morbidity"* is a worthy addition to any scholarly library.

Savage Perils

Jason W. Ellis

Patrick B. Sharp. *Savage Perils: Racial Frontiers and Nuclear Apocalypse in American Culture.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007. Hardcover, 270 pages, $34.95, ISBN 978-0-8061-3822-0.

Patrick B. Sharp's first book, *Savage Perils: Racial Frontiers and Nuclear Apocalypse in American Culture,* is an engaging and well-researched interdisciplinary work that combines historical, cultural, and literary analysis to construct a narrative about race, science, and technology in America from its beginning through the middle of the twentieth century. The author carefully builds his case that scientific justifications for the social constructions of race have informed and continue to inform the way Americans see themselves and other peoples around the world. His project is ultimately one about the discourse lying at the intersection of race and technology in America and how that discourse made possible both the racist official governmental responses to the first phase of the cold war and the challenges to that racist and futile doctrine of protecting the white nuclear family.

Savage Perils is a unified work that maintains its argumentative focus, and it is chronologically organized to reveal how the association of race and technology developed in the United States. The book aims to chart the circuits between race and nation, civilization and savagery, Occident and Other, and overcivilization and frontier as found in the development of the United States and American culture. The author shows that throughout American history there has been a racist identification of whiteness with civilization and the accoutrements of technology, and nonwhiteness with savagery and backwardness. Beginning with

the Industrial Revolution and the promotion of Darwin's key concept of "man as toolmaker," there developed a racist anxiety over nonwhites obtaining and developing technology with the perceived strategy to invade and destroy the supposedly superior white American nation. Furthermore, Sharp demonstrates that the dominant racist modes of thinking continue to inform and impact the present through cycles of social assumptions justified by pseudoscientific analysis, which in turn feeds new assumptions embedded in cultural works.

Furthermore, *Savage Perils* illuminates the cybernetic feedback loop that forms this discourse, which stretches back to the early United States. This discourse begins with assumptions coloring science, which in turn justifies rather than tests those assumptions. Science then informs cultural works including proto-SF (and later SF proper) including the early future-war stories. These stories make up the cultural background radiation that informs the way people (i.e., white American government officials, soldiers, and civilians) think about race leading up to, during, and after World War II. Even turn-of-the-century shifts in anthropology and the biological sciences are not enough to counteract these socially embedded ideas. The linkage running through it all is an implicit understanding that to be American is to be white; that the American frontier and its savagery creates Americans as better than their European origins; and finally, that Darwin's concept of "man as toolmaker" points the way to evolutionary superiority by means of our technology and war making with those peoples of color, also considered savages, on an expansive frontier.

Sharp relies on numerous historical primary texts and a range of established and more recent secondary texts to support his argument. In the book, he engages a number of concepts including future-war stories, nuclear frontier stories, nuclear frontiersman stories, and subjective narratives of those directly affected by the atomic bomb. He also covers official government accounts released to the press and civil defense literature. Through these examples, Sharp reveals the complicity with and challenges to the accepted (or perhaps unconscious) racist beliefs on the part of much of white America leading up to and beyond the Second World War. His elaboration on these themes includes in-depth discussion of a number of texts including, but not limited to, the following: Jack London's "The Unparalleled Invasion," H. G. Wells's *The World Set Free* (which defined the narrative framework for future works on nuclear apocalypse in Britain as well as the United States), John Hersey's *Hiroshima,* Philip Francis Nowlan's *The Adventures of Buck Rogers,* Alex Raymond's *Flash Gordon,* General H. H. "Hap" Arnold's "The 36-Hour War," Philip Wylie's *Tomorrow!,* Walter Miller Jr.'s *A Canticle for Leibowitz,* and Frank Pat's *Alas, Babylon* (the latter two examples deconstruct racist civil defense messages by penalizing prejudice).

Savage Perils may be of most interest to researchers focusing on race and SF as well as race, science, and technology. Sharp brings a lot of diverse materials together into this one book, which makes it an invaluable source for further research. As such, it should be carried in library collections devoted to any of the above topics, because it offers breadth of field combined with depth of focus. Additionally, I would recommend it as a secondary text in an undergraduate or graduate course that engages race, technology, SF, or a combination of these, because

it is approachable and not overly laden with jargon. Because of its scope, it is a wonderful companion text to some of the other recent scholarship devoted to race and SF, including Elizabeth Anne Leonard's edited collection *Into Darkness Peering: Race and Color in the Fantastic* (1997), De Witt Douglas Kilgore's *Astrofuturism: Science, Race, and Visions of Utopia in Space* (2003), and Sharon DeGraw's *The Subject of Race in American Science Fiction* (2007), or research on the first phase of the cold war, including M. Keith Booker's *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds, and the Cold War: American Science Fiction and the Roots of Postmodernism, 1946–1964* (2001), David Seed's *American Science Fiction and the Cold War* (2002), and Lisa Yaszek's *Galactic Suburbia: Recovering Women's Science Fiction* (2008). *Savage Perils* is without a doubt an important contribution to the continuing discussion of race in American culture, and I recommend it to those of you actively researching in the field—as well as those of you who are not—because I guarantee you that there are insightful and thought-provoking revelations contained within.

Tech-Noir

Mark Decker

Arguing for the existence of a literary or filmic subgenre gets difficult after the definition has been crafted. Once a catchy name has been coined and a set of criteria has been determined, a critic must simultaneously produce enough evidence that the subgenre exists while at the same time avoiding the appearance of superficial engagement with either the primary texts or the relevant secondary sources. When you consider that a credible description of a subgenre should involve a discussion of scores of texts that is anchored by more extensive readings of key texts, and when you consider that these readings should be combined with extensive historical and theoretical contextualizing, you realize that an author of such a study has a difficult choice: either try the patience of editors and readers—especially readers who are not academic researchers—with a heavily footnoted doorstop or create a tighter narrative that sacrifices analytical totality to create an easily grasped overview.

Paul Meehan takes the second approach in *Tech-Noir: The Fusion of Science Fiction and Film Noir*. Broadly speaking, Meehan makes a good choice, with his study successfully arguing for the existence of a filmic genre that combines science fiction and noir. Though it is difficult to provide a quick summary of the extensive list of films under consideration or of Meehan's evaluation of those films, it is safe to say that *Tech-Noir* amasses so many examples of these entertaining hybrids that a fair-minded reader cannot finish this book without being convinced that films like *Blade Runner* and the *Matrix* trilogy represent recent iterations of a filmic subgenre that combines noir's surreal depiction of crime and human depravity in the metropolis with such SF staples as mad scientists, aliens, and deranged robots. Yet Meehan's convincing genealogy and taxonomy of a primarily American genre that has roots in Weimar Germany and has

seen expression elsewhere in Europe is hampered by inconsistent historical contextualization and, more importantly, a spare theoretical apparatus that will frustrate academic readers.

Meehan discusses more than 130 films in a book that, if you exclude front and back matter, is only 237 pages long. While that works out to an average of just over one and three quarters pages of analysis per film, Meehan's relatively brief summaries do not stray from a discussion of the criteria he sets forth for tech-noir films. Consequently, he makes a convincing argument that science fiction and film noir have been deftly blended in films ranging from Fritz Lang's 1922 film *Dr. Mabuse, the Gambler* and the 1927 film *Metropolis* through scores of films like 1936's *The Walking Dead,* 1957's *Not of This Earth,* 1962's *The Manchurian Candidate,* 1965's *Alphaville,* 1972's *Solaris,* 1981's *Blade Runner,* 1997's *Gattaca,* and 2006's *A Scanner Darkly.* While it would be difficult to comment on the quality of each one of Meehan's capsule discussions, almost all of them are at least convincing, if not compelling. Meehan does, however, include some films that either don't seem to really merit the appellation *noir,* like the relentlessly suburban *The Stepford Wives,* or films that are primarily concerned with genres other than noir and science fiction, like the classic-cartoon-nostalgia-driven *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* or the 1994 British television movie *Fatherland,* which is primarily an exercise in alternate history.

Although Meehan seems to be generally aware of the historical and theoretical context of the films he discusses, his book heavily emphasizes documenting the recurrence of tech-noir themes and characters by means of close readings of the individual films. While this approach is understandable and effective, generating an array of readings that strongly support his contentions about the shape of the subgenre, Meehan's execution of that approach is lopsided. His use of secondary sources is erratic and incomplete—there are only 64 footnotes in the entire book—and his historical contextualization is very broad. Given the structure of the book, this is particularly problematic. Six of Meehan's seven chapters cover specific historical periods, with the book devoting chapters to the 1950s and the 1980s and dividing up the rest of the 90-year span under consideration into chapters covering roughly 16 or 17 years. As one would expect, Meehan begins each chapter with a few paragraphs of historical contextualization, but the author often recounts what is widely accepted about twentieth century German and American history. Consequently, readers must endure statements like "the postwar years were a time of nuclear angst in America" (88), along with the occasional head scratcher like the discussion of the "emergence of rock music" during the 1960s.

If Meehan's historical contextualization is bland but largely uncontroversial, his theoretical discussion can be maddeningly vague. While the author has a solid grasp on the major genres he discusses and presents an enlightening discussion of the history of film noir, he often makes statements that seem broadly Marxist or feminist but are not backed up by reference to any theorist or theoretically informed secondary work. Consequently, problematic statements are often presented in a way that implies Meehan's conclusions are obvious. The most telling example of Meehan's theoretical haste comes in his discussion of *Attack of the 50-Foot Woman.* Meehan ostensibly demonstrates that he understands the film's feminist themes when he observes that the 50-Foot Woman "literally and figuratively breaks the chains of

the male-dominated world and does what many wronged women in the audience no doubt wished they could do to their conniving, two-timing husbands" (106), but he casts doubt on that understanding by labeling the 50-Foot Woman a SF femme fatale. Although a femme fatale can do much to subvert male domination, she is usually presented as a sexually powerful woman who is both enticing and threatening, not an enormous monster who is only terrifying. It's interesting to imagine the 50-Foot Woman as both a battered wife and a femme fatale at the same time, but Meehan needs to make a more convincing case by engaging with relevant feminist theory.

A potential reader should not make too much of the problems discussed above, however, because they are primarily explained by Meehan's choice to create a readable overview rather than an exhaustive study. This is an interesting and enjoyable book that will give serious fans and academic researchers (who are probably also serious fans) much to think about. Meehan's hit-or-miss approach to secondary scholarship and theoretical contextualization may make this book less attractive to graduate students and other professional researchers who are looking for texts to add to their personal libraries, even though the book should be consulted by those working with any of the films Meehan discusses. Instead, researchers and teachers should recommend that their library purchase *Tech-Noir*. Because of its accessible prose and broad sweep, it would be an excellent reference text for courses focusing on noir and science fiction. Furthermore, given the numerous succinct descriptions of tech-noir films, those who teach science fiction may find the book handy when composing syllabi or fleshing out primary research.

Undead TV

Karen Hellekson

Alana Levine and Lisa Parks. *Undead TV: Essays on "Buffy the Vampire Slayer."* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007. 224 pages. Paper, $21.95, ISBN 978-0-8223-4043-0. Library cloth, $74.95, ISBN 978-0-8223-4065-2.

Undead TV joins several other academic books analyzing Joss Whedon's cult TV show, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003), including Rhonda Wilcox, *Why "Buffy" Matters: The Art of "Buffy the Vampire Slayer"* (2005), Rhonda V. Wilcox and David Lavery, eds., *Fighting the Forces: What's at Stake in "Buffy the Vampire Slayer"* (2002), and James B. South, *"Buffy the Vampire Slayer" and Philosophy: Fear and Trembling in Sunnydale* (2003). Innumerable critical essays on *Buffy* have appeared, and the show remains a popular topic on the academic conference circuit. There is also an online academic journal devoted to *Buffy: Slayage* (http://slayageonline.com). It could certainly be argued that "Buffy studies" is a legitimate cross-disciplinary field of study, incorporating scholars in English, media studies, television studies, popular culture, gender, and women's studies. This rich text, so resonant for youth, adults, and academics alike, uses metaphors to explore power, resistance, authority, sex, life, and death—all within the rubric of a show about vampires and other evil creatures, and the high-school girl destined to kill them.

Undead TV comprises eight chapters, with a useful introduction by the editors that lays out the landscape of *Buffy* and *Buffy* studies and summarizes the essays' contents. A number of black-and-white screenshots and other images illustrate the essays. All the essays share a long bibliography provided at the end of the book, and an index closes the volume. The title of the book points to an underlying point of the book: *Buffy* continues to be shown in reruns, it had a spin-off show, *Angel,* and its characters live on in various tie-ins, including a comic book series and a book series; it could truly be said to be undead, particularly as scholars continue to explore the text and do the work of continually making it relevant.

Mary Celeste Kearney's "The Changing Face of Teen Television, or, Why We All Love *Buffy,*" analyzes the cross-age audience appeal enjoyed by *Buffy,* noting that it appeals to tweens who are "reading up" and to older folks who are "reading down," and linking this cross-age appeal to a deliberate attempt on the part of the networks—first the WB, then UPN—to broaden the appeal of the show to attract a youthful audience desired by their advertisers. As a text, *Buffy* deliberately plays with this audience with the construction of characters with "multiple, shifting identities" (34). In "I Know What You Did Last Summer: Sarah Michelle Gellar and Crossover Teen Stardom," Susan Murray analyzes Gellar's persona, showing how Gellar became associated with her character, Buffy, and how that persona has affected Gellar's choice in roles—and our readings of these roles. Like Kearney's essay, Murray's also discusses the show's cross-age appeal in terms of "marketing strategies and spectator positionings" (43), with Gellar's teen stardom the lynchpin of multimedia marketing, from TV to the Internet to film to comics to books.

Annette Hill and Ian Calcutt's "Vampire Hunters: The Scheduling and Reception of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel* in the United Kingdom" discusses not only scheduling, but also censorship and editing of the episodes to make them appropriate for the broadcast time and station. This resulted in a unique fan experience: in addition to forming groups to obtain and share the originary (uncut) source text, UK fans also frequented message boards, forums, discussions, and chat. The constraints placed on the program resulted in *Buffy* becoming "a comparatively hard-to-find commodity abroad" (71).

Amelie Hastie, in "The Epistemological Stakes of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer:* Television Criticism and Marketing Demands," the best essay in the volume, discusses merchandising in terms of ancillary texts, but also broadens the discussion to the merchandising of the academic, with the show valorizing academics (what other show has montages of study scenes as the characters read up on various monsters?) even as it conflates temporality and history. "Surely," Hastie concludes, "the production and reproduction of knowledge in all of the *Buffy* texts is directly related to academic occupations and preoccupations.…*Buffy*...is often explicitly about investigation and knowledge" (89).

The next chapter, Cynthia Fuchs's "'Did anyone ever explain to you what "secret identity" means?' Race and Displacement in *Buffy* and *Dark Angel,*" moves from analyses of reception, marketing, and audience to close readings of *Buffy* and *Dark Angel,* both TV shows that feature strong, superhuman woman protagonists. Race in *Buffy* is often metaphorical (although also literal, as images of slayers of color attest), but rather than presenting people of color, *Buffy* "tends to displace raced identity

and anxieties about race onto species-related anxieties, which are typically performed as various romances": Willow and Oz the werewolf, Xander and the demon Anya. Fuchs argues that superhuman Buffy is trying to pass as human. Allison McCracken, in a gender analysis entitled "At Stake: Angel's Body, Fantasy Masculinity, and Queer Desire in Teen Television," studies the character of the sometimes bad, sometimes good vampire Angel in both *Buffy* and its spin-off, *Angel,* noting that the character can accept violence upon his body, "a masochistic object of teen girls' erotic pleasure" (118). Angel's "queer erotics" created a new kind of male TV hero, "one who served largely to undermine and critique masculine dominance and normalcy" (141). To balance this reading of Angel is Jason Middleton's "Buffy as *Femme Fatale:* The Cult Heroine and the Male Spectator," which assesses the male gaze on the female body in formal shot-by-shot analyses of TV shows and comic books. With plenty of illustrative images, Middleton discusses the notion of the pin-up conflated with the action shot in these texts: he targets the aspect of fandom (as in a fanzine entitled *Femmes Fatales*) that prefers "to construct Buffy as a cult heroine" (163).

Elana Levine returns to feminism in the volume's final essay, "*Buffy* and the 'New Girl Order': Defining Feminism and Femininity." Levine argues that *Buffy* is sited at a place and time where feminism is different than the New Woman, who has been part of popular culture since the 1970s. Buffy herself is a third-wave feminist, marked by contradictory indicators of girlieness and toughness; the character of Willow may also be similarly read, and ex-demon Anya continually struggles not only with how to be human, but how to be a girl. All of these signal multilayered attempts to navigate the terrain of gender and superhuman strength.

This smart volume can be profitably read within the rubric of Buffy studies, but it can also be read as an indication of larger concerns having to do with merchandising, marketing, and audience, as well as sophisticated analyses of gender, race, and feminism, and ought to be read by people researching these concerns. The well-argued analyses delve deep into *Buffy* even as they underscore the importance of *Buffy* to television in general: *Buffy* broke new ground in terms of depictions of men and women, and especially in that regard, it has something important to say about the human condition.

Metamorphoses of the Werewolf

Justin Everett

Leslie A. Sconduto. *Metamorphoses of the Werewolf: A Literary Study from Antiquity through the Renaissance.* Jefferson, NC: MacFarland, 2008. Paper, 228 pages, $39.95, ISBN 978-0786435593.

It is a pleasurable event when a work addressing the pregenre origins of science fiction, fantasy, and horror appears. Most books, if they discuss ancestral works at all, cover them only briefly in order to move on to the mainstream of these genres in the nineteenth century or later. Leslie A. Sconduto's *Metamorphosis of the Werewolf* addresses the origins of the werewolf as a mythic figure without directly making reference to the werewolf's appearance in modern fantasy and horror. Sconduto's

book covers literary treatments of the werewolf in the Greco-Roman tradition, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance without addressing how these iterations of the myth may have influenced the figure as it appears in modern horror and fantasy.

This is both a disappointment and a relief. Coming from a position of relative ignorance about the origins of the werewolf, I had hoped to learn from this book how the modern version of the story had been shaped. However, I was pleased to have been so thoroughly introduced to the origins of the figure of the werewolf, particularly as it appears in the medieval and Renaissance traditions. In the end, though I was somewhat disappointed that the book did not connect the older literary treatments to those with which we are more familiar, I came away from this book with a greater understanding of the origin of the werewolf than I had when I first opened it.

The first chapter of the book, "The Werewolf in Antiquity," was perhaps the most disappointing to me. This is less due to the depth of the discussion than it was the limitation of references in Greek and Roman sources. However, though the author cites, translates, and discusses sources in French throughout the book—something that is particularly illuminating when the French romances are discussed in later chapters—here the failure to discuss the Latin of the original text from the *Metamorphoses* emphasizes the author's lack of ease with the classical sources. Further, this chapter is fewer than eight pages long, so it seems underdeveloped. The discussion of the implications of the analysis is thin here. This chapter had the potential to be the most interesting in the book, but it needed more careful development and more in-depth analysis.

In the second chapter, "The Church's Response to the Werewolf," the author becomes more comfortable and authoritative. The analysis of the texts cited is in much greater depth, and the discussion of how the narratives emphasize "the humanity of the werewolves and with it the opposition between outer appearance and inner reality" (32) is particularly compelling. The emphasis, in this and succeeding chapters, on the inherent humanity of the werewolf in the medieval and Renaissance traditions can be compared to modern werewolf narratives which often emphasize the transformed person's bestiality as opposed to his or her inherent humanity.

In the chapters that follow, the author discusses several medieval romances that feature werewolf protagonists. Chapter 4 discusses *Bisclavret,* a character who retains his chivalric qualities of loyalty and courtesy in spite of his transformation; chapter 5 introduces *Melion,* a noble werewolf who must learn to surrender pride and a desire for revenge to chivalry; and chapter 6 considers *Arthur and Gorlagon,* a cautionary tale about adultery and the nature of women. Chapter 7 analyzes *Guilluame de Palerne,* the last of the medieval romances featuring chivalric werewolves. It is in this chapter that the author begins to bring together the common themes illustrated in the foregoing chapters: that werewolves are men disguised as wolves, not men actually transformed into wolves, and that they maintain their human characteristics. Even though these characters may at times act like beasts and commit acts of extreme violence, this is but an illusion, because within, they remain men and have at their disposal that will that allows them to choose to act as men or as beasts, despite their appearance to the contrary.

It is in chapter 8 that the more familiar "wicked" werewolf reappears. The author shifts from discussing literary texts to treatises such as the *Malleus maleficarum* (*The Hammer of Witches*), which describe, in part, werewolves in terms of witches, madness, and trickery. Though this chapter contains much that is interesting, the very long passages of original text—often in French with equally long translations—cause the author's discussion to be lost. The effect is more like leafing through a pile of related papers than reading a well-constructed argument. In chapter 9, the author begins to tie the discussion together, noting that what binds the medieval and Renaissance versions of the werewolf is the belief that only God can transform a man, and that the apparent transformations are largely matters of trickery and self-delusion. Further, she argues that werewolf tales are ways for the medieval and Renaissance worlds to deal with violence and stories of cannibalism (187) and the problem of transubstantiation, particularly across Catholic/Protestant lines.

Metamorphoses of the Werewolf is a valuable text, bu tone that does not go quite as far as it could have. When the author is in comfortable territory—particularly within the discussion of the medieval romances—the discussion is engaging, though the book's weak opening and failure to connect the discussion to later versions of the werewolf myth is a matter of some concern. I would have liked for this to have been a longer book with a more in-depth discussion of the werewolf in the ancient world and chapters tracing the further transformation of the werewolf from the Renaissance through the current age. Perhaps this author will consider extending this discussion in a succeeding volume. In spite of some weaknesses, I think this is a strong treatment of a subject that is a welcome contribution to the fields of folklore, fantasy, and horror.

Media Reviews
"Anybody heard the name 'John Connor?'": *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles* [TV series]

Ed Carmien

Smart, really smart, time travel yarns are rare. More typical is the *Back to the Future* model, where time travel serves as a plot device, and changing the past erases people from pictures or similar silly (if fun) things. *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles* (*T:TSCC*) is one of the smart ones.

Or was. As of the middle of May 2009, Fox canceled the series, reportedly having demanded the budget be cut by half a million a season—a demand the show's producers declined to accept. For a full review of the Terminator mythos, including references to Harlan Ellison, see *SFRA Review* #284, "Somewhere a Cog Turns," my look at the show's first season.

The show's audience lucked out after a first abbreviated season of nine episodes. The network renewed the show, and a marvelous run of 22 episodes in season 2 ensued, wrapping up in March 2009 with an extremely promising finale that showcased some fine writing and SF concepts.

Very briefly, the TV *Terminator* series cemented the concept of "alternate timeline" time travel, and actions taken by the characters on screen have echoes that lead down different paths than the familiar mythos presented in various films. Future John Connor's reliance on reprogrammed "metal," for example, leads to a subplot in which future human resistance fighters send an independent mission back through time intended to break John's link to friendly terminator Cameron, perceived as the beginning of John's attachment to machines in place of people. Effect can precede cause—with time travel.

The overall plot of the series culminated in a finale that promised a third season that would start in a future where John Connor is just John Connor, sans any "future leader of mankind" baggage. Smart time travel: John's actions in the past jump him forward in time. His absence during the opening years of the war against the machines means he's not known as the savior of mankind when he arrives in the future.

Fox's decision to terminate the series seems odd. With the fourth *Terminator* movie released in May 2009 (and with DVD to follow in the fall), keeping this series alive seemed like a no-brainer. Fox's record on such decisions is questionable, but it is also hard to ignore that network television is changing. Shows draw smaller audiences today, and that reduces advertiser revenue. *Battlestar Galactica* (*BSG*), commonly touted as "the best show on TV," succeeded for five seasons—*T:TSCC*'s modest success was not enough to carry the show into a third season, and in fact, thanks to the writer's strike, the entire run is limited to 31 episodes.

Despite the foreshortened story arc, the show remains potentially useful in the SF classroom. It offers a less romantic picture of the meaning of artificial intelligence than, say, *BSG*. In the opening episode of the second season, "Sampson and Delilah," the damaged Cameron reverts to type and attempts to kill John Connor. When the machine is trapped and helpless, Connor begins the process of removing "her" CPU (as seen in *T2* and previous episodes of the show).

"Things are good now," the machine says, as John hesitates. "I'm sorry for what I did," it continues, adding "Please, I don't want to go…I love you…I love you, John, and you love me…" As these lines are delivered actor Summer Glau is uncharacteristically emotional. "She" is frantically begging for her life. John Connor grimaces and pulls the plug.

Are we to imagine he has just ended a "life"? No. These terminators are not synthetic humans—they are less technologically fantastic than Cylons, merely complex machines. These toasters are programmed to say anything (often imitating another person's voice) to accomplish the mission demanded by their programming.

If sentient, they are alien, and emphatically not human. "Born to Run," the show's final episode, completes this element of the overall story arc. "You need to understand how it works," Cameron tells him. "This chip. This body. The software is designed to terminate humans. The hardware is designed to terminate humans. That's our soul function."

In a moment that recalls a low-level flirtation carried on throughout the entire series, Cameron removes her shirt and bra, lies down and instructs John to straddle her. "She" then details how to cut open her abdomen, saying "If I'm damaged, you should know," making the ostensible reason for this act a verification of "her" functional state. However, the real message is expressed when John reaches into Cameron's chest, "below the breastplate." "There," Cameron says, "what does it feel like?"

"Cold," John replies. Her heart, indeed, is cold. She is a machine, albeit programmed to fight on the side of humanity, and as such the show's ongoing debate about how to treat Cameron the cyborg provides a good contrast to *BSG*'s more optimistic and idealistic message regarding artificial life.

Barring something unexpected as of this writing, we may never know the intended message regarding machine intelligence. The show does contain a potential "human" machine in the form of John Henry, and a plot element (required in any "smart" time travel yarn) indicates there is more than one machine faction in the future.

In any event, *T:TSCC* raises useful time-travel issues as well as questions about the nature of humanity and what it means to be human. Too bad we'll never know how things turn out in the "Sarah is a brunette" *Terminator* timeline.

Moonlight [TV series]

Candace R. Benefiel

Moonlight: The Complete Series. Dir. Rod Holcomb, et. al. Perf. Alex O'Loughlin, Sophia Myles. Warner Home Video. 2009.

Moonlight lasted only sixteen episodes, its promising first season interrupted by the writers' strike of 2007–8. Despite garnering a 2008 People's Choice Award for Best New Drama and an unusually passionate and vocal fanbase, it was canceled in May 2008.

The vampire as private investigator is not an unfamiliar trope in television and fiction, one that lends itself to serialization. Moonlight drew early critical comparisons with the popular *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* spinoff, *Angel* (1999–2004), but actually was far closer in tone and content to *Forever Knight* (1992–1996). In addition, the series added in elements from the extremely popular genre of paranormal romance, as it explored the dawning attraction between series main characters Mick St. John (Alex O'Loughlin) and investigative reporter Beth Turner (Sophia Myles).

One of the chief tenets of *Moonlight* is that the several hundred vampires in Los Angeles are hiding in plain sight. They are largely nocturnal, but (in the tradition of Stoker, if not common filmic vampire lore) these vampires are able to tolerate a limited amount of sunlight. This is not a world where other supernatural creatures lurk. Mick St. John is using his "special abilities," as he terms it in episode 1, to help humans, as penance for his past misdeeds. Where Angel fought demons and mythological menaces, Mick is more likely to deal with murderers, rogue arms dealers, and purveyors of illicit drugs, although often the cases trace back to some vampiric involvement.

Beyond the basic detective plots, the series used each episode to highlight steps in the progression of the romantic relationship between Mick St. John and Beth Turner. Mick, turned into a vampire on his wedding night by his (now ex-) wife, Coraline (Shannyn Sossamon), had once rescued a small child from her clutches, and in the years since has watched over the girl. Now that she is an adult, he lets her know of his existence, although concealing his nature and his connection to her past. One of the strengths of the series is the believable growth of this relationship, including Beth's conflict between her feelings for her current boyfriend, assistant district attorney Josh Lindsey (Jordan Belfi), and the compelling, mysterious stranger who has entered her life.

The series, created by Trevor Munson and Ron Koslow (*Beauty and the Beast*) began with strong influences of the film noir genre, filled with shadowy, enclosed spaces and a hero trapped by the echoes of his past. The tension between the toxic relationship between Mick and femme fatale, Coraline, and his newfound interest in fresh young blonde Beth take Mick far from the Gothic trappings of the traditional vampire tale, and into the realms of both noir and romance genres. There is a sharp break between noir atmosphere of the first twelve episodes, written and produced before the writer's strike caused a several-month-long break in the series, and the final four, which took a decidedly lighter turn. However, the noir influence is most clearly visible in the main character, a man trapped and defined by the burden of his past mistakes, and his desire to atone for what he feels is unforgivable.

Also notable is the overall style of the series. The sets are richly detailed, and contribute to the noir feel. Mick's loft/office, for example, is decorated with stark, postmodern furniture and art that accentuates his alienation from humanity:

> The idea behind the show was to put a modern spin on the vampire genre, so [production designer Alfred Sole] wanted the sets to reflect that quality. Mick's loft, the centerpiece of the permanent sets, had to embody the character's personality and life experience as well as provide everyday practicality for a vampire attempting to live unnoticed in a mortal world…[H]is living space had to reflect this lifetime of experience as well as a contemporary aesthetic that fit the feel of a modern drama. (Goldman 59)

Another standout in the cast of regulars is Mick's best friend and mentor, the 400-plus-year-old vampire Josef Kostan (Jason Dohring). As portrayed here, this rich, ancient vampire has the appearance of a man in his twenties, and although first presented as a hedonistic playboy, is given unexpected depths of emotion as the series progresses. His verbal edge adds needed humor in the dark tones of the early episodes, and as an unrepentant vampire, he provides a foil to the angst of the main character.

Moonlight uses its story arc to explore the nature of humanity and love in unexpected ways. The primary question of whether love can conquer seemingly insurmountable obstacles, such as vampirism, and heal the wounds left by the past, are in the forefront of this series. The characters, even the minor ones, are surprisingly complex. Beth's boyfriend, Josh, for example, is neither unlikeable nor a cardboard character to be discarded. He is presented as a passionate believer in justice, and although his charms ultimately fail to enthrall Beth in comparison to those of

the vampire, the fact that he is a genuinely good man makes her struggle all the more difficult.

One negative of the DVD release is the total lack of extras or commentary. Despite the gap of eight months between the series cancellation and the release of the DVD in January 2009, the set has a rushed look, as though the production company had little interest in offering a quality product.

As a series, it had its ups and downs. The quality of writing varied from episode to episode, and there were gaping holes in consistency on vampire mythos as defined within the show itself. The tragedy of *Moonlight* was that in the sixteen episodes that were filmed, the series, hampered by frequent changes in showrunners, ended just as it was beginning to find its way into a more detailed exploration of the world it was creating.

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Terminator: Salvation [film]

Ed Carmien

Terminator: Salvation. Dir. McG. Perf. Christian Bale, Helena Bonham Carter, Sam Worthington, Moon Bloodgood. Halcyon, 2009.

The *Terminator* series reaches back to 1984. Four movies, several novels, and a television series comprise the official mythos. Prior to *Terminator: Salvation*, the formula was always comfortable: time travelers from the future fight to secure victory for their faction in a war that hasn't started yet. In the first film (*T1*), Arnold Schwarzenegger plays the heavy, while Michael Biehn plays human soldier Kyle Reese, sent to rescue Sarah Connor.

For a full review of the *Terminator* mythos, see *SFRA Review* #284, Spring 2008, "Somewhere, A Cog Turns." Suffice to say for now that the next two films employ the same model—in *T2* Schwarzenegger gets to be the hero terminator while child John Connor is the target, and in *T3* the Governator repeats his role against yet another machine of the future while victim Connor is a young man in his twenties.

Messing with the formula in series fiction and films is risky business. On the one hand, audiences too familiar with the tropes and tricks of the formula are hard to entertain with that formula. On the other hand, one of the things that makes the Terminator franchise entertaining is that comfortable model.

Terminator: Salvation (*T4*) takes place in the future, no time travel involved. The war is well under way. Skynet is constantly improving its hardware: the Schwarzenegger-model terminator is bleeding-edge technology. Always looking for an advantage, Skynet has produced a hybrid terminator, a genuine cyborg (not the "fake" cyborgs that are really just robots, technically speaking, dressed in human flesh) equipped with both human and electronic brains, and a human heart. He is, in fact, a variant on a concept crafted by S. M. Stirling for his *Terminator* novels… but that's another story.

Marcus, put to death in 2003, awakens in 2018, and his purpose is to infiltrate the human resistance and get close to (but not kill) John Connor. His purpose is to gain the trust necessary to run a con on John. Meanwhile, Skynet is running a con on the resistance in general, leading them to believe that transmitting a signal can shut Skynet equipment down.

Weak writing hampers the intelligent viewer's ability to appreciate this film. It is better, certainly, than the often (and justly) maligned *T3*. The writers had a hard job, though, because *T4* doesn't follow the traditional formula. No time travel. In addition, there is no clear authorial ownership in *T4*: the script was heavily rewritten (this is common in Hollywood, and a common failing). Too many cooks spoil the broth?

What's left? A war story. But not a good one, and not one that has at its heart any particularly science fictional concept or idea. Sure, John Connor has an overriding reason to retrieve Kyle Reese from Skynet, because audio tapes made by Sarah Connor detail what she knows about the war to come, including the fact that John will send Reese back through time, and that Reese is John's father.

Sure, this Marcus fellow is a human/terminator hybrid, able to successfully emote his way into John's company, then to emote his way out of prison (he's tripped up by magnetic mines intended to let people but not terminators by), and even to convince John to infiltrate Skynet HQ alone. Of course that's a Skynet trap, but Marcus's human side triumphs over Skynet's control, Connor frees Reese, and the complex is blown to smithereens.

What's missing from this picture? A sense of drama. All Connor has to do is not lose the war and retrieve Reese, a task Skynet makes easy by acting like all good Bondesque villains: it explains the plan and doesn't put a bullet into people when the obvious chance presents itself.

The resistance leaders (John Connor is not senior in the hierarchy) never offer John anything more than token resistance to his "I know the future" cant. When John defies the resistance leadership and calls off a worldwide attack, the generals are proved toothless. This is a good thing, as it prevents the resistance from falling into Skynet's "fake signal" trap—but this avoidance is not tactical brilliance on John's part, merely his insistence that he be allowed time to rescue Reese and other civilians held by Skynet.

And hence, sadly, a lack of drama, at least on a strategic level. At best, viewers know how vital it is that Reese be rescued from Skynet's clutches. (At worst, filmgoers are confused on this point.) This adds spice to the (traditional) human vs. machine climatic showdown in an industrial environment, but doesn't carry the whole movie. Since the war can't be prevented, and three previous films presume that Kyle Reese has already gone back in time, it doesn't seem there is much for the audience to worry about.

There is lots of action. Skynet has some big toys in this war, and some nice small toys, too, including water 'bots that are bound to give some viewers *Jaws*-like water nightmares, and my favorite: motorcycle terminators. And there is a lot of mythic verisimilitude.

In the opening future war scene of *T2* (another series tradition), John Connor is shown directing a battle. This is an older John Connor, perhaps in his forties. He's grim, focused, and

carries facial scars. He gets those scars in *T4*. His spouse, forecast as such in *T3*, is a medico—although a veterinarian in *T3*, it makes sense that she's shifted her talents to people in *T4*. To the extent possible given the nature of the "past" provided by earlier movies, *T4* seems true to the cinematic world of *Terminator* as we know it, although for this reviewer dates are always out of focus.

Fans of the series will appreciate these touches, and nonfans can at least appreciate the spectacle. Real fans will bemoan Fox's cancellation of the TV series *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*, and the fact that the writers of that *Terminator* tale managed to bring uncertainty, mystery, and drama to the mythos, something that the makers of *T4*, with all their millions, could not do.

There is not much material for serious discussion of science fiction issues in *T4*. There are echoes of time travel questions from other films. Is it single universe? Alternate timeline? Are there paradoxes? Answer those questions by viewing and discussing other films. Can machines be human? Look elsewhere. In *T4*, machines are machines, unless they're hybrids, in which case the human half wins out without much apparent struggle. As with much science fiction cinema, the pretty pictures on the surface are all one gets in *T4*. Luckily, a guy named James Cameron made a couple of films in which there is something below the pretty pictures—I suggest any exploration begin there.

Star Trek [film]

Catherine Coker

Star Trek. Dir. J. J. Abrams. Perf. Chris Pine, Zachary Quinto, Leonard Nimoy, Eric Bana. Paramount, 2009.

Full disclosure: I am exactly the sort of hardcore *Star Trek* aficionado Abrams's film claims to run away from. I have the encyclopedias, the ornaments, and the ability to recite factoids and name the episode or book from which they came. The film, according to all the hype, was not for me. It was for everyone else. And the kicker is: I enjoyed it as much as, if not more than, my non-Trekkie/Trekker friends.

The script, by Roberto Orci and Alex Kurtzman, delivers on every bit of *Trek* lore you would expect. Young Spock lifts a single eyebrow and dryly delivers, "Fascinating." Bones is a doctor, not a physicist, dammit. Scotty's engines can't take much more. Et cetera. Perhaps the most amazing thing about the film is how deeply each actor has seemingly internalized the character played without giving in to wholesale imitation. This is a reboot that is an homage, not a carbon copy.

Because it is a reboot, it holds a significant debt to Ronald D. Moore's Battlestar Galactica. Moore, himself a veteran writer of the latter-day Star Trek franchises, engineered a brilliant redesign of a series best known as being a *Star Wars* knockoff with some Mormon imagery. Battlestar reimagined a nauseatingly wholesome family show (with obligatory cute small child and robotic dog) as a meditation on the natures of humanity, terrorism, religion and government (the small child was quickly written out; the dog was never there to begin with), while simultaneously rewriting beloved characters' genders, races, and personalities.

Abrams writes a new *Star Trek* universe that is much darker than the original (we're treated to not one, but two genocides in a two-hour film) but nonetheless retains a hopeful optimism about the future—creator Gene Roddenberry's hallmark. No matter how bad things look, they will get better.

The clever trick that Abrams pulls off is fashioning a reboot through manufacturing an alternate reality. "We must forget all that we might have been. This is what we are now," Spock states. A four-issue comic book prequel, *Countdown*, explicates what we are told through a flashback in the film: in the future, horrible events will drive a Romulan mad, and to wreak his vengeance he will travel back in time to destroy the Federation. *Countdown* takes place some time after the last *Star Trek* film offering—Captain Picard is an ambassador now, and cameos are made by Worf, Geordi LaForge, and the latest Data iteration. Films that require print prequels tend to hold structural weaknesses, though fortunately this is not so here. The prequel comics elaborate on a larger story, but the film is no way beholden to it.

Thus, we have a film true to its extensive mythology, its previous incarnations, and its multimedia megatexts. So here's another kicker: this looks like *Star Trek* and sounds like *Star Trek*, but it is not *Star Trek*.

Though the *Star Trek* franchises have often veered far closer to science fantasy than science fiction, their stories have always focused on ideas: the nature of humanity, the forging of utopia, the balance of the environment with technology. Even the worst of the films have tried to grapple, however awkwardly and badly, with age-old concepts like the place of God and eternal youth. Abrams's ideas, however, are his conceits: how an alternate reality can be forged through wormholes and paradoxes. However, this idea really begins and ends with the contrasts in the elder Spock (called Spock Prime) and his young counterpart, and with the James T. Kirk born at the moment of his father's sacrifice contrasted with the Kirk we have come to know from the series. These different takes on beloved characters are the true crux of the story. However, this same story offers the opportunity for the exploration of many more ideas—an opportunity that is not taken—at least, yet.

As mentioned earlier, the film contains two genocides. The first is the destruction of Romulus via supernova in the original timeline, a destruction that may or may not have taken place through the negligence of the Federation in general and the Vulcan Science Academy in particular. This disaster is what spawns the madness of Nero, a Romulan miner, and his vendetta with Spock. A man driven mad by the genocide of his people is not a new story, but here it is glossed over. Nero does little more than growl and stalk around the stage. Given his historical namesake, one would think his madness would resonate more somehow. When we see the holograms of his pregnant, dead wife, we should be invited to sympathize with his horror and his loneliness. But we aren't, and instead are treated to more growling and explosions.

The second is the destruction of Vulcan at the hands of Nero. Spock notes in his log that six billion are dead, that he estimates that no more than ten thousand Vulcans could have survived, and that he is now a member of an endangered species. In addition, the Vulcans have developed a hyperemotional control to counteract their violent emotions which had nearly destroyed

them in their ancient history, a control that lapses in the pon farr, or mating heat, that can also lead to madness. What happens to such a species, such a people? This, too, is not discussed, beyond Spock Prime's declaration that he will found a new colony for the Vulcan people. But there are dozens of implications left that are completely undiscussed. While the movie must itself end, only a line or two needs utterance to open up some awareness of the issues at hand. This lack implies a lack of awareness on the part of the authors—a lack that has historically not been seen in the previous *Trek* incarnations.

Ultimately, the film reminds us of an exercise in fan fiction. An excellent piece of fan fiction can illuminate the lives of beloved characters, develop alternate universes to explore new avenues in storytelling, and add an emotional depth that may not be found in the original. However, it often lacks the trueness of the original—an attention to detail, to characterization, to canon. The new *Star Trek* shows a breadth of knowledge and understanding of the original, but it misses the point.

What Burns Also Breathes in Stardust: Zowie Bowie Finds His Own *Moon* [film]

Matthew Snyder

Moon. Dir. Duncan Jones. Perf. Sam Rockwell, Kevin Spacey, Dominque McElligott, Kaya Scodelario, Robin Chalk and Benedict Wong. Sony Classics. 2009.

If there ever was a sad subnarrative to children of celebrities run amok, the car accidents, anorexia, plastic surgeries, school dropouts—dreams of Demerol and the addled days of other addictions found in Hollywood—Duncan Jones seems to have read all of the articles on the subject. If so, he read them not to relive them or reenact them, but to avoid them entirely. Living inside of the cloistered preen and glow of Iconomania, being the child to David Bowie, is no small life negotiation in a world drawn in by the shimmied swirl of cellophane, cameras, and plastics. And by being a child of the 1970s—then free of the now ever-present burning eye of the British press—the director spent his childhood studying at private schools aloft in the great countries of Europe: Switzerland, Germany, London, and Scotland. Upon reaching adulthood, he studied for his bachelor's degree at the College of Wooster and wrote a thesis titled, however portentously, *How to Kill Your Computer Friend: An Investigation of the Mind/Body Problem and How It Relates the Hypothetical Thinking Machine*. After dropping out of his PhD program in philosophy at Vanderbilt University, Jones transferred to the London Film School, moving slightly off the mark from his childhood dreams of becoming the next "Macho Man" Randy Savage. Yet instead of hitting raves and clubs to Destination Self-Immolation, Jones worked at bridging the gap between his interest in philosophy and cinema, all while studying at the London School of Film. He later worked as a director of commercials in Britain to hone his craft in a real-world setting. The young Bowie spent ten years in total writing, planning, and crafting a story for Sam Rockwell and used a patchwork quilt of connections to find the needed funding for his first film. *Moon*,

as one might suspect, is an attempt at exploring his undergraduate philosophy thesis at Wooster to the contours of sound and image. Questions of the mind/body relationships to the self are central to the thematic concerns of his debut work. Made for a hysterically scant budget of $5 million, confabbed with CGI and traditional microminiature sets, Moon allows Duncan Jones to seizure-dream his way to the Space Oddity within.

Name-checking the lost legacies of an earlier, more experimental science fiction cinema as seen with films as various as *THX-1138*, *Silent Running*. and *Solaris*, *Moon* seems oddly askance of the thematic concerns of its more contemporary brethren like *Transformers* or *Terminator 3*. The spitting glitter of these latter CGI spectacles seems largely invisible from the film's modus operandi, and instead, Jones uses SF as a platform for delving into the psychology of emotional distress and emotional feeling—of retracing the arc of the human condition. Once the child of an icon, shadowed by media and the garish green glitz, Jones escapes from the black hole of failure, indirection, and hesitance. And among the failures and compromises made or lost in the gaps between A-listers and celebutards, Duncan Jones finds himself in the rare company of success with his debut film, *Moon*. Much like Sophia Coppola's exorcism of her father's long shadow with her first film, *Virgin Suicides*, Duncan Jones's *Moon* silences the sounds of his own father's voice. Showing an intense understanding of the self and human subjectivity, the lust for life and the dangers of nonexistence, *Moon* is thoughtful counter to the dishwater intellectualism found in recent SF cinema. The film, as such, breaks through the shitpile of Michael Bay's dumbed-out CGI bonanzas and George Lucas's space operas to rejoinder those tiresome narratives for a film that harkens back to the Yuletide prayers of cyberpunk. *Moon*, more than any film since *Children of Men*, pushes the boundaries of SF, all while still clasping onto its more resilient legacies and visual tropes. In reviewing this debut work (although several film critics made mention of both *Blade Runner* and *2001 Space Odyssey*, and even Tarkovsky's underseen and misunderstood *Solaris*), I found that *Moon* has as more to do with Hitchcock's *Vertigo* as to anything so seemingly connected to the science fiction of the 1970s. A clever mélange of film influences, Moon grapples with Kantian and Lacanian ideas of the self as well as our newfound fears of a world estranged from us—of a world that makes devil deals with technology to replicate human beings into mirror images themselves.

[Author's Note: Spoilers ahead.] Set in a near-time future from an unknown year, Sam Bell (played by Sam Rockwell) is busy harvesting on the moon for a substance known as helium 3. Sam is alone and quietly troubled, working in the bleak slash of Earth's afterglow for a substance that offers his home planet's only true source for energy independence. Other than a robot affectionately nicknamed Gerty (eerily voiced by a Sir Kevin Spacey, who smoothly glides from the moon base's many ceiling rails), Sam is left to his silence, his breathing, and the brief passing communications to his wife and daughter back on Earth. A miner-astronaut in space, Sam is slowly winding down his three-year purgatory on the barren crust of a dead moon. He plays ping-pong. He sings songs to himself. He carves small miniature versions of his hometown out of wood with maniacal detail and abject precision. And in a resplendent and thoughtful reference to *Robinson Crusoe* and *Blade Runner*, we see Sam

count off the days remaining with pen-marked happy faces, as he lovingly touches his family photographs of a wife and daughter he has not seen for three years. Memories dried and drifting, he thinks only of those he has left behind. He waits on the moon. They wait on Earth. Among all of the detritus and grunge of a moon base seemingly in decay and in dire need for repairs, Sam is slowly—at least seemingly—losing his mind and suffering nosebleeds. He hears voices. He sees ghosts. He then sees himself facing himself. What follows from here is a psychological journey that films unrelated to the SF genre have discussed and explored with intense feeling: what would you do if you saw another version of yourself? Although previous works like *Dead Ringers*, *Fight Club*, and *Adaptation* serve as able-bodied comparisons to Jones's examination of the self, one should look no farther than Hitchcock's *Vertigo* to understand the film's complete and difficult metanarrative.

And like Jimmy Stewart's character, Scottie Fergusun, in the aforementioned film, the detective suddenly realizes that everything he has been told about a woman's fate has been consecrated by deceptions and preconceived lies. His obsession with Madeleine is really with a Kansas-born girl named Judy, hired by a wealthy man, whose ultimate goal is to find an alibi to his own wife's murder, and in doing so, sets out to manufacture a witness to his wife's death. In Duncan Jones's retelling of this same narrative thrust, Sam meets Sam, thinking that he is insane or losing his mind. They seem different, but look the same, but remember similar and disturbing details about their wife and their time with her. It is in this space of the film that Sam Rockwell gives the most urgent, subversive, and wholly compelling performance of his career. Playing between emotions and countervailing pivot points of two selves warring for the ultimate sense of self, Rockwell adroitly sends off his own Masterpiece Theatre of Hamlet talking to himself. And as *Moon* continues on in the empty stark caverns of the base, the film slowly reveals—through psychological dread and despair—that the men are in fact both clones of one original Sam Bell. And in true cyberpunk fashion, à la William Gibson, or in the proto-forms of Philip K. Dick, we find out that the corporation involved in collecting helium 3 has an ulterior and secret purpose toward maintaining its profit margins. We find out that several clones are kept down below the base. They were created to save money, and in effect, reduce any exorbitant costs of retraining the original Sam Bell's future replacements back on the moon. And like any kind of yogurt lying on a Food 4 Less grocery shelf, they have an expiration date.

Monsters vs. Aliens [film]

Amy J. Ransom

Monsters vs. Aliens. Dir. Rob Letterman and Conrad Vernon. Perf. Reese Witherspoon. DreamWorks Animation, 2009.

As its title suggests, *Monsters vs. Aliens* pits the star tropes of fantasy/horror and science against each other, placing the former, however, soundly in the field of the latter, drawing heavily upon the tradition of the SF horror film. Its "monsters" openly reference well-known creatures from the 1950s nuclear anxiety films such as *The Blob* (1958, dir. Irvin S. Yeaworth Jr.;

remake 1988, dir. Chuck Russell), *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954, dir. Jack Arnold; remake projected 2011, dir. Breck Eisner), *The Fly* (1958, dir. Kurt Neumann; remake 1986, dir. David Cronenberg), and *Attack of the 50 Foot Woman* (1958, dir. Nathan Juran; perf. Allison Hayes). In this animated feature, although they have been imprisoned for decades, these cinematic monsters are redrawn as human and lovable, and they are offered a chance to redeem their perceived "sins" when aliens attack and they save the world.

Of particular interest for academic study is the central character, Susan/Ginorma (voiced by Reese Witherspoon). About to be married to a self-serving, ambitious television meteorologist (Derek, voiced by Paul Rudd), Susan is struck by a meteorite and begins to grow to an amazing, colossal height. Discovering the existence of the other monsters—B.O.B. (Seth Rogen), the Missing Link (Will Arnett), and Dr. Cockroach, PhD (Hugh Laurie)—triggers a journey of self-discovery for Susan, so that by the end of the film she rejects the traditional feminine role of support and helpmeet to Derek. In fighting the aliens, she discovers hidden abilities and strengths within herself; symbolic of her new self-acceptance, she embraces the media name adopted for her, becoming forever "Ginorma."

This work can be fruitfully read in tandem with the original *Attack of the 50 Foot Woman*, in which Gwendolyn Audrey Foster examines "the specter of gender" (73). Foster sees the 1950s film as blaming the woman for the rape that results in her monstrosity and uses her as an example of the "bad-white body" in the SF monster films of that decade. In contrast, the recent film offers visions of a woman rejecting traditional gender roles, opting for an active life, valuing both her female friends and her new monster friends, and adopting a name that, while it draws on the child's expression, "ginormous," also points directly to her sexuality, the enormous vagina. The film itself resists closure on the heteronormative couple as Susan/Ginorma chooses to remain single. And yet this manifestly feminist message clashes with a racial reading of its character the Missing Link, whose representation reinscribes a number of stereotypical images of the African American (or even Irish in nineteenth-century English cartoon drawings) man, including large lips, a low brow line, an overactive libido, and—most obviously—the status of being "less evolved."

The film's revisionist look at monsters from the 1950s repositions monstrosity into the politics of acceptance and tolerance of the contemporary world, yet, it still posits the existence of an evil "other" in the form of the demonized aliens. Like *Space Chimps,* it also satirically references U.S. politico-scientific institutions and the films of Stanley Kubrick. Leading the assault upon the aliens, but also the monsters' prison guard, General W. R. Monger (Kiefer Sutherland), recalls George C. Scott's General Buck Turgidson in *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), as does the war room in which he and others meet with the president. With its obvious referentiality, as well as its pastiche characteristics, this text could be used fruitfully to illustrate the conventions of the SF monster film subgenre. It also fits into what is now appearing to be a major trend that includes original stories that play on anxieties about science and the environment (like M. Night Shamyalan's *The Happening*, 2008) and remakes of SF and horror texts from the 1950s and the 1960s, including *I Am Legend* (2007), *Night of the Living Dead* in 3D (2006), and *The*

Incredible Shrinking Man (announced for 2010). Can we read this trend in popular culture as a reflection of a post-9/11 anxiety analogous to that of the cold war period?

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The Gamers: Dorkness Rising [film]

Nathan Rockwood

The Gamers: Dorkness Rising. Dir. Matt Vancil. Perfs. Nathan Rice, Carol Roscoe, Brian Lewis, Scott C. Brown, Christian Doyle, Jen Page. Dead Gentlemen Productions, 2008.

T*he Gamers: Dorkness Rising* (alternatively known as *The Gamers II*), an independent film by Dead Gentlemen Productions, parodies the players and game content of tabletop role-playing games—specifically, Dungeons and Dragons by Wizards of the Coast. Following the story of a group of friends playing through a D&D adventure, the film alternates between the "reality" of the players around the gaming table and the fantasy world of their characters, providing a satirical look at not only the antics of obstinate paladins and lusty bards, but also at the social conflicts that arise between players when their personal goals differ.

At first glance, it may seem strange to attribute academic purpose to a film like *Dorkness Rising.* As the back of the DVD case describes it,

> All Lodge wants is for his gaming group to finish their adventure. Unfortunately, they're more interested in seducing barmaids, mooning their enemies, and setting random villagers on fire. Can the group overcome their bickering to save the kingdom, or will the evil necromancer Mort Kemnon triumph unopposed? A parody of fantasy films and the adventure gaming community, The Gamers: Dorkness Rising is a hilarious romp through the world of sword and sorcery—in this case, a world of exploding peasants, giant house cats, and undead roast turkeys. Game on!

Clearly, the goal of the Dead Gentlemen was to produce an entertaining film about a subject they enjoy, but taking the time to watch and understand the movie may inspire some scholarly applications.

Despite being written and directed so that it stands on its own, *Dorkness Rising* is essentially a sequel to the Dead Gentlemen's older film, *The Gamers*. In comparison, *The Gamers* was a short sketch that briefly parodied gaming stereotypes and relied on special effects on par with Photoshop, and *Dorkness Rising* is a feature-length film with a fleshed-out plot and a level of professional polish that many similar indie films lack. However, the force driving Dead Gentlemen films to cult popularity among gamers is not the growing strength of their budget, but rather their application of skillful writing and directing to a social commentary that dissects a subject close to their personal experience. Much as Mark Twain dug into his knowledge of life

in the American south when writing *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the Dead Gentlemen draw on their knowledge of gaming to provide a tale that is mainly true—with some stretchers thrown in, just to make their points clear.

While *Dorkness Rising* has significant appeal to gamers simply for its entertainment value, the film provides several interesting points for academic exploration, and even more so than in the previous *The Gamers*, the humor and the game content discussed are meant to be accessible to nongaming audiences. Much like the SF satire film *Galaxy Quest*, there are many moments where a fan of the original material will have a deeper understanding of the history behind a given joke, but the film works to establish context for even a complete newcomer to the genre.

First, *Dorkness Rising* provides a look at not only the stereotypical (and stereotypically ridiculed) behaviors of gamers, but also why those gamers are playing those games at all. Just as participants in any social activity—sports, parties, etc.—may each have their own agenda, each of the characters in *Dorkness Rising* has a clear and distinct goal within the game. By observing them, the audience can explore several of the various motivations that lead people to play role-playing games, design alternate persona, and engage in imagination play.

Second, because the motivation behind gaming is an admittedly narrow focus, the social conflicts that arise between the players in the film can be generalized to other situations. *Dorkness Rising* is rife with issues of trust, pedantry, cheating, inappropriate behavior, peer pressure, and social consequences. Even the deceptively complex question of what makes a good story is given explicit attention.

Third, as alluded to above, there are parallels one can draw between *Dorkness Rising* and more traditional examples of social criticism, such as *Huckleberry Finn*. To some students, the humor in *Dorkness Rising* or other modern media may be more accessible than Twain's artful but increasingly archaic prose, providing a stepping stone by which they can approach the idea that Huck Finn is supposed to be hilarious. The critical commentary in *Dorkness Rising* is not targeted at a vast social institution like slavery or racial prejudice, but it nonetheless relies upon the same elements of satire and irony.

Given the relatively adult nature of the film (it is officially "Not Rated" but resides in the approximate realm of PG-13/R films for its use of fantasy violence, coarse language, and sexual references), it would not be appropriate viewing in many classrooms, but could find a place in a certain secondary, undergraduate, or graduate classroom investigating any of the related topics. As a text on its own, or as a text to compare to other parodies—*Galaxy Quest* springs to mind again—*The Gamers: Dorkness Rising* is worth consideration as more than simple entertainment.

Space Chimps [film]

Amy J. Ransom

Space Chimps. Dir. Jeff De Micco. Perf. Jeff Daniels. Vanguard Animation, 2008.

Space Chimps offers a vision of space exploration with a conscience. Just as the Senator (voiced by Stanley Tucci) announces that the plug will be pulled on space research, an unmanned probe indicates the possibility of extraterrestrial life. Unwilling to risk human lives, a sudden inspiration—or rather, a visual image hacked in by chimp-geek Comet (Zack Shada)—leads him to revive the space chimp program. While three highly trained chimp astronauts are already prepared for the mission, the Senator wants a media-friendly image of heroism. Who will fill this role? Ham III (Andy Samberg), the apparently unheroic but thrill-seeking grandson of Ham (first chimp in space), is reluctantly "recruited" by kidnapping from his current job as a circus performer (he is regularly shot from a cannon). Fortunately, his grandfather's chimp technician Houston (Carlos Alrazaqui) accompanies Ham, bringing experience and know-how to the newly formed team. With Comet and Houston on the ground, Ham III, Luna (Cheryl Hines), and Titan (Patrick Warburton) blast off to encounter sentient life on the other side of a wormhole. What they find is a local cargo cult gone horribly awry: the earlier probe has been appropriated by the childishly evil Zartog (Jeff Daniels), a real monster from the id. After he has been fully probed "for purely scientific purposes," the machine delights him with him images of "Earth culture." A few fortuitous pushes of various buttons grant him the power to use the new technology to enslave the planet and organize a huge public works project which will result in his own palace (modeled after a Las Vegas casino-hotel, of course), as well as—oops—the destruction of the village where everyone else lives. Realizing that Earth's intervention has inadvertently caused this catastrophe, the chimps resolve to stay and help the Malgorians save their village and dethrone Zartog. The film's commercial success has led to the development of a sequel, *Return to Malgor* (announced for 2010).

Space Chimps obviously references such space exploration films as *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1969; dir. Stanley Kubrick), but it most readily calls to mind the *Planet of the Apes* (1968; dir. Franklin J. Schaffner), its sequels, and Tim Burton's 2001 remake. The female astronaut Luna's delivery and characterization resembles that of Kim Hunter's portrayal of Zira in the original film, and it depicts chimps as a highly intelligent, technologically and scientifically savvy species. The animated comedy largely avoids the social commentary imbedded in the Apes films or in Kubrick's space epic, and yet, it offers some "lite" food for thought. Its satire of the politics of space exploration and funding, the shallowness of "Earth culture," and its potentially negative impact on extraterrestrial communities, coupled with its positioning of the primate chimpanzees as more intelligent, humane, and responsible than their human counterparts, reflect a certain social conscience on the part of the film's creators. Indeed, this last element obviously undoes Kubrick's imagery of primate savagery, so central in contrast to the human astronauts and the megalith, which has been read as racist in its potential alignment of "less highly evolved" apes with so-called primitive peoples. A racial reading, similar to that in Eric Greene's *Planet of the Apes as American Myth: Race and Politics in the Films and Television Series* (1996), might prove interesting; apart from the chimps and one scientist with a clearly South Asian accent, the most prominent faces "of color" in this cast are the brightly tinted Malgorians.

Although the film is somewhat fluffy, it might prove an interesting opener or icebreaker for a course that makes a larger contextualization of a number of topics, including representations of space exploration as well as the use of animal subjects for experiments deemed too dangerous for humans. Pedagogically, engaging in a topic with a student-friendly text that both entertains as it can be used for social analysis can often result in generating discussion and building up a friendly audience before more difficult texts or topics are engaged. Clearly, Space Chimps cries out for a reading through—or could be used to illustrate—Donna Haraway's fascinating examinations of humans, primates and race in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* (1991) or *Modest-_Witness@Second_Millennium. Female_Man©Meets Onco_MouseTM: Feminism and Technoscience* (1997). It also engages directly with postcolonial theory in its direct demonstration of the negative impact of Encounter, as well as its call for responsibility in exploration. And yet it does not question the fundamental paradigm itself: space exploration is depicted as exciting, heroic, and necessary; humans—represented by the chimps—are fundamentally compassionate, but clearly culturally and technologically superior to other beings in the universe, as Zartog's aspirations to appropriate human cultural artefacts reveal.

Escape Pod [podcast]

Alfred E. Guy Jr.

Escape Pod. Founder and Editor, Stephen Eley. Managing Editor, Jeremiah Tolbert. Escape Artists. May 2005–present.

On April 15, I caught up to *Escape Pod*. And if that sentence doesn't make sense, I envy you, because it means *Escape Pod* is in your future.

Escape Pod is an SF podcast produced by Steve Eley. Each week since May 2005, Eley has provided an audio performance of an SF short story; broadcasts average about 40 minutes, meaning the stories are roughly 6,000 words, or 15 published pages. There have been 200 full-length episodes and roughly 50 "flash" episodes, which average about 5 to 7 minutes long.

The short version of this review is: *Escape Pod* is wonderful, and if you haven't listened to it, you must. It's also 100 percent free. One easy way to access the stories is via the "podcast" section of the iTunes Store. You can also visit *Escape Pod*'s Web site (http://escapepod.org/) for information on other ways to download or stream the episodes.

The stories include a mix of science fiction and fantasy. Nearly all are reprints from the main SF magazines, although there are occasional *Escape Pod* originals (notably the "Union Dues" series—see below). To my taste, at least a third of the stories rate at "very good" or higher; another third are either enjoyable or at least interesting and provocative. The roster of stories on *Escape Pod* ranges very widely. There are a handful of truly classic stories, including Robert Heinlein's "All You Zombies," Isaac Asimov's "Nightfall," and Robert Silverberg's "When We Went to See the End of the World." At the next rank of canon for the SF scholar or deep fan, a substantial portion of the stories come from top contemporary authors, including

Elizabeth Bear, David Brin, Ted Chiang, Cory Doctorow, Nancy Kress, Ken MacLeod, Robert Reed, Mike Resnick, Benjamin Rosenbaum, Robert Sawyer, and Michael Swanwick. Tastes vary, and you might choose to highlight different luminaries, but there's no denying the remarkable collection of talent available. Of special interest to SFRA readers, perhaps, are *Escape Pod* stories by recent SFRA honorees, including 2009 guest authors Michael Bishop, Andy Duncan, and Paul Di Filippo. For five weeks each spring, *Escape Pod* also hosts performances of that year's Hugo-nominated short stories.

The authors I've mentioned so far represent perhaps 50 of the 200 full-length stories in the series, but as powerful as it is to access such high-quality productions of their work—for free—they are not the only reasons to subscribe. In fact, I've been delighted with the authors that *Escape Pod* has introduced me to for the first time. Once again, tastes will vary, but here are a handful of the most powerful stories that I would likely not have encountered without *Escape Pod*: "Squonk the Dragon" by Pete Butler; "The King's Tail" by Constance Cooper; "The Dinner Game" by Steve Eley; "The Life and Times of Penguin" by Eugie Foster; "Cinderella Suicide" by Samantha Henderson; "26 Monkeys, Also the Abyss" by Kij Johnson; "Tk'tk'tk" by David D. Levine; "Friction" by Will McIntosh; "Ulla" by Daniel Schwabauere; and "Blink. Don't Blink." by Ramona Louise Wheeler. This list includes stories of the following SF subgenres: children's fantasy, political allegory, hard SF, cyberpunk, first contact, and space opera. And that hardly exhausts the range of the podcast. Worth special mention is the Union Dues series of stories by Jeffrey R. DeRego, currently at nine installments, which creates a near future where superheroes with X-Men–like powers have been licensed—and unionized—in an effort to normalize their relations with the rest of us.

Each episode of *Escape Pod* begins with a brief biography of the story's author. For the first two years, introductions also included two or three minutes of reflections by Eley—on SF, on writing, or on cultural and political themes. These discussions have been moved to the few minutes after the story (which Eley calls the "outro"), which now also includes listener feedback on previous weeks' stories. The audio quality is generally pristine. There's almost no trolling for donations. Eley occasionally includes a paid plug, but only briefly and for appropriate items (SF novels, Audible.com).

Escape Pod productions do not include authors reading their own work; they are also somewhat minimalist, eschewing music or special effects. Eley himself is the reader for about half of the first 150 stories. Guest readers occasionally feature an especially idiosyncratic voice or style, but most of the performances evince a straightforward aesthetic that keeps the focus on the stories. (Two of my favorite guest readers are Frank Key and Anna Eley, Steve's wife.) Eley has been appearing in fewer episodes during the past year, in part to avoid burnout and in part because of the company's expansion into two other podcasts: *Pseudopod* (October 2006), which focuses on horror, and *PodCastle* (April 2008), which features fantasy.

Although SF films are a central part of my teaching practice, I haven't yet incorporated audio books. I do already teach several stories that have been produced on the podcast, and on the basis of my practice with film and TV adaptations, here's how I'd be likely to incorporate *Escape Pod*: (1) Pass out a short section of the story on paper in class. (2) Ask students to mark places where a reader could make choices about tone, pace, or volume. (3) Experiment with students reading a few passages in very different ways. (4) Ask students to reflect on how these variations might affect their sense of the overall story. (5) Listen together to that same section from *Escape Pod*. (6) Ask students to discuss the choices *Escape Pod*'s reader made, and what effects these seem to have on the story.

Perhaps my only critique of the series is that its selections skew toward more humor than I might choose on my own. Thirty to 40 of the full-length stories have either a madcap, postmodern quality or are resolved by classic comedy conventions. (Although for a truly brilliant, humorous flash piece, listen to "The Team-Mate Reference Problem in Final Stage Demon Confrontation" by Constance Cooper.) I don't think I'm humorless, but in SF, my preference is for tough and thoughtful rather than clever. I think Connie Willis's *Lincoln's Dreams* is one of the world's great books, for instance, but I don't really like *To Say Nothing of the Dog*.

The percentage of comic stories on *Escape Pod* probably reflects in part Eley's taste, and in part that such material comes across more readily in performance. Where reading to yourself allows you to pause, reread, and ponder, audio books move forward relentlessly. This forward momentum lends itself to stories with a first-person perspective or a strong narrative voice. Once you've enriched your pool with these kinds of stories, I think a higher percentage of these voices are going to be eccentric or otherwise "off." As someone who commutes 150 miles a day for work, I've noticed I listen to more suspense and plot-heavy fiction in the car and save poetry for reading at home. Similarly, *Escape Pod* sometimes emphasizes playfulness over profundity.

But this is a small concern in light of the deep, varied brilliance of *Escape Pod*'s offerings. Overall, I can't recommend the series highly enough. And if this review offers more endorsement than analysis, I think you'll understand why when you sample *Escape Pod*'s wares. After discovering the series in 2008, I listened to as many as two stories a day for months at a time. What I refer to at the top of this review as "catching up" is the day when I had exhausted the series' backlog—now I have to wait for my weekly fix every Thursday. If you're new to the podcast, you have the opportunity to burn its candle at both ends for more than a hundred hours yet. Happy listening.

The Sandman: Brief Lives [graphic novel]

Dominick Grace

The comic book The Sandman was published by DC Comics from 1989 to 1996. Written by Neil Gaiman and drawn by various hands (the original artists, Sam Keith and Mike Dringenberg, are credited as cocreators), the series was the flagship title of DC's then-new Vertigo imprint and has become one of the most highly regarded mainstream comics. Issue 19 of the series (an exploration of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's*

Dream) won the World Fantasy Award for short fiction, the only comic ever to do so, and is included in *Dream Country*, the third volume in the collected series. The series has been kept in print in the form of ten trade paperbacks (an eleventh collection of new stories was created and published in 2003). *The Sandman* is unusual in that Gaiman conceived fairly early on of a finite run for the series (mainstream comics are in general ongoing serials) and managed to convince DC to let the series end when and as he wanted it to. The ten volumes that comprise the original run contribute to the overall arc but are also reasonably accessible as stand-alone works to those unfamiliar with other volumes; the analogy might be a later volume in an ongoing SF series that resonates more deeply with long-term readers but that can be picked up and read by a neophyte. *Brief Lives* is volume 8 in the series and one of the longest story arcs; while some of its elements will go over the heads of new readers and others acquire their full significance only in subsequent volumes, the book can be read as a self-contained work.

Gaiman's forward asserts that the reader needs to know only the following: "There are seven beings that aren't gods, who existed before humanity dreamed of gods and will exist after the last god is dead. They are called The Endless. They are embodiments of (in order of age) Destiny, Death, Dream, Destruction, Desire, Despair and Delirium. Approximately three hundred years ago Destruction abandoned his realm." That is indeed, for the most part, all a reader needs to know, and enough for the astute reader to suspect that the following narrative will involve a quest. Delirium (who used to be Desire but changed—change is one of the major themes of the book) misses her absent brother and convinces Dream to accompany her on a quest for the missing Destruction. Yes, they go looking for Destruction, the irony of which is deliberate and leads to a major narrative thread completed only in the penultimate volume in the series.

As a quest narrative, *Brief Lives* is unconventional in many ways. For one thing, it reverses the usual quest trajectory from the familiar to the unfamiliar world in that the questors are not humans who enter supernatural realms but rather supernatural creatures who enter the mundane world on their quest; one might liken it on this front to a work such as Peter S. Beagle's *The Last Unicorn*. The book's relatively few instances of humor involve their unfamiliarity with mundane life, such as, for instance, how to drive a car without drawing the attention of a traffic cop. Second, the narrative is almost as much antiquest as actual quest, in that Dream has no real interest in finding his brother but merely seeks diversion, developing a belief in the quest as quest only as it proceeds. Third, and perhaps most significantly, the climax is highly unconventional. Dream and Delirium do find Destruction but do not restore him to his former position, as we might expect given the common quest motif of bringing back the lost thing and using it to restore order. Instead, Destruction simply gives them dinner, says he's not going back, and departs to realms unknown. Though Dream seems changed by the experience, whether he has in fact fully grasped or accepted Destruction's rationales for his abdication is not fully clear; Gaiman deliberately frustrates the expectations set by convention about how a quest will change the questor and/or the questor's world. Readers familiar with Gaiman's novels may not be surprised by this; indeed, *Brief Lives* is in many ways an anticipation of *American Gods* and features versions of some of the gods who appear in that novel, as well as some parallel events and one major symbol, the coin.

Instead, Gaiman uses the quest structure to meditate on subjects such as mortality and change. Though the protagonists are theoretically Endless, their functions govern major aspects of the lives of ephemeral creatures of all kinds, and it is this responsibility that has driven Destruction to abandon his realm. Destruction as a phenomenon remains a reality in the world, but Destruction personified is no longer responsible for it, no longer burdened with the implications of his function. Indeed, he has instead become a creator of sorts, as an artist, worker on the construction of the Panama Canal, and even chef. His surrender of his function coincided with the birth of the Age of Reason and its inevitable trajectory on the path to nuclear Armageddon. Though he is Destruction, he chooses, in effect, not to be, in contrast to other supernatural figures we encounter in the work, such as Ishtar or Bast, who continue in reduced or attenuated forms as tragic shadows of their former selves, or Delirium, who was changed from Desire by changes in the world, or, obviously most significantly, Dream, who fails to recognize that he has changed but who is put in the volume on the path that leads to his ultimate transformation.

As an unconventional quest narrative, *Brief Lives* is a useful work with which to unpack the conventions of the form. As a meditation on the meaning and function of gods and myths as manifestations of aspects of human reality, as supposedly endless and eternal manifestations of the ephemeral, the brief, the work is considerably more interesting and a useful text to discuss when considering the purposes myths serve. In this regard, it can be compared productively with other works in the comics tradition, ranging from Kirby's *New Gods* or *Eternals* (Gaiman has in fact authored an *Eternals* reboot for Marvel) to more revisionist works such as Alan Moore's *Miracleman*. In prose fiction, Gaiman might be considered productively in relation to Roger Zelazny or, more recently, Neal Stephenson, or, on the more fantasy-oriented end of the spectrum, Robert Holdstock.

Buck Rogers in the 25th Century: The Complete Newspaper Dailies, Volume One, 1929–1930 [graphic novel]

Dominick Grace

Philip Nowlan and Dick Calkins. *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century: The Complete Newspaper Dailies, Volume One, 1929–1930*. Nechannock, PA: Hermes, 2008.

We are currently in the golden age of comic strip and comic book reprints, with numerous publishers bringing literally dozens of older works, both famous and obscure, back into print. For science fiction scholars (and enthusiasts), few of these are likely to be of more interest than the Hermes Press integral reprint of the seminal newspaper comic strip *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century*, which (if all goes according to plan) will be reprinted in its entirety in several volumes over the next few years. The first volume came out late last year, and the sec-

ond and third are forthcoming. Because the strip ran for close to forty years, finally being retired in the mid-1960s, this is a major undertaking.

Volume 1 presents the first 582 daily strips, close to the first two years of continuity, in a handsome 12-by-9 hardback format on high-quality paper, with two strips appearing per page. Consequently, the strips are reproduced at a generous size, not quite as large as they would have appeared when first published but still big enough for plenty of clarity and detail to show through. This is not as important for *Buck Rogers* as it might be for some other strips, given the relative unsophistication of Calkins's art, but it does contribute to ease of reading.

Buck Rogers is really more important for its formal innovations and for its pop culture penetration than for its aesthetic qualities. It was one of the first continuity-based adventure strips and the first science fiction strip, though it debuted in papers the same day as *Tarzan*, so serial adventure/SF was clearly in the air. From very early on it brought into the newspapers an array of major SF tropes, from suspended animation (Buck is from 1929 and spends 500 years asleep to awake in 2429, though there is no significant use made of this fact for satirical or any other purpose) through the conquering of America by hostile forces (the first few months detail adventures involving the resistance of intrepid rebels against the "Mongol Reds" who have conquered most of North America, though again there is little serious consideration either of the Mongol motivations or the militaristic, even fascistic, American culture that fights for "freedom"), superscience (antigravity belts, space ships, various superweapons, etc.—indeed, Ron Goulart claims in his introduction that the strip's tie-in products included a toy ray gun that made a "zap" noise then fired, thereby introducing "zap" as a verb and a weapon-modifying adjective to the English language), robots, domed cities, and, early on, space opera, as the Mongol Reds quickly recede as foes when Tiger Men from Mars turn up and Buck's spacefaring adventures begin.

Especially early on, Nowlan and Calkins are clearly trying to develop an appropriate sense of pace for a narrative unfolding at the rate of three or four panels per day at most, as well as a grammar of comics, and even by the end of the volume they have not fully mastered either narrative pacing or strip design. Some standard SF strip devices (e.g., the cutaway illustration showing the schematics of futuristic ships) appear quickly, but the strip rarely looks truly futuristic except superficially. In the first few months, characters actually fly biplanes, though antigravity rocket ships soon appear.

Most of the stories, as well, are superficial and adolescent in their sensibilities, especially when the focus shifts from adventure to romance, especially the romance between Buck and Wilma Deering, the intrepid "girl" soldier he meets upon awakening in 2429 and with whom he almost immediately falls in love. Many of the sequences stumble when combat with robot armies, or negotiations with alien races (or Mongol Reds), or superscience industrial espionage gets mixed up with Buck and/or Wilma acting like a grade 5 student's idea of a mature human being in love. (A comment by a newspaper in 1930, reprinted as an example of early promotional material, that the strip has "tremendous boy appeal" is all too true, sadly.)

Nevertheless, for a course focusing on the history of SF, especially in a pop culture context, *Buck Rogers* offers a fascinating record of the development not only of a popular-form SF narrative but also of multimedia penetration and merchandising. Even within its first couple of years, the strip targeted a developing fandom by offering pictures to those who wrote in, starting polls about what uniform Buck should wear, and so on, and the editorial materials provide insight into the merchandizing of Buck Rogers and into the development of early tie-ins such as comics, Big Little books, and film. The strip's Mongols, its Martian Tiger Men, the relationship between Buck and Wilma, and even occasionally the art anticipate the later but superior *Flash Gordon* strip by Alex Raymond and other popular SF motifs. And while the strip is arguably both sexist and racist, it is equally arguably open to more complex readings, since Wilma is presented (at times) as a capable soldier—she rescues Buck in his earliest adventures and occasionally overcomes him in others—and the Mongols, though drawn as Oriental stereotypes, are not presented merely as the yellow peril but are given a range of motivations and characteristics. One might argue that they are presented as an array of clichés rather than as just one, but then, so are Buck and the other white characters. And the story does occasionally attempt to make something approximating plausible use of its SF elements, such as the limits and implications of the antigravity belts, problems of motion and inertia in space, and others. In possibly the most interesting gesture toward a genuinely SFnal device, one sequence involves using Phobos as a weapon against ground-based Martian Tiger Men forces. Buck Rogers is not great science fiction, but it is important early pop SF and could lead to rewarding discussion and exploration of SF as a pop culture phenomenon in an array of course contexts.
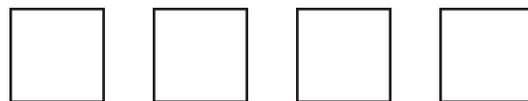
Calls for Papers

Compiled by Jen Gunnels

Call for Papers—Book

Title: *Participatory Popular Culture and Literacy Across Borders*

Topic: We will explore how students' online literacy practices intersect with online popular culture. The book will draw chapters from literacy and popular culture scholars from a variety of countries to illustrate and analyze how literacy practices that are mediated through and influenced by popular culture create both opportunities and tensions for secondary and university students. We invite theoretical, empirical, and pedagogical essays for the collection. Areas of participatory popular culture may include, but not be limited to, fan fiction, fan forums, video, blogs, social networking sites, remixes, music creation or downloading, video games, comics and graphic novels, and multiperson role-playing games.

Due date: January 15, 2010. 2–3-page proposal. Inquiries welcome.

Contact: Bronwyn T. Williams, University of Louisville (bronwyn.williams AT louisville.edu) and Amy A. Zenger, American University of Beirut, Lebanon (az07 AT aub.edu.lb)

URL: http://call-for-papers.sas.upenn.edu/node/33582

Call for Papers—Book

Title: *Superheroes Since the Year 2000*

Topic: Submissions are invited for an upcoming edited book covering the superhero genre. There is a great need to re interpret such issues as morality, power, patriotism, and heroism in this new millennium, especially as events such as 9-11, terrorism, torture, corporate profiteering, economic decline, and technological advances impact the United States and the world. This book will focus on the superhero genre in all facets of media, not just the printed comics. Articles on superhero television shows, movies, and online sites are welcome as well. However, the article must address the topic since the year 2000. For our purposes, superheroes can be defined as someone having abilities beyond those of normal humans (in other words, someone with superpowers or powers gained through training). For example, characters such as Batman, Green Arrow, Harry Potter, and James Bond classify as superheroes.

Due date: October 31, 2009. 500-word abstract or full paper; CV for each author or coauthor.

Contact: Kevin Williams (kwilliams@comm.msstate.edu)

URL: http://call-for-papers.sas.upenn.edu/node/33540

Call for Papers—Book

Title: *Stephenie Meyers's Twilight Saga*

Topic: Together with my colleague Marijane Osborn, I am editing a collection of essays on Stephenie Meyer's Twilight Saga. This volume is in the proposal stage and we already have many of the essays we will likely use in the collection. What we are hoping for is essays to top off the collection. The collection casts a broad net, covering the books, the film(s), fan activity, and other Meyer, vampire/werewolf tie-ins. While we are interested in any topics relating to the series, we are particularly hoping for papers that address some of the following: fan fiction, fan activity, the film(s), posthumanism, werewolves/shape shifters, Native American themes and characters, and religion/Mormonism. While we are targeting an audience that includes members of the profession, most of the requests we get for critical information on Meyer comes from undergraduates, so the essays should be accessible to the clever and motivated undergraduate student.

Due date: Not specified. Send query, abstract, or complete paper.

Contact: Amy Clark (amclarke AT ucdavis.edu)

Call for Papers—Book

Title: *Finale—Considering the Ends of Television Shows*

Topic: At least since the end of *M*A*S*H* (1972), the final episodes of television series have often become "cultural spectacles" (as Joanne Moreale deems them in an important essay on the *Seinfeld* finale). Recently, the finales of *Life on Mars, The Sopranos,* and *Battlestar Galactica* proved controversial, engendering water cooler debates around the world. The final episode of *LOST* in May 2010 may likely prove the most-buzzed in the history of the medium. TV finales fascinate us because they bring "'verses" to an end—in the case of long-running shows, very complicated 'verses, exposing in the process our cultural obsessions, our "reading" practices, our imagined identities, our fascination with television.

Contact: David Lavery (david.lavery AT gmail.com)

Due date: None specified. Send proposal and brief bio.

URL: http://davidlavery.net/Finale/

Call for Papers—Journal

Title: *Reception: Texts, Readers, Audiences, History,* vol. 2

Topic: *Reception*, the journal of the Reception Study Society, invites submissions for its second issue, for fall 2009. The journal seeks to promote dialog and discussion among scholars in several related fields: reader-response criticism and pedagogy, reception study, history of reading and the book, audience and communication studies, institutional studies and histories, as well as interpretive strategies related to feminism, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and postcolonial studies. The journal publishes theoretical and practical analyses in these fields, focusing mainly but not exclusively on the literature, culture, and media of England and the United States.

Due date: August 15, 2009. 500-word proposal.

Contact: Philip Goldstein (pgold AT udel.edu), University of Delaware, 333 Shipley St., #309, Wilmington, DE 19801.

URL: http://www.english.udel.edu/rsssite

Call for Papers—Conference

Title: Southwest/Texas PCA/ACA

Conference date: February 10–13, 2010

Conference site: Hyatt Regency Hotel, Albuquerque, NM

Topic: This is a special CFP on the works of Joss Whedon, including *Dollhouse, Dr. Horrible's Sing-along Blog,* comics (*Buffy* season 8, *Astonishing X-Men, Runaways, Spike, Angel, Fray*), *Buffy, Angel, Firefly,* and *Serenity.* Topics might include the construction of place and space; the intersections of memory, identity, and consciousness; socioeconomic class; sexuality and gender performance; race and ethnicity; teaching Joss Whedon's work. All Whedonverse topics will be considered. Please be sure to check out the essays published in *Slayage: The Online Journal of Buffy Studies* (http://slayageonline.com/) as well as the many publications on Whedon's work before submitting. Familiarity with the field is expected.

Due date: November 15, 2009, for proposal submissions; December 15, 2009, for registration (required to appear on program). 250-word paper proposals, 500-word panel proposals; include full contact info (name, institutional affiliation if any, postal address, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail) for all participants, working titles for proposals, and current CV.

Contact: Both Alyson Buckman (abuckman AT csus.edu) and Tamy Burnett (tamy.burnett AT gmail.com)

URL: http://www.swtxpca.org

Science Fiction Research Association
www.sfra.org

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

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lisa.yaszek@lcc.gatech.edu

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Stony Brook, NY 11790-1114
rcalvink@ic.sunysb.edu

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Mesa Community College
1833 West Southern Ave.
Mesa, AZ 85202
rrodrigo@mail.mc.maricopa.edu

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Kent, OH 44240
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