

296

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Editors

Doug Davis

Gordon College
419 College Drive
Barnesville, GA 30204
ddavis@gdn.edu

Jason Embry

Georgia Gwinnett College
100 University Center Lane
Lawrenceville, GA 30043
jembry@ggc.edu

Managing Editor

Janice M. Bogstad

University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire
105 Garfield Avenue
Eau Claire, WI 54702-5010
bogstajm@uwec.edu

Nonfiction Editor

Michael Klein

James Madison University MSC 2103
Harrisonburg, VA 22807
sfranonfictionreviews@gmail.com

Fiction Editor

Jim Davis

Troy University
Smith 274
Troy, AL 36082
sfracfictionreviews@gmail.com

Media Editor

Ritch Calvin

SUNY Stony Brook
W0515 Melville Library
Stony Brook, NY 11794-3360
sframediareviews@gmail.com

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In this issue

SFRA Review Business

Poland, Here We Come!.....2

SFRA Business

Interesting Times, Indeed.....2

2010 Awards.....3

April 2011 Meeting Minutes.....3

What is Our Public Relationship?.....5

SFRA 2011 Conference Update:

Polish Science Fiction - A Highly Subjective Top 9.....6

Feature 101

Choosing a Science Fiction Anthology, or,
Finding My Way Through an Alien Wood.....7

Nonfiction Reviews

On Joanna Russ.....9

The Life of Forry: Forrest J Akerman.....10

Sublime Dreams of Living Machines:

The Automaton in the European Imagination.....11

I Think I Am: Philip K. Dick.....12

Imagining Mars: A Literary History.....14

Fiction Reviews

Nebula Awards Showcase 2011.....16

This Shared Dream.....18

After Hours: Tales from the Ur-Bar.....19

Late Eclipses.....20

Media Reviews

Sunshine.....22

TRON: Legacy.....23

Let the Right One In and Let Me In.....26

The Walking Dead.....27

Sucker Punch.....29

The Tempest.....30

The Adjustment Bureau and Source Code.....32

Announcements

Calls for Papers.....33

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. All submitters must be current SFRA members. Contact the Editors for other submissions or for correspondence.

Poland, Here We Come!

Doug Davis and Jason Embry

THIS ISSUE features two new items and one new variation on a theme. As the SFRA membership is finalizing its plans for the organization's first ever meeting in Poland, we thought it would be helpful to give the organization's members some advance knowledge about the Polish science fiction scene and, for those fluent in languages other than English, perhaps some ideas of what to read whilst making the trip. Conference organizer Pawel Frelik produced an impressive top-9 list of Polish SF that covers the past 100 years of our host country's speculative literary output. We are likewise pleased to offer in this issue a new column from our publicity director, R. Nicole Smith. In this column, Nicole discusses what publicity means to our organization and gives us some ideas for how to publicize the work that we do. So, read on and get to know our host country and our new publicity director a little better.

In the previous issue (#295), we printed a review authored by Catherine Croker of *The Wesleyan Anthology of Science Fiction*. Croker noted that the Wesleyan anthology was especially noteworthy "by virtue of being one of the only texts actively created to act as a thorough textbook of the science fiction genre" (13). In this issue, we are pleased to print a companion "Feature 101" piece authored by Kathleen Ann Goonan on how she used the Wesleyan anthology in an SF survey class she recently taught at the Georgia Institute of Technology. If you teach SF—and even if you don't—we hope you will find Kathy's experience with organizing a class around an anthology instructive.

We look forward in future issues of the *Review* to printing more new features and columns on pedagogy, publicity, library science, ecology and other areas of interest to the field of science fiction studies.

Finally, as many of you know, the *Review* is going through other changes, as well. Jan Bogstad, our Managing Editor, is stepping down and the Executive Committee and the Editors have seen this change as an opportunity to rethink the distribution of the *Review* to the members of SFRA. We welcome input from all of you about these changes. ■

Interesting Times, Indeed

Ritch Calvin

IN THE LAST ISSUE (#295), the new editors, Doug Davis and Jason Embry, titled their column "Continuity of Leadership in Interesting Times." Many of you have heard the (apocryphal) old curse: "may you live in interesting times." The expression is generally meant that a period of turmoil and instability would be "interesting" while a period of tranquility and stability would be, perhaps ironically, uninteresting. Well, by my reckoning, we live in interesting times, indeed.

But, of course, another way to respond to that expression—to quote *Blade Runner's* Eldon Tyrell in a somewhat different context—is to "revel in it." Larger socio-political issues aside (and, yes, that's a large aside!), within our field of study the number of areas of study, the number of "texts," and the number of people engaged in the study of them all are rapidly expanding. At a dizzying rate. Whether or not we reach the technological singularity, one productive effect of the accelerated rate of change is that we get to watch and read some amazing stuff! So, it is with great pleasure that I announce this year's SFRA award winners (see below).

The Executive Committee held a meeting on April 8, 2011 via Skype. It was quite amazing to see everyone (and their cats) on screen. More than that, it proved to be a very productive means to hold a meeting. One of the basic themes of the meeting was how to use technology (like Skype) to facilitate member participation. Of course, we continue to work with Matthew Holtmeier on the primary SFRA website and to add features. We do hope that you will visit and use the teaching and research resources there. We also hope that you will contribute to those resources by sending in your syllabi and notifying us all of your publications. Jason Ellis and Nicole Smith continue to develop the Facebook site and other social media. We hope that you'll visit and "like" the new SFRA organization on Facebook. But more importantly, we hope that you'll actively contribute there.

The EC also discussed some changes in the membership and dues structures. However, instead of making a decision about these changes we will be contacting the membership for input. Jason Ellis is currently compil-

ing some information, and we will post a SurveyMonkey link (or something very like it) to the website and Facebook. Please participate!

Finally, I would also like to remind everyone of the annual SFRA conference to be held in Lublin, Poland. I hope to see many of you there. Should be an interesting conference.... ■

2010 AWARDS SFRA Award Winners

Ritch Calvin

Pilgrim Award: Donna Haraway

Pioneer Award: John Reider, "On Defining SF, or Not." *Science Fiction Studies* 37.2

Pioneer award short list:

- Lisa Swanstrom, "Capsules and Nodes and Ruptures and Flows: Circulating Subjectivity in Neal Stephenson's *Snow Crash*." *Science Fiction Studies* 37.1
- Janine Tobeck, "Discretionary Subjects: Decision and Participation in William Gibson's Fiction." *Modern Fiction Studies* 56.2
- Laurel Bollinger, "Symbiogenesis, Selfhood and Science Fiction." *Science Fiction Studies* 37.1
- Patrick Jagoda, "Clacking Control Societies: Steampunk, History and the Difference Engine of Escape." *Neo-Victorian Studies* 3.1

Clareson Award: *The Tiptree Motherboard* (Karen Joy Fowler, Debbie Notkin, Ellen Klages, Jeanne Gomoll, Jeff Smith, Pat Murphy)

Mary Kay Bray: Alfredo Suppia, "Southern Portable Panic: Federico Álvarez's *Ataque de Pánico!*" *SFRA Review* 292

Student Paper: Bradley Fest, "Tales of Archival Crisis: Stephenson's Reimagining of the Post-Apocalyptic Frontier"; **Honorable Mention:** Erin McQuiston, "Thank God It's Friday: Threatened Frontier Masculinity in *Robinson Crusoe on Mars*"

I WOULD like to thank all the individuals who served on the award committees. As I noted in the message posted to the SFRA listserv, several of the committees reported back that this year's selection process was especially difficult, not only because of the number of publications and individuals to consider, but because of the quality of work currently being done in the field of science fiction studies. It makes for an exciting time to be engaged in teaching and studying science fiction.

So, thanks once again to all the committee members:

- *Pilgrim Jury* (Gary Wolfe (chair), Marleen Barr, Brian Attebery)
- *Pioneer Jury* (Sherryl Vint (chair), De Witt Kilgore, Neil Easterbrook)
- *Clareson Jury* (Paul Kincaid (chair), Andy Sawyer, Joan Gordon)
- *Mary Kay Bray Jury* (Jason Ellis (chair), Susan George, Sharon Sharp)
- *Student Paper Jury* (David Mead (chair), Alfredo Suppia, James Thrall)

And please remember, serving as a member of one of these committees is a great way to be involved in the SFRA. Please drop me a line if you are interested. ■

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Minutes of the SFRA Board Meeting, April 8, 2011

Susan A. George

ISkype Meeting Call to order April 8, 2011, 2:50 eastern time

In attendance (via conference call):

Ritch Calvin, President

Jason Ellis, Vice President

Patrick Sharp, Treasurer

Susan A. George, Secretary

Lisa Yaszek, Immediate Past President

(Lisa was unable to attend but would be available over the weekend if necessary)

- After some technical difficulties Ritch called the meeting to order and presented the first item, one we had discussed last meeting which was to review duties and add the PR and Webmaster positions to the by-laws. Ritch said he was working on it.

- A related issue and project of SFRA has been to make connections with other academic organizations/conferences to improve SFRA's visibility and promote cross discipline research. Currently we don't have an effective way to communicate with these organizations. We discussed adding additional liaisons and if we should codify the guidelines for them in the by-laws as well. All in attendance agreed.

- Item two was regarding newly elected officers' hopes and dreams for the organization. This discussion covered a number of issues and went far afield, manag-

ing to cover a great deal of ground that the EC needed to cover.

- Patrick started us off saying that he wanted to add the new academic journal *Science Fiction Film and Television* to the list of available journals through SFRA membership as one way to make “other media” (more than literature) a more significant and powerful aspect of SFRA. Susan enthusiastically agreed.

This led to discussion regarding rethinking the fee structure if members wanted to receive some journals such as *SFRA Review* (*SFRAR*), *Locus*, and now *Science Fiction Studies* (*SFS*) as e-journals only.

- Patrick also noted that there have been no problems with PayPal, but due to the fees we should consider charging a fee to cover the expense. Ritch told us that PayPal offers reduced rates for non-profit organizations and we may be eligible for this reduced rate. Jason found the necessary form and sent it to Patrick during the meeting (such the multitasker).

- This led to a discussion regarding membership, the return mail from the latest membership mailing, and adjusting the database. Patrick told me to send him the names, new addresses, and also list of those no longer working on SF so the database can be adjusted accordingly.

- Back to wish lists—Jason would like to put more “stuff” online but in the thoughtful way, one that accommodates those members who still like print and newer (often younger) members who are used to getting information quickly and electronically and only if the membership wants more materials online.

- In relation to this Jason notes that the new PR director Nicole Smith has the press releases and is getting ready to send them out.

- At this point, Ritch noted a problem with accessing the new SFRA Facebook page. Jason commented that it was probably because of the way the search was done. The old page was searched through “group” the new one by “page.” Ritch asked if a link could be added to the old page taking folks to the new page—not a problem per Jason.

- Susan’s (my) hopes and dreams started out very pragmatically discussing a better way to print the mailing labels. Ritch suggested avery.com for easy and useful templates.

- Also on my wish list, updating the database and making it cleaner and more user friendly so folks (including Pilgrims) who received membership renewal packets by mistake never receive them again. (I sent apology to the list serve regarding this mistake.)

- On a grander scale, I would like more media as Patrick does and more visibility for SFRA in the academy generally. Things that could help? The joint conference with Eaton is one way to reach larger audience.

- Side note raised—To create continuity from conference to conference and EC to EC even, use a wiki for information, suggestions and procedures.

- Ritch also hopes for more visibility at other conferences and with other organizations. Jason commented that putting more materials online might help SFRA’s image of playing it “old school.” Also the current move, most evident at the Carefree conference, to more sessions and papers on video gaming, webcasts, film and TV will also help pull in folks doing that sort of research.

- Item Three—awards committees. Ritch updated us, reminding us that all awards are done and published to membership for this year. Thanks to all involved for your hard work.

- We need to find replacements for all committees—any suggestions?

- The issue of an International Pilgrim award (non-English Language scholarship) was raised again. Patrick stated, though he doesn’t want to marginalize the work of international scholars in any way, SFRA really can’t afford another award at this time. After a great deal of discussion we tabled the issue with the suggestion that all Pilgrim Award committees be reminded and encouraged to consider non-English language scholars’ contributions. We will revisit the issue in Poland at the general meeting there.

- While this finished the three main items Ritch had for the meeting, several other issues were also discussed. First, Ritch briefly updated us on the Detroit conference, which is coming right along as is the 2013 conference in Southern California with Eaton. Ritch then asked about the Rio conference and while it is being promoted, the executive committee still hasn’t seen a proposal as was required for Detroit, etc. Susan said, if we required it of the other conference chairs then we need to require it from them all. Ritch will take it under advisement. Ritch also told us he received an email from HPN Global, a company that helps organizations find places, hotels, etc., for conferences. We decided more research would have to be done on the company before we would ever consider using it.

- We also revisited the fee structure as SFRA currently doesn’t have an unemployed or underemployed category and “in these tough economic times” we might want to consider this. We decided to table the issue un-

til the e-subscription issue, which will allow for a lower membership rate, is worked through.

- Susan asked Ritch to change her email address on the SFRA letterhead to her new personal email address because her institution email is a bit clunky.
- Ritch told us he had been talking to Art Evans about putting a link to the Pioneer Award winning essays that were published in *SFS* on the SFRA website. We all agreed, especially Jason, that that would be a great idea.
- Ritch raised the questions, “do institutions have voting rights?” After discussion we came to the conclusion that they only get one vote and it is probably sent by the person who is interested and keeping the membership updated, so it is fine.
- Ritch brought up an issue sent to him by Lisa—do we need to limit the roles/positions one person can hold within SFRA to allow for more people to get involved? Susan, who only recently started getting more involved, commented that she had no trouble getting involved and didn’t feel that opportunities were far and few between. In addition, since we have recently started or are considering putting term limits (with review and reappointment as part of it) on positions such as webmaster, *SFRAR* editors, and others there are plenty of opportunities available. However, we, as the EC, should still be mindful and not appoint the same person to multiple positions if there are other qualified folks interested. Susan did comment that maybe one way to get folks involved is at the conferences. Frequently the same folks serve on the basic panels and roundtables year after year. Maybe we could make a point of inviting new members or those who don’t usually serve on these panel and roundtables to participate. Recruit them to do so more actively.
- Ritch asked what we all thought about the *SFRAR* selling ad space to relevant advertisers; no one seemed to object. Ritch also suggested that we send copies of the *SFRAR* to *Locus* as a professional courtesy.
- We revisited the idea of McFarland doing a regular “conference proceedings” for SFRA. Patrick noted that the last one was a great deal of work and to do that annually might be too much. The idea of having our SF 101 articles, published in the *SFRAR*, compiled into a book and published by McFarland was suggested. Ritch, who has a working relationship with McFarland, said he would take the lead on this project.
- Finally, Jason said he would like to get a survey out to the membership before Poland to get its input on the questions raised in the meeting such as e-subscriptions, membership rates, how people heard about SFRA.

- Ritch adjourned the meeting at 4:27 eastern time. ■

PUBLICITY DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE

What Is Our Public Relationship?

R. Nicole Smith

LONG AGO, in a far away land, I used to have a career in Public Relations and later Marketing. When I would come home from my undergraduate program and explain to my grandmother the career I was one thousand percent sure I would practice for the rest of my life—she would give me this quizzical look. This retired elementary school teacher would ask me, “What does public relations mean” or sometimes “What is public relationship?” I would try to explain and at some point, as her eyes would glaze over, I would realize that it was only grandmotherly obligation that persuaded her to pretend to listen to me.

In other words, sometimes the terms public relations or publicity seem to be nebulous terms like the word consulting that evade concrete definition like slippery fish through Gollum’s hands. An important part of understanding the meaning of the term also involves understanding how to practice it. So what is publicity and how does one go about publicizing? From a professional standpoint the purpose of publicity is to inform your audience about your company’ or organizations’ activities. When we engage in publicity activities, we are in effect sharing the mission, values and story of the organization. The ultimate objective for your publicity efforts can range from profit to increased awareness. How will I go about publicizing? My goals include promoting SFRA conferences and activities through SFRA’s current publicity outlets such as Facebook, Twitter and the SFRA Website. In addition I will develop promotional materials such as press releases, media advisories, etc. to promote SFRA conferences and activities to print and electronic media outlets. I also plan to participate in and develop new initiatives. For instance, in each SFRA Review I will contribute this column that will introduce new publicity ideas and offer tips on how SFRA members can help publicize, or tell the story of, SFRA in our own backyards. I appreciate the opportunity to act in this position for SFRA and am looking forward to a wonderful year! Cheers! ■

SFRA 2011 Conference Lublin, Poland

Polish Science Fiction - A Highly Subjective Top 9

Pawel Frelik

IN A PERFECT WORLD I would write that the following list could serve as a good introduction for readers unfamiliar with Polish science fiction—both those attending this year's SFRA conference and those who did not realize in time that Lublin is the place to be in early July 2011. But our world is far from perfect and most of these novels are unavailable in English (in many cases reading Russian, German, French, Ukrainian, Hungarian, Slovak or Czech could help).

As always, compiling "The Top x" of any body of texts is a highly arbitrary and subjective activity—in this case even more so as the entire roster could be filled with a part of Lem's *oeuvre* or Jacek Dukaj's bibliography to date. Consequently, the choices of texts by these two authors should be taken as general suggestions of their unequivocal recommendability rather than the indication of these particular novels' superiority over others. The list is organized chronologically to avoid the impression that individual titles can be quantifiably evaluated as better or worse than others.

- Jerzy Żuławski, *The Lunar Trilogy: Na Srebrnym Globie (On the Silver Globe, 1903)*, *Zwycięzca (The Conqueror, 1910)*, *Stara Ziemia (The Old Earth, 1911)*. While Żuławski's science can be very iffy in the vein of some of Verne's novels, the philosophical and historiographic dimensions of the trilogy and its extended polemic with the modernist conceptions of renewal align it more closely with the British tradition of scientific romance or German expressionist fantasies than with any space-faring adventure stories.
- Stanisław Lem, *Solaris* (1961). If you actually need any comment on this one, perhaps you should be reading *South-German Journal of Soil Biochemistry*, and not *SFRA Review*.
- Stanisław Lem, *Głos Pana (His Master's Voice, 1968)*. Long before Sagan's *Contact* and Watts's *Blindsight*, Lem mercilessly dissected the philosophical and linguistic aspects of the contact scenario, making the almost contemporary *Babel-17* (otherwise a fine novel in its own right) look almost naive and simplistic. As

always with Lem, don't expect much hope for the powers of the human mind.

- Adam Wiśniewski-Snerg, *Robot (Robot, 1973)*. Commonly considered the best work by this outsider SF writer whose work continues to be largely unrecognized even in Poland, *Robot* may start in the familiar territory of robotics, but its world of Mechanism and the Theory of Superbeings described in a highly evocative language continues to make for a profound if not disquieting read.
- Edmund Wnuk-Lipiński, *Apostezjon trilogy: Wir pamięci (Memory Vortex, 1979)*, *Rozpad połowiczny (Half-life, 1988)*, *Mord założycielski (Foundational Murder, 1989)*. Another fine specimen of sociological SF. The trilogy's fictional state of Apostezjon is a thinly-disguised version of communist Poland. Politically grim and philosophically pessimistic.
- Janusz Zajdel, *Limes inferior* (1982). A classic example of sociological science fiction which flourished in communist Poland as, possibly, the only genre critical of totalitarian reality allowed to circulate.
- Marek Huberath, *Gniazdo światów (A Nest of Worlds, 1998)*. A ferociously Borgesian and Calvinian metafiction in its purest form combining SF's discipline with the narrative construction which makes Chinese-box texts seem simple and unchallenging.
- Rafał Ziembkiewicz, *Walc stulecia (The Waltz of the Century, 1998)*. Mixing the *fin-de-siècle* milieu with the near future of immersive gaming, the novel is as conservative in its diagnosis of modernity as it is successful in conveying the sense of over-determination of individuals in the all-too-familiar world of media, corporatism and surveillance.
- Jacek Dukaj, *Lód (Ice, 2007)*. An alternate history / thriller / SF behemoth set in a world in which WWI never broke out and Poland never regained independence in 1918. Its protagonist Benedykt Gierosławski, a talented mathematician and a notorious gambler, is sent to Siberia to investigate the Ice, a mysterious form of matter covering parts of the region after the Tunguska event. The Ice has also spawned a species of liquid helium entities named "Frigids" that have brought not only frost but also an explosion of creativity, scientific inventions and material wealth. The cost of this is the freezing of choice—relativism disappears, reduced to binary logic—and of history. ■

Choosing a Science Fiction Anthology, or, Finding My Way Through an Alien Wood

Kathleen Ann Goonan

IN THE SPRING of 2010, Lisa Yaszek, head of Undergraduate Studies in the School of Literature, Communication, and Culture at Georgia Tech, invited me to apply for the position of Assistant Visiting Professor. I applied, was accepted, and in short order began evaluating anthologies to use in teaching a science fiction course.

Although I am immersed in the field of science fiction, it is as a writer and a reader rather than as an academic. My own view of science fiction is necessarily slanted in that for decades I have read science fiction novels, short stories, and criticism from the point of view of wanting to understand the roots of my chosen professional science fiction writer—although I still am not sure whether I chose it or it chose me.

Now, I was faced with a different task. I wanted to present science fiction to my students (whom, I found, once I began teaching, rarely read print SF), as a wide-flung literature willing to engage in the issues of our day, a task that most literatures eschew. I wanted my students to grasp the deep, multi-faceted discussion of science fiction, which, again, is unique in its level of interaction among authors, fans, general readers, and critics. I did not want to be tied to anyone else's concept of canon.

And so I began. In my own library, I found Hartwell and Kramer's *The Ascent of Wonder*, the *Norton Anthology of Science Fiction*, Gardner Dozois's *Modern Classics of Science Fiction*, and other major and compelling collections. My library was also well stocked with useful books such as Brooks Landon's *Science Fiction after 1900: From the Steam Man to The Stars*, Veronica Holinger and Joan Gordon's *Edging into the Future*, Larry McCaffery's *Storming the Reality Studio*, Lisa Yaszek's *Galactic Suburbia*, Brian Attebury's *Decoding Gender in Science Fiction*, Brian Aldiss's *Trillion Dollar Spree*, Carl Freedman's *Critical Theory and Science Fiction*, Darko Suvin's *Science Fiction*, and a wealth of other critical texts collected over time. I was well supplied with everything I might need to create several years' worth of

differently slanted courses. Each one of these anthologies and critical works had stories or chapters I wanted to use to construct a course, but I had no idea how to organize all the information. I realized that I needed one definitive anthology that my students could buy and use.

I did not have one of the biggies—physically as well as literally—in the field. I ordered Heather Masri's *Science Fiction Stories and Contexts*, which looked promising, and set out to read it end to end.

SFS&C is an ambitious, well-constructed anthology. It situates SF squarely in various sociological and literary contexts as it unfolds, using ancillary material from Freud, Haraway, Sartre, Jameson, and Sontag, among many others. The contents are arranged chronologically as well as thematically, and it includes excerpts from *Frankenstein*, *We*, *Starmaker*, and the entire text of *R.U.R.* in addition to a rich collection of short stories.

The Masri anthology is serious. One cannot come away from reading even portions of *Science Fiction Stories and Contexts* without feeling the weight of the Twentieth Century, with its blunders, wars, and the midcentury flash of light that still casts its pall over our possibilities. This and similar implications of science and technology transcend and almost obviate the literary aspects of the stories herein; they become part of a sociological tapestry and do not seem to stand on their own, despite the fact that all of them are quite capable of not only standing but also of leaving this earth to soar.

This slant ran counter to my own relationship to texts. I expect a lot of the novels and stories I spend time with. When I regularly reviewed books for the *Tampa Tribune*, the *Washington Post*, *Science Fiction Eye*, and other venues, I used what might loosely be called a New Critic approach. I evaluated novels by the internal rules they set forth, by the depth and breadth of their own ambition, and judged whether they kept the promises they made to the reader and how well and with what depth of skill. I do not particularly like reading reviews that constantly reference other works. As a writer, I strive to be original and unique. Of course, I want to be referenced; I do not want to reference. If others see connections in my work to other novels, stories, or to literary history in general, I do not want this to be the only thing they notice. This might seem odd coming from someone who packs her novels with literary and musical references, but they are overt, and different than thinking "I will retell *Frankenstein* in my own words, and critics will find it clever that I have

done so.” You will see me eat this attitude in forthcoming paragraphs, in regard to the work of others, but it is an honest stance.

As I digested *Contexts*, I looked out on the vast sea of stories from which I might choose and regarded it anew. I considered that science fiction is a unique literature because all interested parties feed from the same sea of technological wonder, technological horror, or technological speculation—a milieu in a constant state of emergence. Pods of stories and novels arise from this sea as new springs infuse it. Because of this topicality, SF, more than most other forms of literature, can be pressed into service as a handy illuminating tool. The stories are windows through which students can peer into the relatively recent (in literary terms) past. Thematic groupings of science fiction stories are easy to net, as they travel in schools, and these groupings can be used as a powerful pedagogical tool.

Despite this hard-to-assail fact, I found I didn’t much like the didactic, interpret-by-context approach to science fiction. I admire short stories, SF and otherwise, as concentrated gems of the storyteller’s art. Longer works have that much more scope and strength, layers and nuances to unpack and admire. I wanted my students to see the writerly craft of each individual work and at the same time to truly understand the romance, the unfathomably long view that is science fiction as an historical phenomenon. Those were two separate goals that I had to somehow meld.

In the end, *SFC&S* overcame and exhausted me. The font was small, the ink faint, and the impact was as relentless as a trip through the worst parts of the twentieth century. It had its high points, too, of course—Connie Willis’s “At the Rialto,” Kim Stanley Robinson’s “The Lucky Strike,” Terry Bisson’s “Bears Discover Fire.” But I set it aside, discouraged.

I next considered *The Ascent of Wonder*, but decided that it was too narrowly focused on hard SF, which is, after all, its intent. It was, however, another of my top choices, and a book I might use in the future. On to the next possibility. Gardner Dozois states, on page three of his preface to *Modern Classics of Science Fiction*: “I resolved to only use stories in this anthology that had been important to me...and not to worry about whether those stories were generally considered to have had any critical importance for the field at large.” This is, therefore, an outstanding collection, and a personal favorite. But, resolving to be thorough, I moved on to the Le Guin-Attebery-Fowler *Norton Anthology of Science Fiction*, which was like slipping into a mythically

recalled cool, clear, swift-running stream after a long hard trek. These are the type of stories that attracted me to science fiction. Yet, they are predominantly New Wave, perhaps not the focus that a survey class requires. Nothing seemed perfectly suited.

Then, at the last moment, I found *The Wesleyan Anthology of Science Fiction*, edited by Evans, Csicsery-Ronay Jr., Gordon, Hollinger, Latham, and McGuirk. It had just been published, and it had a great selection of stories: Moore’s “That Only a Mother,” Shekley’s “The Specialist,” Ballard’s “The Cage of Sand,” Russ’s “When it Changed,” Wolfe’s “Useful Phrases.” It seemed well balanced and elegant. Seeing the table of contents was like looking at the score of a beautiful piece of music and being able to hear the resonances. It also had an online Teacher’s Guide which included syllabi, well-thought-out questions for exams, and suggestions for research papers. Like the Masri anthology, it is organized chronologically as well as thematically, and one could easily assemble these stories into other thematic units. The book and its online components did much of the organizational work for me, which I welcomed. It was my choice.

I did have occasional yearnings for stories in other anthologies, which seemed inaccessible, given the constraints of rights. As an author, I am keenly aware that writers need to be paid for their work, even though we are paid a pittance for anthology use and no one I know has ever seen a dime of royalties from such anthologies. I requested permission from Greg Bear to use “Blood Music,” Connie Willis to use “At the Rialto,” and Terry Bisson to use “Bears Discover Fire,” which they graciously granted. I have been similarly asked by professors to grant use of particular stories for their classes, and I always say yes; we are a generous breed, and easily flattered. I pondered the fact that there are many more marvelous stories that can fit into any single anthology, and decided that a committee of SFWA might want to work on setting up a pool of stories from which professors can choose when constructing their own anthology-free courses, which students can download and pay for individually, insuring that the stories continue to generate revenue for the authors.

The WAO SF worked like the proverbial well-oiled machine. The students seized on the stories and worried them to bits with admirable verve, and produced excellent exam answers and research papers. I showed films: *Metropolis*, and the haunting *Ghost in the Shell*. I had more than enough ancillary material with which to enrich it, some of it in the form of my own contexts.

I brought in issues of *Science Fiction Eye*, and Steve Brown granted me permission to use anything from it that I might find useful. I also brought in several pounds of *The New York Review of Science Fiction* for the class's perusal. One day I wore my "The Stars Our Destination" t-shirt, which the now-shuttered Chicago store gave me when I did a signing. It is black, scattered with white, distant stars. Tiny humans stand on the pages of an open book, staring upward. "This is what it's all about," I told them, referencing, of course, Bester's novel, but giving it that wider fan-driven scope, the truly and deeply romantic notion that one day we will reach other stars, meet alien beings, and be changed by those encounters.

It was fun. I may well use the other anthologies I read in a future course, just to see how well they work. In retrospect, I think that any of them would provide a solid basis for an excellent student experience. ■

Nonfiction Reviews

On Joanna Russ

Philip E. Kaveny

Farah Mendlesohn, ed. *On Joanna Russ*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2009. Paper, 304 pages, \$29.95, ISBN 978-0819569028.

THE THING I LIKE BEST about this collection of sixteen essays is that they function as a portal into the rich and multi-faceted life of Joanna Russ as teacher, critic, editor and ground breaking feminist science fiction writer. I also like the way some of the essays include enough tantalizing personal details to give us insight into the grounding assumptions of Russ's activism. Paraphrasing her own words: she was tired that "guys got all the good stuff."

All the essays are very good, well structured, current and timely, and the best of them takes the reader transparently to Russ, in a hermeneutic sense, so that one almost feels as if the author has diminished and Joanna Russ is speaking directly to us. Time and space do not allow me to do justice to all the individual essays, but rather I think it works best if the essays talk among themselves and dialogue around the central core of Russ's life and work. Yet that central core is necessarily illusive and even subjective, depending on the reader, because Joanna Russ's creative life and work re-

ally stretches across seven decades: from the time she enrolled in Cornell University as a fifteen-year-old freshman (in the last years of the Truman administration and during the "Korean Police Action") right up to the second decade of the 21st century.

I feel that it is critical to at least mention the organizational structure of the collection with the essay titles and names of the contributors at the end of this review, since, to borrow David Hartwell's concept of the church of science fiction, one does not simply preach to the choir, but also to the benches in the back of the church. Many of the essayists are recognizable as major figures both in science fiction criticism and interdisciplinary scholarship. Some like Gary Wolfe and, of course, Samuel Delany, along with Russ herself, have been around since the start and contributed to the development of science fiction as a legitimate field of formal academic study, thus setting the scholarly parameters for the field.

Editor Farah Mendlesohn has done a fine job in selecting her contributors. The essays in the book appeal to a broad readership, such as Sandra Lindow's "Kittens Who Run with Wolves: Healthy Girl Development in Joanna Russ's *Kittatiny*." This essay, as well as others in the collection, should appeal to the progressive professional educator as a useful tool to expand the scope of empowerment and coming of age narratives available to girls and young women so that heteronormalcy does not appear as the only manner in which one may live happily ever after.

I agree with Lindow and would paraphrase her to say Russ engages in a kind of socially necessary labor when she creates other good stories with positive options for girls and young women. Samuel R. Delany, whose work also appears in this collection, put it another way at a lecture at U of Wisconsin-Madison in 1977. Delany called for narratives in which transgressions against heteronormalcy were not punished by slavery, madness or death. One must remember that this was at a time when any sexual activity which was not "heterosexually normal" was still criminalized nearly everywhere.

Sherryl Vint's "Joanna Russ's *The Two of Them* in an Age of Third Wave Feminism" is a very timely and informative discussion of the evolving conversations in feminist theory as they related to what she refers to as "the troubling pessimism of *The Two of Them*," particularly in the way she summarizes and makes accessible the positions of the major participants in the discussions between second and third wave feminism, and then brings the discussion back to Russ's work and its

troubling lack of reconciliation.

I found Samuel R. Delany's "Joanna Russ and D.W. Griffith" quite troubling because of my recent study of D.W. Griffith's 1915 film *Birth of a Nation* as an instrument in the matrix of racial violence, oppression, and murder, and a defense and call to arms for the Ku Klux Klan, particularly in the case of the Tulsa Race War of 1921. Of course Delany uses another D.W. Griffith film, *Intolerance* (1916), to make his points of comparison between Russ and Griffith's use of female heroes in an effective way. The part I like the best about the essay was the glimpses that Delany gives us of Russ as a tall, vibrant and creative young woman at Cornell in the fifties.

Gary K. Wolfe's essay, "Alyx Among the Genres," does much to ground Joanna Russ's early career as what we used to call a working writer, well accustomed to genre conventions, and yet still able through her guile, craft and talent to expand the reader's horizons of expectations. This was at a time when science fiction writing was a way of earning at least a paltry living rather than as it is now in the second decade of the 21st when, for most, writing is either a kind of avocation or a way of accumulating academic social capital and greasing the tenure track as it were. Wolfe has done us a service as he gives us excerpts from her 1969 story "Second Inquisition" to make his point, which, at least for me, gets me back to reading the complete story.

The last essay in the collection, "The Narrative Topology of Resistance in the Fiction of Joanna Russ" by Brian Charles Clark, was for me the most eye opening because it reminded me of the economy of language and political power of genre fiction. It did so by drawing on a scene from John le Carre's *Little Drummer Girl* where a PLO fighter claimed that the only difference between PLO bombings and Israeli state-sponsored reprisals was that the PLO could not afford high tech delivery systems, like missiles, drones, jets, or tanks. I also think that, using Brian Charles Clark's analytical framework, I finally understand Russ as an anti-colonial writer, in the deepest ecological sense, much in contrast with some of her early contemporaries like Clifford Simak in his short story "Beachhead."

I will close by disagreeing with Paul Kincaid's SF Site review of *On Joanna Russ*. In addressing anger, he called her an ideologue in a pejorative sense. But in a way, if we liberate the word and use it in the manner of Noam Chomsky in his book *Understanding Power*, that is as a lever of power, why not then call her an ideologue of liberation in the Frankfurt School sense? Kincaid also

thought that this collection was the best we could do until more of Russ came back into print. I think, based on the feedback I have gotten from some very bright undergraduate women who have never heard of Russ, that this collection should help and would be a nice core around which to build a seminar or an honors undergraduate course. This collection deserves the attention of anyone interested in the history of women and science fiction as well as in the work of Joanna Russ. ■

The Life of Forry: Forrest J Ackerman

Bruce A. Beatie

Deborah Painter. *The Life of Forry: Forrest J Ackerman*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2010. Cloth, viii + 216 pages with notes and index, \$45.00, ISBN 978-078618845.

THE COVER OF THIS BOOK is unlikely to attract the general reader in a bookstore. It imitates, in a similar format, the covers of Forry's *Famous Monsters of Filmland* periodical (I will use his nickname here, following Pointer's usage), with a head-and-shoulders shot of Forry as a vampire (fake long canine teeth, left hand extended threateningly); a small logo in the upper left shows Forry as the Frankenstein monster above an issue title: "Famous Monster # 1." In any case, the book doesn't seem to be available at any of my local (Cleveland) bookstores, and it is not even listed online at the Borders website, though it's available online at both Amazon and Barnes & Noble. Its intended audience seems to be mainly fans of science fiction and horror fiction and, especially, films.

The mode of presentation is appropriate to that audience. Deborah Painter became a fan of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* as a college student in 1976, began writing for it in 1979, met Forry at the World Science Fiction Convention in 1983 (Preface 6), and became one of his many good friends. Her narrative is more of a tribute to and description of Forry's many achievements than it is a "life" properly speaking. Though her chapters proceed chronologically by decades, within each chapter her discussion seems more associative than either chronological or logical. The book is full more of information than of insight; perhaps, indeed, Painter had too much information at her disposal, from Forry's own writings and from the memories of friends and as-

sociates. Too often the progression from paragraph to paragraph seems driven rather by the need to include comments or events that occurred in a particular decade than by any substantial connection between them.

Many fans of science fiction and horror may well enjoy the book's 86 black-and-white photographs. Painter has had access to the photo files of many of Forry's friends, especially Walter Daugherty, Michael Ramsey, David Hawk and Jim Morrow, all of whom are mentioned repeatedly in the text. While most of the photos are of Forry himself and/or his collection of film memorabilia (originally vast, though unfortunately he was forced to sell it in stages as he moved to progressively smaller dwellings), many include well-known writers and film people. One of the most interesting is a group photo taken by Daugherty (33, undated but early) of the members of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society; included are Forry, Robert and Leslyn Heinlein, Ray Bradbury (also shown with Forry on 158 and 195), and E. E. Smith. Ray Harryhausen is shown working on his stop-motion figurines (36) and at the 1998 Monster Bash (131). Robert Bloch appears reading in an unidentified library (45), and one of his paintings was part of Forry's collection (139). Others include Boris Karloff (72), George Pal (82, 114), C. L. Moore (123), Lydia van Vogt (161), Fritz Lang, director of *Metropolis* (172, unidentified in the caption, but the label on the photo can be read), and Carla Laemmle (154, niece of Carl Laemmle, president of Universal Pictures).

The book concludes with personal reminiscences of Forry by Martin Powell, Paul S. Knight, Rick Atkins, David Hawk and Jim Morrow (181-209), Chapter Notes (201-202), a Bio-Bibliography (203-205), a Bibliography of Painter's sources (207-208), and a fairly comprehensive Index (209-216). While the tone of unbridled enthusiasm about Forry and his accomplishments palls after a while, the book will doubtless be valuable to those who share his interests.

Let me end, like the book, on a personal note. I came to science fiction in the late 1940s as a Boy Scout, reading Heinlein's serialized juveniles in *Boy's Life*, and I remember running into Forry's name early on, probably in the letter columns of *Amazing* or *Astounding*. It remained a familiar name to me for the rest of my life. However, though I enthusiastically attended all of the early science fiction films by George Pal and others, my interest was always "hard" science fiction rather than horror, and so I never, until I read this book, came to know the extent of Forry's activities in that field. Recognizing that fact led me to check Wikipedia for some of

Forry's contemporaries as writer-editors. While Forry's name, with 387,000 sites, beats out "Sam Moskowitz" with only 62,000, "Damon Knight" beats both soundly with 820,000 (though certainly some of those sites refer to others with the same name), and of course *Astounding/Analog's* John W. Campbell, Jr. beats them all with 7,950,000 sites.

Postscript: Forry would be delighted to see that in the February 7, 2011 *New Yorker*, the first paragraph of a Profile of Guillermo del Toro, director of *Hellboy* and *Pan's Labyrinth*, consists of a brief biography of Forrest Ackerman. After noting that Forry had no children, the article continues: "But he had an heir." In 1971 the seven-year-old del Toro found a copy of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* in a Guadalajara supermarket and "was so determined to decode Ackerman's pun-strewn prose ... that he quickly became bilingual" (41). ■

Sublime Dreams of Living Machines: The Automaton in the European Imagination

Philip E. Kaveny

Minsoo Kang. *Sublime Dreams of Living Machines: The Automaton in the European Imagination*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2011. Cloth, 387 pages with notes and index, \$39.95, ISBN 978-0674049352.

WHEN READING or writing a review of this sort, one sometimes finds it helpful to check out what others have to say about the item. In the process of checking the reception of *Sublime Dreams of Living Machines*, the phrase "broadly synthetic" frequently turned up. The term was used in a strongly positive sense when applied to Minsoo Kang's work, particularly if used in a broad Hegelian sense, so that its timely historical present contains something of the past and future and also exists in the luminal space between them.

Minsoo Kang's approach is demanding because it requires viewing his subject from an Archimedean perspective since he is covering the better part of three millennia of European thought and history. Kang looks at the automaton not so much as an entity but as a cultural product of that thought. If this approach is not done with style, elegance and, most of all, self confidence, it quickly falls prey to accusations of European logocentrism and gets lost in the self-referential semi-

otic language games of reductionist postmodernism.

Luckily, Kang is up to the task. He not only has a kind of Renaissance familiarity with the scope of his study, but also intends to do the groundbreaking work for others by mapping an emergent field at a very grand historical scale. This allows him to write an evolving conceptual history of the automaton, “a machine that mimics a living being as an idea in the European imagination,” from the time of Hero of Alexandria right up to depictions of revolts of the machines in the 21st century (1).

Kang’s book contains seven chapters, including “The Power of the Automaton”; “Between Magic and Mechanics: The Automaton in The Middle Ages and the Renaissance”; “The Man-machine in the World – machine, 1637-1748”; “From the Man-machine to the Automaton-man, 1748-1793”; “The Uncanny Automaton, 1789-1833”; “The Living Machines of the Industrial Age”; and finally, “The Revolt of the Robots, 1914- 1935.” It becomes clear that each chapter could be a study in itself, and one suspects that there will be more work done in this area in the 21st century as the boundaries between what is a living being and what simply mimics a living being break down.

One would expect nothing less than that from Kang whose vita is both interdisciplinary and fascinating, especially in the academic world of the 21st century where many younger academics, particularly in the area of history, tend to speak with trepidation outside of their own area of specialty. In addition to his academic work, Kang is a successful fantasy writer, and this shows in his ability to give his readers what they need to understand the conceptual framework that grounds his study. In a way, he gives us a refresher course in European intellectual history, cultural production and material culture by drawing on current research. Thus, those of us who have removed ourselves from the field for a while (perhaps even a generation) may ramp ourselves up. His introduction is also a roadmap for the body of his work, something the reader with less than total familiarity with European intellectual history and cultural production will find gratifying.

For example, he compares and contrasts attitudes of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. In the first period, science and magic are not highly differentiated, yet in the second there is a wall between them. However, the concepts of automation and the automaton, as Kang suggests, are highly adaptive and exist as a different iteration in each historical periodization he presents.

Kang concisely applies Freud’s theory of the uncanny

to the origins of our discomfort and ambivalence towards the automaton, which seems to exist in the liminal space between human and nonhuman. Yet at the same time, he is a storyteller willing to draw from his own anecdotal experiences. For instance, he describes watching a little girl interact with a human impersonating a Robot. The human impersonator becomes most disturbing as a human who acts unhuman, alternately freezing and then animating himself. Finally, the girl runs off in frivolous dread, two terms that, in a sense, embody our attitude toward the uncanny and the liminal boundaries between human and machine. Kang also points out how the term machine, at least when used to describe human performance, is usually a positive or even a superlative. An android, on the other hand, is usually depicted as comic or grotesque and often graceless, a conceptual model Kang invites readers to test against the fabric of their own experience.

Because the mission of our organization, the Science Fiction Research Association, is both international and interdisciplinary, I highly recommend *Sublime Dreams of Living Machines: The Automaton in the European Imagination* to our membership. I also think its thought provoking content and timely nature makes it a “must read” for any research, college or public library.

I Think I Am: Philip K. Dick

Jason W. Ellis

Laurence A. Rickels. *I Think I Am: Philip K. Dick*.

Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010. Paper, 456 pages, \$25.00, ISBN 978-0816666669.

I THINK I AM: PHILIP K. DICK is an arduous, psychoanalytically driven exploration of Dick’s fictions by Lawrence A. Rickels. Not a science fiction scholar by trade, the author was initially drawn to Dick’s writing because he found Dick’s “science fiction fundamentally bound up with a certain staging or foregrounding of Freud’s encounters with psychosis” (7). This volume, however, exceeds that genesis by at least 250,000 words (by my calculation). Rickels locates many links and associations between his own and Dick’s writing: Freudian psychoanalysis, mourning/unmourning, spiritualism, the German language, Germanicity, and California. At times, however, it is a challenge to follow Rickels’ arguments and reasoning, because he is given

to copious subject changes (das Thema wechseln) and subject wanderings (vom Thema abschweifen). Ultimately, it is left up to the reader to unearth this book's deeply hidden foci: reality testing and human-animal relations. Therefore, I have chosen to provide a topographical guide to the main themes, important theorists, and Dick's fictions in this hefty tome while attempting to faithfully illustrate the author's labyrinthine course.

To begin with, Part One's main themes are haunting and surveillance. Rickels, drawing on Freud, Daniel Paul Schreber, and Walter Benjamin, surveys spirituality, secularism, and technologization in Dick's works. He then elaborates on the interconnectedness of Dick's interest in Schreber's *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*, beginning with *Time Out of Joint*. Finally, he ponders modern experiences of surveillance in relation to *A Scanner Darkly*.

In Part Two, Rickels emphasizes his concept of psy fi, or the conjunction of psychology/psychosis and science fiction. Consequently, he argues that Dick's writing is its prime example. Rickels develops his psy fi concept through Freud, Benjamin, and Ludwig Binswanger before applying the term to *The Cosmic Puppets* and "Upon This Dull Earth." Similarly, *Time Out of Joint* is shown to exchange fantasy for delusion, and *Time Out of Joint*, *Eye in the Sky*, *Ubik*, and *The Man Who Japed* contain "wish-fulfillment worldviews" (89). Additionally, Rickels compares Dick and Jung's respective approaches to the *I, Ching* and *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. Then, he discusses clinical schizophrenia and Manfred in *Martian Time-Slip*. In perhaps one of the more interesting chapters, Rickels explores the relationship between communal bonding and suicide in the related works of *Nick and the Glimmung*, *Galactic Pot-Healer*, and *The Maze of Death*. Differing with Fredric Jameson's claim that *Galactic Pot-Healer* is "one of Dick's Jungian novels," Rickels identifies it instead as a Wagnerian fantasy of nerds with "suicidal depressions" and with Joe the nerd hero, who avoids "the happy ending of unity or disappearance" (128-129).

Part Three's focus is spiritualism and mourning, which begins with a comparative analysis of Jung's case studies and *Dr. Bloodmoney*. Next, Rickels analyzes the Roger Zelazny collaboration, *Deus Irae*, and its relationship to Schreber's "order of the world" (160). Then, he establishes the significance of Binswanger's work to *Time Out of Joint* and after. Subsequently, he discusses Christian fantasy and the archive in *The World Jones Made* and *Counter-Clock World*. Next, Rickels,

following associations, claims that *Solar Lottery* and *Our Friends from Frolix 8* center on games that involve hunting clues, which sounds like haunting, which in turn implies spiritualism. Spiritualism and mourning lead him next to discuss Binswanger and mourning as reality testing. Following mourning, Rickels argues that the sequential works—*The Game-Players of Titan*, *The Simulacra*, *Clans of the Alphane Moon*, and *Now Wait for Last Year*—are all Magna Mater novels (222). Rickels then follows Dick's clues to his psychoanalytic readings before or during his writing of *The Simulacra* to explore, via the character Richard Kongrosian, connections with *Dr. Bloodmoney* and *We Can Build You*. Next, beginning with Dick's responses to racism in *The Crack in Space* and *The Ganymede Takeover*, Rickels works backwards to his thesis in *Nazi Psychoanalysis*, in which he argues that there is a "German introject inside modernism" (268). The author concludes by discussing the Germanicity within Dick's *The Penultimate Truth* and *Lies, Inc.*

Part Four begins what Rickels explores more fully in Part Five: human-animal relations. He relies on scholarship by the German-American Gotthard Günther on the robot other. He interposes that *The Zap Gun* holds a more fundamental question to Dick's writing: "What is the past and where does it go?" (307). Returning to his earlier theme, he employs Dick's androids to develop his ideas about human-animal relations via android mourning. Rickels shifts to a comparison between Günther's essays on mechanical brains and Dick's *We Can Build You*. Next, he links the Chew-Z experience in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* to the life-and-a-half of half-life in *Ubik* via Benjamin. Concluding Part Four, Rickels uses Jason Tavener's "psychotic voiding of existence" in *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said* to compare Dick's reflections on time and space before and after his 2-3-74 experiences (350).

Part Five concludes the author's previously distributed arguments on time, human beings and animals. Beginning with the caduceus in Dick's *Dr. Futurity*, Rickels returns to spiritualism before his last attempt on the question of human-animal relations. Examining Adorno, Derrida, Horkheimer, and Agamben, he indicates the philosophical importance of the animal other to the totality of humankind. Furthermore, Rickels, via Binswanger and Jacob Von Uexküll, claims that animals are necessary for testing human reality. Rickels exercises Agamben's challenges to Von Uexküll's theory on the experience of time across species, which establishes the animal, and not fellow human beings, as our

other. Then, he reconnects his theorization to Dick's reality test in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*. Rickels concludes the book by rapidly connecting his major themes through a discussion of the Hund/Und (hound/and) in German mourning plays as a way to breathlessly crack time travel, androids and half-life.

I Think I Am: Philip K. Dick is a fascinating, if verbose, exploration of the interpenetration of psychoanalysis and Dick's body of work (a series of slips?). I am mournful, however, of how little attention Rickels gives to other Dick scholarship. In fact, the jacket states that, "Rickels corrects the lack of scholarly interest in the legendary California author." I cannot fault Rickels for what could be a marketing falsehood, but I do find this statement reflective of the fact that other relevant Dick scholarship is an overwhelming absence here.

At first glance, the book's audience is limited to psychoanalytic Dick scholars, but other science fiction scholars, cultural theorists, and animal studies specialists might find useful ideas here. It is, I believe, too convoluted for the uninitiated Dickian. For a class on psychology or science fiction, Rickels' book may find traction, but some students might loathe his writing style. Libraries should stock this book in their Dick scholarship sections, though I do have a few minor quibbles: a lack of a full index, and some incorrectly quoted material (e.g., "Dirty Kubby" versus "Dirty Knobby" on 118). Overall, it is an impressive work of psychoanalytic and philosophical criticism, but I have to disagree with the book's title—Rickels may be "out there" with his ideas, but he is no Philip K. Dick. ■

Imagining Mars: A Literary History

Bruce A. Beatie

Robert Crossley. *Imagining Mars: A Literary History*.
Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2011.
Cloth, x + 353 pages, \$40.00, ISBN 978-0819569261.

CROSSLEY'S LITERARY HISTORY of Mars begins, for reasons to which I shall return, effectively with "the close of the nineteenth century" (20). I shall therefore begin with a mini-review of Eric S. Rabkin's *Mars: A Tour of the Human Imagination* (2005). The book provides a convenient preface to *Imagining Mars*. In 67 very brief illustrated "chapters" (in a 203-page book, the average chapter is about three pages), Rabkin trav-

els the path of human awareness of Mars from the ancient near east to the 2004 landing of NASA's Mars Rover, with stops (often a half-page of text with a small photo) at significant historical figures, books and films about Mars. The sections on Percival Lowell (92-103) and H. G. Wells (104-118) are the longest by far, and include extended quotations. Rabkin includes 16 half-page color plates (between pages 114 and 115), and an index, but no bibliographical references.

Crossley's own Preface (ix-xiv), which provides a summary overview of his book, begins with a question: "Of what value is the history of an error?" The error to which he refers is the belief in, and the implications of, the Martian "canals" to which the astronomer Percival Lowell held relentlessly from 1895, when his book *Mars* appeared, until his death in 1916. The millennia-long history surveyed rapidly in the first half of Rabkin's book is covered still more quickly but more interpretively in Crossley's opening chapters, "The Meaning of Mars" (1-19) and especially "Dreamworlds of the Telescope" (20-36).

The reason why Crossley took that error as his point of departure may have to do with similar but earlier works. In his "Preface," Crossley mentions as "a great achievement of reading and research" (4) Marjorie Hope Nicolson's *Voyages to the Moon* (1948), which ends its account of lunar voyages with a French fiction of 1784. More pertinent to his own book is Karl Guthke's *The Last Frontier: Imagining Other Worlds from the Copernican Revolution to Modern Science Fiction* (1983), which Crossley also mentions briefly (20). For most of its length, Guthke's book covers in a much more academic fashion the same ground as Nicolson, but it ends with the novels of Lasswitz and Wells (see below), both published in 1897 (though along the way Guthke shows his acquaintance with more recent authors like Bradbury, Clarke and Lewis, with the *Star Trek* series and the films of Lucas and Spielberg).

Crossley's own detailed and formal history begins in the third chapter ("Inventing a New Mars," 37-67) with the revival of intense human interest in Mars at the time of its orbital opposition to Earth in 1877, during which Giovanni Schiaparelli described the canali he'd observed. With the mistranslation of the Italian word as "canals," Crossley observes, "the history of Mars in the human imagination was about to take a dramatic turn" (40). In this chapter, as throughout the book, Crossley introduces us to the fictions of many little-known writers (listed, 42-43) usually with an interpretive discussion that, however brief, gives at least

an idea of the plot of the story. His principal focus in this chapter is “perhaps the most curious of this very curious body of fiction” (43) and “probably the most obscure Martian romance of the 1880s and 1890s” (59): Robert D. Braine’s 1892 *Messages from Mars, By the Aid of the Telescope Plant* (58-65).

The fourth chapter, “Percival Lowell’s Mars” (68-89), is one of only three chapters devoted to a single author, and the only one on an author who, at least in a literal sense, published not a single work of fiction. The influence of Lowell’s passionate devotion not simply to the existence of the Martian canals in the face of almost unanimous rejection by later astronomers, but to the idea of an inhabited, civilized Mars that could provide a model for our world, is demonstrated throughout Crossley’s book, all the way down to Kim Stanley Robinson’s “homage to Percival Lowell’s delusion” (305) in his *Blue Mars* (1996). That delusion, shared by the French astronomer Camille Flammarion, gave rise to the fictions in Crossley’s next chapter, “Mars and Utopia” (90-109), where he considers a German and a Russian novel “among the hardiest and most culturally significant of early fictions about Mars” and “the peaks of the first wave of utopian writings about Mars” (103): Kurd Lasswitz’s *Auf zwei Planeten* (1897, translated belatedly as *Two Planets*, 1972), and Alexander Bogdanov’s *Krasnaya Zvezda* (1908, also translated only in 1972 as *Red Star*).

Crossley’s next chapter, “H. G. Wells and the Great Disillusionment” (110-128), concentrates on *The War of the Worlds* (1897) and its influence, especially on Garrett Serviss’s *Edison’s Conquest of Mars*, a “sequel” serialized in two American newspapers in 1898 (book form 1947). The chapter is an excellent piece of interpretive and contextual criticism, stressing the dependence of both writers on Lowell’s “delusion.” Interestingly, Crossley dismisses in a single sentence Wells’s 1896 short story “The Star,” to which Rabkin devotes a whole section (112).

I have discussed these early chapters in some detail to give an idea of the way Crossley approaches his literary history; to treat the remaining nine chapters similarly would take this review well beyond the normal limits. Before concluding with an overall evaluation of the book, I will simply list each chapter and mention a significant author treated in it. The novel *Uranie* (1893) by Lowell’s contemporary, Camille Flammarion, is the main focus of “Mars and the Paranormal” (129-148), and Edgar Rice Burroughs’s 1912 *The Princess of Mars* receives extended discussion (151-155, 159-163) in

“Masculinist Fantasies” (149-167); his remaining Mars novels are scarcely mentioned.

In “Quite in the Best Tradition” (168-194), Crossley considers C. S. Lewis’s *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938, 185-189) as “[T]he definitive statement on the legacy of Wells” (179), though the chapter title is a quote from John Wyndham’s *Planet Plane* (1953, as by John Beynon—also published as *Stowaway to Mars*). Ray Bradbury’s *The Martian Chronicles* (1950, 197-207) is the most significant work in “On the Threshold of the Space Age” (195-221). Though a number of books are discussed briefly in “Retrograde Visions” (222-242), perhaps the most interesting (and little known) is Ludek Pesek’s *The Earth Is Near* (1970, 233-235, published in German); it won the German children’s book prize in 1971, and was translated into English in 1973. Even more interesting, and probably still less widely known, is the author Crossley chooses to emphasize in “Mars Remade” (243-262). Frederick Turner, born in 1943 and raised in Africa, is a much-published poet and former editor of the *Kenyon Review*. His only novel, *A Double Shadow* (1978, 247-250), is narrated by a 24th-century New Zealander living underground on Mars and observing its terraforming on television. Turner deals again with the theme of terraforming in his 10,000-line epic poem *Genesis* (1988, 250-258), which Crossley considers “the most original literary treatment of Mars produced in the 1980s” (258).

In his penultimate chapter, “Being There” (263-283), Crossley emphasizes no single figure, presenting Mars novels by Greg Bear, Ben Bova, Gregory Benford, and Geoffrey Landis. But the whole of the final chapter, “Becoming Martian” (284-306), is an insightful analysis of Kim Stanley Robinson’s Mars trilogy: *Red Mars* (1992), *Green Mars* (1993), and *Blue Mars* (1996). “Making an utterly new Mars and new Martians out of the materials of both contemporary science and literary tradition,” Crossley concludes, “Robinson has brought the history of imagined Mars to a new plateau” (306).

In his brief “Afterword: Mars Under Construction” (307-309), Crossley notes that Robinson’s novels are not “the omega-point toward which the literary history of Mars has been tending.” They do not “close the book of Mars but simply complete one of its chapters” (307). In fact, nearly two-dozen books that libraries catalog under the subject “Mars (Planet)—Fiction” have appeared since 1996. Of these, Crossley mentions in passing Parkin and Clapham’s *Beige Planet Mars* (1998, a new *Doctor Who* adventure), Larry Niven’s *Rainbow Mars* (2000) and, more extensively, Brian Al-

Nebula Awards Showcase 2011

Ed Carmien

Kevin J. Anderson, ed. *Nebula Awards Showcase 2011*. New York: Tor, 2011. Paper, 416 pages, \$17.99, ISBN: 978-0-7653-2842-7.

diss's *White Mars* (2000, 304)—all of which explicitly acknowledge the influence of Robinson's books. In his afterword, Crossley gives especially high praise (306-307) to Ian McDonald's novella "The Old Cosmonaut and the Construction Worker Dream of Mars" in the 2002 anthology *Mars Probes*, edited by Peter Crowther.

While Crossley's book is not comprehensive, he does acknowledge at the outset that he has "focused largely on novels about Mars" while considering "only a few of the many short stories on the subject" and has not "tried to cover the various cinematic treatments of Mars or film, television, and comic-book adaptations of novels about Mars." A main concern "has been to probe the relationship between literature and science in the representation of Mars" (x). *Imagining Mars* is therefore not a reference work but a true literary history. It is well written, thorough and insightful in its evaluations; and, as I have noted above, it not only discusses the "canonical" novels but also introduces us to some that are very unusual and little known.

Crossley writes, like Nicolson and unlike Guthke, not only for the scholar and the aficionado, but also in a style that is, or should be, of interest to the general reader. Like Rabkin, Crossley includes a section of color plates (full-page), none of which duplicate Rabkin's. It is carefully edited; I noted no typos or stylistic infelicities, though I cannot promise there are none. Its only serious fault is that it lacks a list of works cited—a fault also of Guthke's book, mitigated in part by his use of footnotes rather than endnotes. Though Crossley's book has a very good index (341-353) of authors, titles (separately indexed, as well as under the authors) and, to a limited degree, topics, the only way of finding publication data (including, sometimes, dates) is by going to the very extensive endnotes (311-340). In spite of this problem, I believe that *Imagining Mars* should in public as well as academic libraries, and should be read (and purchased) by anyone seriously interested in science fiction.

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ONCE UPON A TIME, the story goes, one could stand in the middle of the great country of Science Fiction—our thing—and see the ends of it, recognize the countries, provinces, counties, principalities, oceans, deserts, quaint lakes, rivers, streams, ponds, sloughs, marshes, swamps, hills, valleys, and mountains of the thing. In my olden days, the years of oil shortage and Jimmy Carter, this still seemed true. But one needed sharp eyes, and the smog index had to be low. Even as the 1970s gave way to the boisterous '80s (Gibson & co.) an energetic reader could lurk among the dusty shelves of used book stores (this was after blue jeans but before Amazon and the flood of super chains) and feel confident that the number of new names one might encounter would be few—some distant peninsula of SF, previously obscured by cloud or fog now smozzling into sight, securely locked into the known landscape.

Reading this year's Nebula Awards Showcase smacked that dreamy idea right out of my head with the first story, dazzled me into an arm lock with the second, and by the time the longer works fell under my eyes I was frantically tapping out, having surrendered any notion of being able to see the boundaries of our thing, even in general outline, even with the Hubble, even with some Vulcan on sensors using space opera equipment that mocks Einstein and blows raspberries at that fuddy duddy Newton.

Fair disclosure: I am a member of the SFWA, but had nothing to do with the preparation of this volume (other than placing a few votes for a few of the larger or longer works that were in contention), and I don't think anything I say here can have any impact on my pocketbook.

The anthology opens with Saladin Ahmed's "Hooves and the Hovel of Abdel Jameela," a straightforward fantasy tale set in a land with a Caliph, a story of magic and transformation. It is ably followed by "I Remember the Future," Michael Burstein's homage to the SF of yore framed in the twilight of a writer's life. N. K. Jemisin

gives the reader a good poke with “Non-Zero Probabilities,” a story set in a New York City beset with warped probabilities, as best shown by “The Knicks made it to the Finals and the Mets won the Series” (53). Her short story is a model of craft, moves the reader across its pages like a stone skipping on still water, and ends by suspending the reader, alert and cautious, overtop what might come next.

Here the anthology gains more depth, with James Patrick Kelly’s “Going Deep,” a story set on the moon, told by the clone of an adult spacer left in care of a professional, contracted father. There is no deep focus on science, but rather on the mind and consciousness of a clone, someone who is genetically tailored for interstellar flight, a teenager with all the thrums and skips of adolescence facing the inevitable collision with her clone-mother and all that entails.

“Bridesicle” has a flick of genius, one that reaches into the reader’s mind and biffs it—the blow struck by a snapping finger against the head. Will McIntosh combines two known tropes from our thing—suspended animation (‘sicle) and consciousness sharing—the dead can hitch a ride in one’s consciousness. McIntosh plays out a fine speculative thread over some time—the narrator is frozen and periodically awakened for “dates” with prospective suitors who can afford to have her thawed and her injuries repaired in return for wedding vows—and the conclusion might be telegraphed for the close reader, but it is satisfying nevertheless.

Just when I’m thinking I’ve got a handle on the horizons presented in this anthology, Kij Johnson’s “Spar” arrives. The 2009 Nebula Award Winner is entirely deserving. The experience of reading this story is inescapably kinetic. It is not for the faint of heart. It is not for those who prefer the camera to pull away from certain scenes, who imagine that imagination can fill in the out-of-focus pieces of a narrative better than a bold declaration of physical facts can do. “Science fiction and fantasy are the literature of the edge. We have resources that other genres don’t because we are not restricted by naturalistic (or realistic) conventions. We can create outrageous thought experiments,” says Johnson (92). And she means it. “Spar” begins “In the tiny lifeboat, she and the alien fuck endlessly, relentlessly” (93).

This is Kathy Acker, but only in Acker’s dreams. This is literature that scathes the reader, penetrates the reader, forces the reader to penetrate the story. It is impossible to summarize without leading a reader of this review wrong. “Spar” is what it is, the undeniable Queen

of the short-story pack for 2009. Read it. That’s a dare.

The anthology moves on, even though readers may feel a bit wrecked by page 99, to a presentation of SFWA Author Emeritus Neal Barrett, Jr. Appreciated by Joe R. Lansdale, Barrett’s story “Getting Dark” is a nice piece of work, one that brushes the periphery of SF and fantasy with a light but consistent touch, like the feeling of wind on a foggy day.

The novelette is represented by six stories, including 2009’s winner. The category opens with a tale Charles Stross would envy; his *Halting State*, while insanely wired and equipped with virtual action that ties to the real world, occupies a street in the country of thrillers. Paolo Bacigalupi’s “The Gambler” is insanely wired and equipped with virtual action, but is set in a very different part of our thing, as it tells the tale of a real journalist in the age of news-by-click, a novelette that has real bite in a world that includes the fall of governments, blacked-out net access, and that gut-churning feeling anyone with sense has that much as SF is the literature of change (Gunn), so too is the world changing, in too many ways to count.

Michael Bishop’s “Vinegar Peace (or, the Wrong-Way Used-Adult Orphanage)” is a tale that is more effective if one reads Bishop’s own words on the genesis of the story last, if at all. At the longer length of the novelette the country of SF is providing readers with more and more challenges that bend the event horizon closer to our foreheads. Gunn’s definition tells us change is out there somewhere: Bishop shows us, metaphorically, that out there is pretty damn close.

“I Needs Must Part, the Policeman Said,” by Richard Bowes, is another story that uses New York City as an effective setting for a tale that takes us out of ourselves and yet into ourselves. Of particular note here are Bowes’ characterizations, one after another, of fellow patients in a semi-private hospital room.

Ted Kosmatka’s “Divining Light” would have won this category in most (generic) years. Kosmatka winds the reader up like a clock, with no word wasted, until the physicist whom we shadow begins some real work, at which point Kosmatka reverses the tension and forces it down the reader’s throat to a chilling conclusion. The best tales are those which haunt the reader afterward, make the reader wonder “what next?” even though the story has been effectively concluded in and of itself. Lovely speculation here, and evidence there are still places to go, even in a world with Star Trek communicators in every American pocket and rail guns and super-lasers being fired for real by the United

States Navy.

Rachel Swirsky's "A Memory of Wind" is Iphigenia's story. Could you have forgotten her role in the mythic war on Troy? Remember by reading this well-done rendition, and enjoy in particular Helen's appearance on the stage. Like the just-right feel of a three-point shot falling home, Swirsky nails that little scene perfectly.

"Sinner, Baker, Fabulist, Priest: Red Mask, Black Mask, Gentleman, Beast" is Eugie Foster's Nebula-Award winning novelette for 2009. And it is well-deserving of the award. Claimed by Foster as "the first dystopian story" she's written, it is that. With a dollop of horror to flavor the punches, she drills the reader with blow after blow, going beyond the dystopian to an "illustration of an individual's introspection and reflection and their inner journeys rather than the strife and dysfunction of a ravaged or broken society" (264-65).

Given the limitations of space in such an anthology, only the winning novella is presented. Kage Baker's "The Women of Nell Gwynne's" is, as one would expect, a longer and more patient story that takes time to develop the narrator in more depth, the better to appreciate the Victorian lady's fall from grace into the hands of a secret society that manages the use of steampunk technology. Our heroine with the backbone of steel (metaphorically speaking) is plucked from street-walking and planted in a house of ill repute that serves as a sieve for useful information. Gentlemen callers leave more than their cash: they leave secrets told as well as pictures of most scandalous activities. To cap the adventure, our Heroine is called to serve as part of the recreational offerings at a villain's mansion, where super-science will be offered to whoever can write the largest check...including three bidders who aren't even British!

The Best Novel Nebula does not appear in this volume, so one will have to look elsewhere for anything more than a paragraph of commentary by Paolo Bacigalupi about his novel *The Windup Girl*. Aside from the Rhysling Award's poetry winners, the remainder of the anthology is taken up with details about the sundry other awards given by the SFWA for 2009. They include the Andre Norton Award for Young Adult Science Fiction and Fantasy, won by *The Girl Who Circumnavigated Fairyland in a Ship of Her Own Making* by Catherynne M. Valente, *District 9's* win of The Ray Bradbury Award for Outstanding Dramatic Presentation, and other awards that recognize service and value to SF as a field and the SFWA as an organization.

In closing, if there is a common thread presented as

a consequence of the chaotic, open-field scrum that is the Nebula Award nomination and final selection process, it is one of an eye turned inward. While I have idly toyed with the imagined kinetic effect of these works on the reader, these impacts are not of exploding stars, wild artificial intelligences, or DNA acting across eons, but the very real consequence of engaging one's consciousness with work that blows the top off one's skull. There is less "oooooh look at that over there" and much more "what's all this, then, going on in my mind?" than in some annual collections. And that's fine by me. The Nebula Awards Showcase 2011, ably edited by Kevin J. Anderson, is a fine candidate for use as a text in the teaching of SF. It represents the pro's picks, not the fan's picks—but all of us who write the stuff were fans first, so don't let that bother you, gentle reader. Libraries should make these anthologies an annual purchase. They include much that is valuable to future researchers—brief introductions by the authors, a running list of Award winners through the ages, and most important, a snapshot of the now effectively infinite landscape of science fiction and fantasy literature. ■

This Shared Dream

Carol Dorf

Kathleen Ann Goonan. *This Shared Dream*. New York: Tor, 2011. Cloth, 400 pages, \$25.99, ISBN 978-0-7653-1354-6.

THE NATURE of consciousness and our perceptions of time as continuous, along with the questions of what changes in human perceptions are necessary to end the cycles of war and violence, are the central concerns of Kathleen Ann Goonan's *This Shared Dream*. Not small ideas. Fortunately Goonan's eye for details and the complexity of her central characters allow the reader to join in the dream.

This Shared Dream follows the three adult children of her characters Sam Dance, a soldier and engineer, and Bette Elegante, a spy and Montessori teacher, from the novel *In War Times* (which won the John W. Campbell award). The primary time line of the book opens with Jill Dance's defense of her PhD dissertation in history and subsequent breakdown when different streams of history collide in her consciousness. Her husband arranges for her involuntary hospitalization (which is one way that her history has diverged from ours, where involuntary hospitalization isn't legal for more than a

few days). During this hospitalization, Jill's guilt over changing history emerges, and also the confusion that results from her ability to see more than one timeline.

She is preoccupied with finding her parents, and we quickly learn that Jill has played a central role in changing history, along with her parents and the mysterious Dr. Eliani Hadanz. They prevented John Kennedy's assassination, which subsequently led to a world where he, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, Jr., all contributed. This change in history led to a number of other differences including her mother's disappearance from their lives in early childhood. A few years before the story begins, Sam Dance, the children's father, has gone off to find their mother and disappeared as well.

The issue of whether it was right to change time in the previous novel becomes Jill's central question in *This Shared Dream*. The characters see the alternative to the changes they create, through travel to the sites of the violence of WWII in the first novel, and a supposed game that gives the Dance children a view of parallel timelines in this novel.

Jill reaches a resolution of her guilt when presented with the evidence that if time hadn't been changed the future would have been much bleaker, and in the fight to stop a character who wants to push change in the direction of letting the Nazis take over.

Both Dance daughters engage in activities that could change people's lives without the cooperation of the changed, Jill in the area of creating self-assembling pre-schools and Megan in the area of changing brain chemistry so that people are more cooperative. The son, Brian, follows his father's interest in jazz and uses that as a path to understanding the parallel universes and also gaining contact with his father. The youngest generation also plays a role in the action, particularly Brian's daughter Zoe, a teenage musician, and Jill's young son Whens who understands the movement between times. Some of the work of the grandparents' generation goes on into the lives of the children. The AI that has been created by the previous generation leads to further changes by giving children the ability to communicate across the globe and help each other by a type of self-replicating child-only internet slates.

Although the characters are convinced by having seen what would occur if they hadn't manipulated time, for the reader (who could worry about being one of the people who disappeared from a timeline) questions remained.

This Shared Dream increases the stakes in changing history to prevent war when characters must make

decisions about actually changing the human genome. This problem is solved by having Bette Elegante Dance, the spy, return from another timeline, as she is the only character single-minded enough to do the deed.

In *This Shared Dream* characters face essential issues in determining the uses of technology within the context of compelling personal decisions and relationships. Goonan's novel would provide an excellent starting point for discussion of our responsibility in making decisions involving new technologies. ■

After Hours: Tales from the Ur-Bar

Patrick Casey

Joshua Palmatier and Patricia Bay, eds. *After Hours: Tales from the Ur-Bar*. New York: Daw, 2011. Paper, 310 pages, \$7.99, ISBN 978-0-7564-0659-2.

LET'S GET THIS OUT OF THE WAY—there's nothing "science fiction" about *After Hours: Tales from the Ur-Bar*. It is fantasy through and through: an ancient, immortal hero; a mystic curse and magic potion; a few epic battles between good and evil; and, of course, a pub where all kinds of creatures gather to drink and learn their fates. As literary conceits go, it's not stunningly original, but it serves its purpose well enough to sustain most of the tales in this collection of short stories edited by Joshua Palmatier and Patricia Bay.

Fifteen authors participate in this literary roundtable, each of them contributing a story focusing on a different moment in the history of the eternal "Ur-Bar." The tales begin in 3rd-century BCE Sumeria and conclude sometime in a post-apocalyptic, near-future New York. Each story is connected by the bar and its immortal owner/bartender, Gilgamesh. Unfortunately, neither the bar nor its owner is ever established as a meaningful presence in the collection. Occasionally, Gilgamesh takes an active role in the story but his primary job is to serve a mystic beverage which helps the protagonist discover his or her fate. Sometimes he doesn't even do that (as in Seanan McGuire's "The Alchemy of Alcohol" where Gilgamesh is literally asleep upstairs for the entire story).

The fact that neither the Bar nor Gilgamesh is particularly developed is frustrating but less so than the fact that many of the stories in *After Hours* don't have much to say. They are, like the collection itself, pleasant air-

plane readings: i.e., pick it up, read it on the early flight from Chicago O'Hare to Phoenix Sky Harbor, and tuck it discretely into the seatback magazine rack before deplaning. Few of the stories suggest deeper inquiry or encourage multiple readings.

Thematically, most of the stories fall into the secret history sub-genre. Jennifer Dunne's "The Emperor's New God" uncovers the role of Mars (the Roman god of war) on the career of the Holy Roman Emperor. Kari Sperring's "The Fortune Teller Makes Her Will" relates the quiet heroics of the maid to one of Louis XIV's mistresses as she battles against the political suppression of Lieutenant De la Reynie and the excesses of the French aristocracy. Other stories provide adventures for familiar myths and legends. Barbara Ashford's "The Tale That Wagged the Dog" provides a feminist moral to the tale of a fairy's curse while Maria Snyder's "Sake and Other Such Spirits" provides a slightly more complex feminist slant to the only non-western myth of the collection. Other stories of a ghost, a time traveler, a vampire hunter, and a zombie are included for good measure.

The best story of the bunch is "Steady Hands and a Heart of Oak" by Ian Tregillis. Tregillis examines the motives of a "sapper" (combat engineer) during the London Blitz. Reggie Brooks, the protagonist, has been disarming unexploded ordinance around London for more than eight weeks, two weeks more than the average sapper's life expectancy. He is blessed with a peculiar ability to understand how things work: bombs, women and life. As his tour of duty is ending, Gilgamesh serves him a drink which seems to refine his abilities, or perhaps it simply gives him the backbone to think about the problems which a drink more often helps people ignore. With his senses honed, he considers his retirement, his future, and most importantly, his girl, Sybil, whom he is doing his very best to ignore. Gilgamesh's only role in the story is to serve Reggie the drink, and the story would very easily have worked without him. However, as Gilgamesh lurks in the background "taking in every word," Tregillis suggests that Reggie and the legendary bartender have much in common (243). Both are concerned with fame, pride and immortality. Reggie, like Gilgamesh, is a man concerned with his legacy. The story concludes with Reggie examining every angle as he tries to ensure himself a heroic place in history. The reader is left to wonder whether such selfish motives undermine even the most heroic choices.

A few other stories trace similar themes, often glorifying the heroism of the nearly anonymous life and the

choice never made public. These stories ("The Grand Tour" by Juliet McKenna and "Paris 24" by Laura Anne Gilman), provide the most substance for a classroom discussion of the work. S.C. Butler's "Why the Vikings Had No Bars" offers a little room for some comparative mythology. Unfortunately, its relation to other mythic traditions is largely the result of a single paragraph at the conclusion of the story.

Though the bulk of the collection is largely forgettable, it shouldn't be judged too harshly. Most of the stories are pleasant distractions. Several of the stories will have readers heading to the internet to double check their knowledge of history, and a couple of the stories could even serve as fodder for a classroom discussion, but on the whole, the collection itself has little to say. As the editors make clear, this collection began as a barroom discussion between friends. And as they note, "Thousands of ideas are thought up at the bar by authors; some of them are even good." ■

Late Eclipses

Jim Davis

Seanan McGuire. *Late Eclipses*. New York: Daw, 2011. Paper, 372 pages, \$7.99, ISBN 978-0-7564-0666-0.

BEING A FAN of neither faerie nor filk, nor urban fantasy in general, I at first had little interest in reviewing this book. Normally, blurbs that say "If you like such-and-such a writer's series, you'll love this one" are a sure sign that what awaits between the covers is less than serious literature, and this book exhibits six such blurbs. But there is that 2010 Campbell Award for Best New Writer, so I decided to see what's there. What I found elicited feelings ranging from pleasant surprise to irritation and annoyance, but added up to a good light read.

The fourth in the October Daye urban fantasy detective series, *Late Eclipses* (yes, everyone who sees me with the book assumes from the cover that it's a vampire novel) continues the story of October "Toby" Daye, a half-human, half-fae detective who lives in the San Francisco area, which also happens to be overlaid by the faerie land ruled by the Queen of the Mists, a baddy. Toby has friends and allies as well, from all types and species of fae and half-bloods, the delineations and interactions of which are among the more interesting aspects of the book. She also has a very complex and mysterious (even to her) relationship with her pure-

blood mother. Toby herself has had a rough past both as a child—spending part of her childhood in an Oliver Twist-like gang, and 12 years as a fish—and in more recent days, in stories covered in the first three books of the series. She is strong, active, and no stranger to pain. Chapter one is explication, complete with some huge smelly piles of infodump, which regrettably are not exclusive to the early chapters. (When some incident from an earlier book or from Toby's pre-series life is mentioned, she stops the story and addresses a recap directly to the reader.) Toby then learns that two of her closest friends and allies in high places are dying, possibly poisoned, possibly by an old nemesis of Toby's as a way of hurting her. Toby, who for some reason is the only character in this world capable of, or willing to, figure out who did it, soon finds herself framed for the crimes. Once the plot gets into full swing, the pace picks up considerably and things get much more interesting. McGuire is at her best when things are happening fast and furious. Her invention-on-the-fly is impressive and surprising when action takes over, and some of her more distracting writing habits are reduced to an acceptable minimum.

The key element of any detective series is, of course, the detective, and this unfortunate fact is just as true for an urban fantasy series and for *October Daye*. Except in the action scenes, Toby is about as lightweight a detective as you are likely to see this side of Thelma, Shaggy and Scooby. She preaches about evidence analysis, but the sum total of hers consists of taking some contaminated food and a wine goblet to a new friend who happens to be a fae biochemist, and having him figure out the poisons and their antidotes. Half or more of the times that she arrives at some clever bit of inductive reasoning, another character there with her figures it out at the same time, or had already done so. And except for the impressive final duel with the villain, she is not the active hero—other people do things for and to her, and she suffers through it. When she is imprisoned, someone else rescues her; when she is dying, someone else saves her; when she is too weak or sick to do what needs to be done, others do it for her. If the intent here is to show that it is better to cultivate your friendships than to be a superhero, that is all well and good, but directly contradictory to the constantly repeated statements about what a strong and admirable hero she is. And based on her past and her physical and mental abilities, she could be that strong and admirable hero. I want to like Toby, but she would be much more impressive if there were some clearer delineation of

what type of character she is supposed to be.

My main complaint about the writing style is also the main element of the book that detracts from Toby as a character. There are two parts to the problem. The first shows up early in chapter one: the “witty” banter between characters is truly worthy of a Disney Channel after-school show. For example: “May eyed the Pop-Tarts. ‘Do we really need those?’ ‘They’re part of a balanced breakfast.’ ‘In what reality?’ ‘Mine.’ I grabbed another box of Pop-Tarts.” This type of priceless repartee is repeated every single time there is a slow moment in the action, and often during furious and dangerous action.

This leads to the main part of the style problem: Toby's smart-ass attitude. Sure, let her spit in the face of death by smarting off to the Queen even when she knows it will cause her more suffering; let her prop up her courage by belittling the most dangerous situations. But Toby just smarts off all the time, to everyone, about everything, for no reason. Complaining about her fae susceptibility to iron poisoning, Toby says: “Amandine saved my life, but she also made me more vulnerable to the touch of iron. Nice trade, Mom.” Well yes, if you were more mature than a petulant five-year old, you would know that it was a nice trade. At the conclusion of the book's most genuinely touching moment, after a young man who had betrayed his liege repents and dies saving the liege's life, Toby tells us “He looked more asleep than dead, if you ignored the knife sticking out of his chest.” Ba-dump-ump. This last “witty” jab turns the whole scene into a Benny Hill skit, a solemn scene showing a noble character's death, then Benny mugs at the camera and starts chasing the nurse around the bed. The scene was much better than that, and the whole book could be much better than that. There's a difference between mature, witty irreverence, and a pre-schooler who sasses off about everything. Please, stop portraying Toby as a five-year old. She could be so much more.

It ain't Great Lit, but still I can see why fans love it.■

Sunshine [film]

Alfredo Suppia

Sunshine. Dir. Danny Boyle. Perf. Michelle Yeoh, Cillian Murphy, Chris Evans, Rose Byrne, Cliff Curtis, Troy Garity, Hiroyuki Sanada and Benedict Wong. Fox Searchlight, 2007.

WHEN DANNY BOYLE'S *Sunshine* (2007) was released in Brazil, a film critic enthusiastically compared it to Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) (review published in the well-known Brazilian magazine *Veja*). However, rather than recovering the tradition of great science fiction films, *Sunshine* is actually a parade of clichés and imitations of the once-good moments of a popular movie genre. In Boyle's film, we can find all the most worn-out narrative elements which are typical of the space journey subgenre: the ubiquitous "Murphy's Law," the more-than-expected technological quid pro quos, the sacrifice of the brave astronaut (usually the captain of the mission), the approach of a drifting spacecraft, the mysterious intruder hiding on board, the crew member who goes crazy (in this case, intruder and nutty crew member are the same character), the famous air leakage and consequent lack of oxygen, the countdown before detonation, the convenient (and often necessary) *deus ex machina*, etc. Someone might object that all this is part of the subgenre of space odyssey. But why simply repeat themes, situations and clichés when several other movies have used the same formulas more efficiently? *Sunshine* causes a tremendous sense of *déjà vu* and gives us a hint that it won't shine very brightly when the character played by Hiroyuki Sanada, a fine actor who previously starred in Yoji Yamada's *The Twilight Samurai* (*Tasogare Seibei*, 2002), dies prematurely. Sacrificing such an actor because of a cliché doesn't seem very sensible.

The film tries to tread the path of hard science fiction—but is wrecked on the way. It cannot be seriously compared to Kubrick's *2001*. The inventiveness of Kubrick's/Clarke's film is still light years ahead of *Sunshine*, especially if we take into account the technological gap between the two productions. Nonetheless, in order to save what can be really appreciated in *Sunshine*, I call attention to the production design, costumes and interesting appearance of the space ships

Icarus I and II. Ironically, all this only goes to confirm the (arguable) hypothesis that, since William Cameron Menzies's *Things to Come* (1936), British science fiction films are usually interestingly designed—and nothing more. And speaking of *Icarus I or II* (the reference to the Greek mythological hero in the name of the spacecraft is truly moving), it's worth recalling the Czech-Slovak film *Ikarios XB 1* (*Icarus XB 1* aka *Voyage to the End of the Universe*), directed by Jindrich Polák and released in 1963: an Eastern European space odyssey, such as Pavel Klushantsev's *Planet Bur* (1962), before 2001. In *Icarus XB 1* we can already find the space ship in a rescue-of-mankind mission, the drama of isolation, the turbulent relationships amongst the crew, the smallness of man compared to/in comparison with the cosmos, the crew member who goes mad, the approach of a drifting ship, etc. It might just be coincidence, but there is so much *Icarus XB 1* (uncredited) in *Sunshine* as *The Last Man on Earth* (dir.: Ubaldo Ragona, 1964), *The Omega Man* (dir.: Boris Sagal, 1971) and *Dawn of the Dead* (dir.: George Romero, 1978) in a previous Danny Boyle's SF movie: *28 Days Later* (2002). It seems that Boyle does not cite or simply honor, or recycle. Instead, he apparently works as a master of repetition, but a kind of empty, "pasteurized," snobbish repetition, with a cult movie look. *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) and its remembrance of Katia Lund and Fernando Meirelles's *City of God* (*Cidade de Deus*, 2002) help to confirm our hypothesis that Danny Boyle might be an avid cinephile who loves to pay homage to film history—much less creatively, however, than a Jean-Luc Godard or even a Quentin Tarantino.

The leitmotif of isolation and consequent madness, so strong in films about journeys into deep space, was far better explored in *Icarus XB 1*, Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris* (1972) or the celebrated *2001*. And when *Sunshine* invokes a religious or transcendent stance, it also does so less creatively than the three titles mentioned above. The crew crackpot who takes on the role of a prophet is a bizarre figure compared to the equivalent character in *Icarus XB 1*, developed(?) in a much more subtle way. OK, in deep-space-journey-movies it is inevitable that someone goes nuts—but if it has to be so, let's do it with some class and subtlety. *Icarus's* crazy guy in *Sunshine* recalls Freddy Krueger too much/is too reminiscent of Freddy Krueger. Even *Event Horizon* (dir.: Paul Anderson, 1997) fared a little better; presenting a hell-raiser from the bottom of a black hole, it assumed the horror movie modality/mode at once. By the way, *Event Horizon* is another film that, like *Icarus*

XB 1 and *2001*, appears to be imprinted on the DNA of *Sunshine*.

Towards the end of *Sunshine*, the scene when the good guys face the bandit in the super-nuke, while space/time distorts, could be praised—had we not seen almost the same situation in *2001*, conducted/conveyed/carried out in a much more interesting way. Incidentally, I have the impression that Boyle was more ambitious in *Sunshine* than Kubrick was in *2001*. The grandiloquence of several sequences, the forceful, persuasive(?) soundtrack, and the tear-jerking efforts recall Roland Emmerich's (the most American of contemporary German directors) SF boleros. *Sunshine* emulates American cinema, as much of the British and Australian SF cinema had done in the past. And the excesses of the old (if not worn-out) Commercial Cinema's formulae annoy those who watch movies in a slightly more critical approach, rather than as pure entertainment. Definitely, the kitsch aesthetics still lurks in (hovers over?) films like *Sunshine* in their apparent European domestication of American blockbusters such as Michael Bay's *Armageddon* (1998).

Because of all this, *Sunshine* gives the impression that Boyle has collected material from several other better and earlier SF films, reintroducing them in "new clothing" (i.e., with a fine touch of digital cinema and cool "Europeanness") to the audiences. The result is a film of only 107 minutes that appears to be two and a half hours long. So, a question arises: why make remakes of masterpieces or new approaches to themes that were so masterfully treated in the past? This question concerns also Adrian Lyne's remake of *Lolita*, or Gus Van Sant's remake Hitchcock's *Psycho*. Films such as Kubrick's *Lolita* (1962), or Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), can plunge any remake into the shade. Only in some (fortunate and hard-working) cases, such as J. Lee Thompson's *Cape Fear* (1962), the remake follows at the same level or somewhat higher than the original—see Martin Scorsese's *Cape Fear* (1991).

It is necessary to differentiate a great film from a "cool" movie, a great director from a filmmaker in evidence. *Sunshine* and Danny Boyle fit the latter options. *Shallow Grave* (1994) and *Trainspotting* (1996) are nice films, maybe good films. *28 Days Later* and *Sunshine* can even be "cool," whereas *The Beach* (2000) is a total waste of time. This makes Boyle an average director, though still far from an auteur. Talking about contemporary British directors and SF productions, I would call attention to Michael Winterbottom's *Code 46* (2003), or Alfonso Cuarón's *Children of Men* (2006).

The sociological speculation in these two films seems far more interesting than the clichés and the aura of self-help literature impregnating *Sunshine*. ■

***TRON: Legacy* [film]**

Jason W. Ellis

TRON: Legacy. Dir. Joseph Kosinski. Perf. Jeff Bridges, Garrett Hedlund, Bruce Boxleitner, and Olivia Wilde. Walt Disney Pictures, 2010.

TRON: LEGACY is a delightfully nostalgic and updated trip down the digital rabbit hole that audiences first experienced in Disney's groundbreaking popular proto-cyberpunk film, *TRON* (1982). Now, Disney has returned to the roots of popular cyberpunk with their sequel to the technoscientific extrapolation of the world on the digital frontier known as The Grid. Before William Gibson published *Neuromancer* (1984) and long before the Wachowski brothers released *The Matrix* (1999), the first *TRON* film introduced audiences to the hidden virtual world of The Grid: a digital realm within the Encom mainframe, arranged on intersecting lines of light, and containing representations of data and programs going about the work of living and gaming. *TRON* and *TRON: Legacy* largely take place in The Grid with the former being about a programmer simultaneously stopping a world-dominating computer program and finding the data that proves he has a claim as the creator of Encom's greatest video games and the latter being about the programmer's son searching for his father, who cannot escape The Grid, and encountering a new form of digital life.

Like the first film, *TRON: Legacy* is a visually rich film that pushes the narrative possibilities of film in the film industry's current experiments with three-dimensional viewing. Unlike the first *TRON* movie, which has its own interesting film production story that combines backlit animation, live action, and early computer animation in a feature film, *TRON: Legacy* combines the latest green screen filming techniques with immersive computer generated images to create an intriguing film in three viewing formats: 2D, Disney 3D, and IMAX 3D. It is significant to the plot of the new film that, perhaps in homage to *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and its Kansas/sepia and Oz/Technicolor juxtapositions, it uses 2D to signify the real, physical world and 3D to signify the equally real, but digital world of The Grid.

Both films are closely related to Disney's *Alice in*

Wonderland (1951), itself a retelling of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), because the plot of both *TRON* films focus on the down the rabbit hole adventures and horrors encountered by the elder Kevin Flynn and in the latest film, his son Sam. Additionally, both films are about the hubris of programmers, Ed Dillinger (David Warner) in *TRON* and Flynn in *TRON: Legacy*, to create artificial life that may want to travel back up the rabbit hole into the physical world. In the first film, Flynn must learn to navigate The Grid and survive its games in order to successfully stop Dillinger's unleashed Master Control Program (MCP) and obtain the evidence that establishes him as the creator of Encom's success. In *TRON: Legacy*, Sam follows his missing father down the rabbit hole in order to bring him back to the physical world. However, Sam quickly learns that his father's attempt to build a perfect system and introduce the physical world to digitally emergent lifeforms known as isomorphic algorithms (ISOs) has failed, because his father's codified likeness utility or CLU has assumed control over The Grid and attempts to bring his version of the utopic perfect system to the physical world by crossing over with the help of Flynn's identity disc. Like his father, Sam successfully returns to the physical world with a new direction in life to assume the reigns of corporate directorship over Encom and a special prize of the last living ISO and potential love interest, Quorra (Olivia Wilde).

TRON: Legacy has many interesting as well as troubling aspects that deserve further critique and discussion including issues of disembodied/embodyed intelligence, tensions between character pairings, and stereotyped images of women in science fiction. First, this film demonstrates the imaginative possibilities of bodily escape, but it also shows how an artificial life form which emerges from The Grid itself desires digital escape into bodily flesh-and-blood. Quorra is an interesting character in the film, because she represents the ISOs and Flynn's dream to bring them into the physical world. The End of the Line Club's Castor (Michael Sheen) is also one of the last remaining ISOs, but he prefers his power and prestige provided by CLU until his use value reaches its minimum. Quorra is depicted as Flynn's protégé who is educated on Russian literature, 19th century German philosophy, and Zen Buddhist beliefs. However, the most fascinating thing about her character is her love for *Les Voyages Extraordinaires* of Jules Verne. It is in Verne's proto-science fiction that she learns about the physical world, and through it, she begins to imagine herself here, outside

of The Grid. Unlike the digital citizens of Greg Egan's *Diaspora* (1997), Quorra is a digital being who wishes to be on the outside looking in rather than inside looking out. For her, she wishes to experience the world rather than read about it, and she wants to do this as a participant rather than a controller. CLU also wants to get outside into the physical world, but his objective is control and the establishment of a perfect system. He feels that the Users should not control The Grid and come-and-go as they please. Instead, he is a revolutionary who wants his vision of utopia to carry over from The Grid into the physical world. Therefore, *TRON: Legacy* largely challenges the cyberpunk tendency to celebrate the digital realm.

As in all cyberpunk narratives, *TRON: Legacy's* plot develops as a result of the tension between the physical world and the digital realm. This tension is often explored through the many doppelganger pairings found throughout the movie. One example of these pairings is Tron, the system monitoring and security program pioneered by Flynn's friend and associate Alan Bradley (Bruce Boxleitner), who finds his way into the new Grid developed by Flynn between the first and second films. In the original film, Tron is a master of the games, and he fights for the Users, or people in the real world who interface with programs that exist in The Grid. He helps Flynn succeed by destroying the MCP, and it is explained in *TRON: Legacy* that Flynn brought Tron to the new system to help in its construction. However, Tron suspects that CLU may be exceeding Flynn's intentions, but this is uncovered too late. The audience does not see what happens to Tron, but it is probably CLU's ability to repurpose programs and inability to create new programs that led to Tron's transformation to Rinzler (Anis Cheurfa), CLU's enforcer and game master. Though it is not very well developed, there is evidence that Tron/Rinzler struggles with the fact that Sam is a User and should be protected such as in the first disc battle when Sam bleeds red blood rather than de-rezzes when struck by an identity disc. Ultimately, Tron wins out over his transformative re-coding as Rinzler, which allows Flynn, Sam, and Quorra the time they need to safely make it to the input/output portal.

Flynn and his visibly younger and wholly digital alter ego, CLU, provide a second important set of doppelgangers. In the first film, Flynn creates CLU as his in-system avatar to search for evidence that supports his claims as creator of Encom's greatest video games. CLU reveres his User and does his best to succeed before he is eliminated by Dillinger's avatar, Sark (David

Warner). In *TRON: Legacy*, Flynn creates a new mirror-image likeness of himself also named CLU, who is tasked by Flynn: "We will build the perfect system." Flynn's hubris concerning the creation of CLU and the construction of a utopic perfect system leads to his being trapped within The Grid since the time that Sam was only a boy. CLU and his forces stage a coup, because he believes that Flynn's interest in the newly discovered ISOs and their emergent rather than designed identities betrays the younger Flynn's goal for digital perfection. Before the emergent and imperfect ISOs walked out of the darkness surrounding The Grid, Flynn and CLU were designing a so-called perfect system from the top-down. The ISOs challenged their approach to system design, because they and their knowledge emerged from The Grid itself: an idea from chaos and complexity theories, and more importantly, digital physics. CLU had no control over the ISOs' design, so he viewed them as flawed creations. Instead of learning from them as Flynn began to do, CLU sought to eradicate them. Like the machines of *The Matrix* trilogy, CLU employs violence and ruthless control to enforce his formulation (and by extension, the younger Flynn's command) of the perfect system. The older, "Zen thing" Flynn changes from his younger self. As a program of Flynn's design, CLU cannot alter his original instructions. He is stuck in a loop and he is unable to change that reiterative code. The explosive tension between the unchanging CLU and the evolving Flynn is explosively resolved at the end of the film when Flynn initiates a re-integration with CLU in order to allow Sam and Quorra access to the portal and escape from The Grid. Consequently, *TRON: Legacy* supports a favorable view toward adaptability and changeability over the dangers of programmatic existence, an idea shared by Philip K. Dick in his essay, "The Android and the Human" (1972), but the film takes a nuanced approach by demonstrating that digital life is not necessarily program-bound.

The physically real Sam and the digitally real Quorra are a final complementary rather than antagonistic pairing. Flynn's meditations and Zen Buddhist beliefs point the way toward the yin-and-yang/male-female union that Sam and Quorra represent. It was Flynn's plan to help them escape at the loss of his own life, because he has come to deeply believe that the ISOs have so much to offer humanity in the physical world. Instead of finding new life in outer space, Flynn finds new life here within the computing circuit that we are all plugged into now. It could be argued that Sam's char-

acter develops into maturity through his father's sacrifice and his relationship to Quorra, but I argue that it is more likely that Sam is in a sense programmed to take the elder Flynn's place in the world. Additionally, Quorra appears to be Sam's love interest, but the sexless, sexiness of Disney's Grid forbids any consummation or overt acknowledgement of attraction. In fact, Sam acts at times much like a teenager despite his age of twenty-seven. I believe that there is more to be said about Disney's arm's length approach to sex through sexualized images primarily of women, particularly considering the real world scandals of their constructed music, television, and movie celebrities.

The final aspect of *TRON: Legacy* deserving more critique is an issue in most cyberpunk and much of science fiction in general: what Joanna Russ calls "images of women in science fiction." Despite Quorra's character in the film, it still promotes heavily stereotyped images of women with primarily sexy yet sexless roles. *TRON* and *TRON: Legacy* are both about physical and digital men as creators and leaders. Additionally, the new film is about the relationship between father and son. The women in these films are sexualized objects of desire by the men: Yori (Cindy Morgan) in *TRON*, and Quorra and the Sirens (Beau Garrett, Serinda Swan, Yaya DaCosta, and Elizabeth Mathis) in *TRON: Legacy*. For example in *TRON: Legacy*, the four Sirens, tightly clad in high heels and with carefully cinematography that accentuates their curves and moves, disrobe and then clothe Sam in digital gear in preparation for the games. Furthermore, Garrett's Gem is the only Siren named in the film. And despite Quorra's centrality to the motivations of Flynn and the development of the plot, she and the other digital women in The Grid are eye-candy. Quorra is presented as a strong woman who protects her men, but she is beholden to those men as her saviors. First, Flynn saves her from CLU before the first film, and then Sam and Flynn save her at The End of the Line Club and then gaze at her lifeless body while they repair her digital DNA and allow the repairs to propagate through a reboot. Thus, Quorra and especially the other women appear as images of women rather than developed characters in control of their actions in the plot.

There are numerous other aspects to the film that deserve critical consideration. Some of these include: the imaginative extrapolation of what data looks like within a computer system or digital anthropomorphism; surface-only characterization, which does provide further commentary on the contemporary

creation of online identities and their fill-in-the-form identity creation; issues of corporate profit, research and development, and open source principles; and male creative hubris where there is a conspicuous absence of mothers (cf. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*). Following a historiographic approach, *TRON* and *TRON: Legacy* fit into the early and continuing development of computer technology from the cyborgization of humans with computers through touch interface designs and the importance of video games to the continuing development of personal and portable computing devices. Finally, the original *TRON* was a largely hopeful vision of a digitalized future leveraged on the popularity of video games, but it is hard to say how *TRON: Legacy* fits into this today. Perhaps this latest visit to The Grid is merely a nostalgic reinvention of a cult film for a wider audience or an anachronistic view of computing technology that never came to pass. However, the film speaks volumes about us today, particularly about cultural images of sex and digital identities, even if it is devoid of many distracting elements of contemporary computing such as texting or social networking.

I firmly recommend *TRON: Legacy* for everyone interested in cyberpunk, computing technology, and narratives about digital spaces. It is an enjoyable adventure movie that offers fantastic visuals and inventive interfaces on the digital frontier. I have seen the film in IMAX 3D and Disney 3D at a standard theater, and I can categorically say that the IMAX presentation is a completely different and more immersive experience. You do not have to have seen *TRON* to enjoy the new film, but I believe the strong dialog between the two films will enrich your experience if you can obtain a copy of the original on DVD to watch beforehand. Visit *TRON: Legacy* while it is in theaters, because it is a wondrous spectacle best experienced at the multiplex and I suspect that it will lose its luster on smaller screens. Its commentary on techno-social nostalgia and the present digital zeitgeist will however last past shelf date of its 3D presentation. ■

***Let the Right One In* and *Let Me In* [film]**

Steve Berman

Let the Right One In. Dir. Tomas Alfredson. Perf. Kare Hedebrant and Lina Leandersson. Sandrew Metronome, 2008.

Let Me In. Dir. Matt Reeves. Perf. Kodi Smit-McPhee and Chloe Moretz. Goldcrest, 2010.

He cannot go where he lists, he who is not of nature has yet to obey some of nature's laws, why we know not. He may not enter anywhere at the first, unless there be some one of the household who bid him to come, though afterwards he can come as he please. Van Helsing in *Dracula* (Chapter 18)

THIS QUOTE, from Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, is the central thematic influence for the Swedish film *Let the Right One In* (based on the novel by John A. Lindqvist) and *Let Me In*, the American remake.

The invitation ritual in vampire lore affords the potential victim of the vampire some protection. The vampire can only have access to the victim if the victim verbally invites the vampire into his or her home. Should the victim be unaware of this protective ritual and allows the vampire access to his home, the vampire will achieve proximity to the living, making the victim rather vulnerable to the vampire's bite.

Van Helsing says that this invitation is an inevitable aspect of nature. It may seem nothing more than a mannerly invitation; however, when one says, "Come in," to someone at his door, he is usually inviting a living person into his home. In this case, however, Van Helsing asserts that natural law separates the living and the dead, or in this case, the undead. Thus, nature allows that the vampire herself must provide her living potential victim with a statement of caution. Like garlic and the crucifix, this invitation ritual protects the victim-to-be from the vampire and may awaken the potential victim of the vampire from his or her innocence of the situation.

We see what happens to the vampire, Eli, when she enters without an invitation in *Let the Right One In*. At first, she begins to shake violently, and then she bleeds spontaneously from various parts of her body thereby verifying a natural defense for the living against the undead.

This invitation is evident in the earliest vampire film as well, for example, *Nosferatu* (directed by F. W. Murnau in 1922). Realizing that the only way she can save her husband, Hutter, from the vampire (Count Orlok), Ellen offers herself to Orlok with a dramatic gesture of invitation into her home. Since the film is silent, there can be no verbal invitation, so she throws open the windows making it clear that she is inviting the vampire into her home. Ellen offers this invitation just before dawn, hoping that Orlok's bloodlust for her will

distract him from sunrise. The trick works, but soon after the vampire vanishes in the sunlight, Ellen dies from his bite.

The notion of inviting evil into one's home is also evident in *Poltergeist* (1982), directed by Tobe Hooper. This film is not about vampires but about some angry spirits of the dead. Living in a suburb that was built on a cemetery, a family begins to feel the creepy effects of poltergeists. To save money, the developer of the subdivision decided not to move the bodies before building the homes. The full effect of the poltergeist is not felt, however, until after Anne, the youngest child in the family, invites the spirits in late at night while entranced by white noise on the television. She touches the screen and the spirits use her as a conduit to enter the house.

In *Let the Right One In* and *Let Me In*, the invitation ritual is essential to each film's meaning. The title of the Swedish film serves as a warning or a caution to those who may be naïve about the designs a vampire may have on their lives. Granted, a vampire may do good things for one who helps the vampire have access to blood. However, it is evident that there are serious difficulties associated with keeping a vampire fed. Within the context of the story, the title does not simply refer to letting someone occupy the same space as another person but to letting someone into the life of another person. The American film's title, *Let Me In*, puts a different spin on the events of the film and on the invitation ritual. The title phrase could be a plea or it could be a command. Either way, the living person responding to the command is being placed in danger, for it sounds as if the vampire is pushing her way into the victim's life. I found the titles of both films to be engaging as they mark the direction that each film will successfully take.

There are several interesting differences between the two films. The Swedish film takes place in the snowy landscape of a suburb of Stockholm while the American film takes place in New Mexico. Each setting provides a brooding backdrop for its respective film.

The American remake, *Let Me In*, adds a noir feel to the film by putting a detective on the case of a serial killer who binds his victims upside down to drain their blood. We soon find out that this serial killer is actually the vampire's caretaker. He is old enough to be her father, but he's really a sort of servant or companion. As the twelve-year-old vampire, Abby, points out to Owen, "I've been twelve for a long time," suggesting that she is older than her caretaker. The Swedish film

has no detective, but rather a grief stricken neighbor, whose friend has been killed by the vampire, comes to recognize that an older man and his daughter, who recently moved into his apartment complex, may have killed his friend.

The American film is less subtle and more grisly while there is a lyric beauty in the way the Swedish director has shot the film. In the basement scene of *Let the Right One In*, the vampire girl, Eli, simply looks abnormally inhuman when Oskar cuts himself arousing Eli's bloodlust and causing her to metamorph into her vampire state. In *Let Me In*, however, Abby becomes monstrously inhuman when she smells Owen's blood. Indeed, Reeves conveys the grisly nature of the vampire by depicting her as horrifying.

In each film, the living person is a young, lonely boy who is constantly being bullied at school. In each film, the vampire saves the boy from the bullies at his school; she encourages him to stand up against the bullies, which he does successfully. In each film, the boy falls in love with the vampire even though she warns him that she's not a girl, yet he still wants to go steady with her. In each film, the boy witnesses the vampire girl's brutal attacks while feeding. In each film, the boy experiences a dissolving family situation as his parents are undergoing a brutal divorce. The tender age of the vampire and the love that the boy in each film feel for her somehow make us ignore her brutality. Her caretaker is killing young boys for her; she kills several innocent people; and she bites a woman leaving her alive so that when the sun rises the next day, the woman spontaneously combusts. Thus, the future prospect for the boy in each film seems dim and hopeless, so we have to wonder, should we feel sympathy for this vampire?

I strongly recommend both films, especially the Swedish film. Both films are well done. The Swedish film is stronger due to its subtlety. The American remake is gorier and clearly spells out some aspects of the film, most notably that Owen, perhaps like the father/caretaker before him, is being seduced by Abby into becoming her next caretaker. Viewers may find the relationship between the two young people appealing, but they should also think twice the next time they invite someone into their homes. ■

The Walking Dead **[television series]**

Rikk Mulligan

The Walking Dead. Dir. Frank Darabont. Perf. Lincoln Teachers, Jon Bernthal, Sarah Wayne Callies, Laurie Holden, Jeffrey DeMunn, Steven Yeun, Emma Bell and Chandler Riggs. AMC Studios, 2010.

WHEN 900 ZOMBIES, aliens and Star Wars Stormtroopers attempted to set the Guinness record for a live performance of Michael Jackson's *Thriller* at Dragon*Con in 2009, many fans of the risen dead thought they might have finally "jumped the shark." The first decade of the twenty-first century has been a renaissance for the zombie, although it has competed against a similar resurgence of vampires in popular media. Vampires have the advantages of intelligence, social organization, and increasingly as romantic interests (from young adult to "mature themed" series), while the zombie . . . lurches, stumbles, and if lucky, gets a bite in here and there. The early-2000s horde of zombie films had begun well enough with *Resident Evil* and *28 Days Later* in 2002, and the remake of *Dawn of the Dead* (2004), but the extension of Romero's franchise declined after 2005's *Land of the Dead* with the less well received *Diary of the Dead* (2007) and *Survival of the Dead* (2009). By the end of the decade academics continued to debate the social relevance and symbolism of the cannibal corpse, and to teach courses on the zombie at a number of universities, but the zombie-parodies of *Shaun of the Dead* (2004), *Fido* (2006), and to some extent *Zombieland* (2009) garnered more critical attention than the standard survival horror splatterfest.

AMC's announcement of its planned adaptation of Robert Kirkman's comic book series *The Walking Dead* in August of 2009 received a mixed response; fans know how expensive good F/X can be and a good zombie apocalypse was expected to run over a typical television budget. However, AMC aggressively marketed and advertised the series by taking advantage of their Atlanta filming location to use local fans as zombie extras (after suitable training in their "zombie school"), releasing a series of trailers on the Internet, and by staging a series of "zombie invasions" in cities around the world. The series premiered on Halloween night 2010 for the first of six episodes; both fans and critics responded so well that the series was picked up for a second season of thirteen episodes after the second episode.

The Walking Dead is the beginning of an epic survival story set in the American Southeast—Kentucky and Georgia so far—in the first six months after a zombie epidemic has swept the world, reducing human society to small, struggling enclaves and furtively roving

bands of survivors. The main protagonist is Rick Grimes, a former Sheriff's Deputy from Kentucky, and a steadily dwindling group of survivors played by an ensemble cast, many of whom are easily recognizable genre veterans. The television episodes are inspired by the comic books, from which they deviate very early and significantly with new characters and relationships. The arc of the first six stories brings Rick from Kentucky to Atlanta where he meets a small group of now-trapped scavenging survivors. After helping them escape the city, he reunites with his family at a refugee camp outside the city for a short time before a zombie attack leaves the survivors reeling, and sends Rick and his faction to the CDC in search of a cure. They find neither answer nor encouragement in Atlanta and the season ends with the caravan departing the city with limited supplies and weapons.

Most films of the horror survival genre deal with a siege or escaping from a besieged location; most feature a signature protagonist who attempts to lead while many of their party fall around them. These first few episodes of the television series work with all the genre conventions, and incorporate homages to significant films like *28 Days Later* and *I Am Legend*, but where they advance the genre is in the more detailed portrayal of social roles and conflict. Kirkman's comic scripts repeatedly explore authority, ethics, and moral values, and how they are challenged by just the effort of day-to-day survival. In episode six, "TS-19," the audience learns that it has been more than six months since the epidemic broke out, and three months since it went global. The show offers an immediate contrast in the way that Rick, who spent the past six months in a coma, holds onto the "old world" values and rules while the rest of his group have been worn down by their efforts to survive. The writers employ typical Southern stereotypes in that most of the men are different shades of sexist, misogynistic, and authoritarian; the women begin in socially subordinate roles, no matter what their "old world" professions. In addition these early episodes deal with race and class issues far more than the comics do. Rick symbolizes the "old world" by continuing to wear his deputy uniform as much as he tries to act as a normative influence by reminding the rest that every life is precious and they must hold onto who they are . . . who they were. He is also the one to point out that "there are no more niggers any more . . . no white trash rednecks . . . just white meat and dark meat." The depiction of women has generated criticism on fan blogs and sites, with many cognizant that these are stereotypes of

the adulterous or abused wife, or the subordinate helpmeet, but the writers seem to be slowly working toward the much stronger, balanced depiction Kirkman offers in the comics of post-apocalyptic social adaptation. Those who have read the comics are more willing to give the shows a chance, while viewers new to the series are far more critical.

For those who study media, the use of F/X, background sound, and score are particularly noteworthy in setting and maintaining the mood. From a cultural studies perspective, these episodes can be used as part of American race and gender discourse, but more significantly, they offer a reflection of American post-9/11 anxieties centered on the role of authority and when the demand for security overwhelms all other social . . . or human concerns. ■

***Sucker Punch* [film]**

T. S. Miller

Sucker Punch. Dir. Zack Snyder. Perf. Emily Browning and Abbie Cornish. Warner Brothers, 2011.

FOR ALL of the automatic weapons, samurai swords and killer robots that appear in its virtuoso action sequences, Zack Snyder's *Sucker Punch* immediately announces its aspirations as a high auteurist action movie by opening with a melodramatic shadow play of sorts, an extended exposition scene with a perhaps too-conspicuous absence of dialogue. In it, we see an unnamed young woman, later known only as "Babydoll" (Emily Browning), distraught at the death of her mother and threatened by her violent stepfather; while armed with a handgun and attempting to protect her sister, Babydoll makes a tragic mistake that lands her in an insane asylum. That elaborate fantasies of stylized gun violence become her primary means of dealing with her new circumstances hints at the pervasive inconsistency of values that characterizes this intricate if somewhat muddled parable of escape. For example, *Sucker Punch* is a film that attempts to empower women yet constantly puts their bodies on display for an adolescent male audience. The film also attempts to parody the vapidity of action movie values yet unreflectively reproduces those same values in the earnestness of its opening and closing voiceovers. At the same time, the overwhelmingly negative reviews of the film have consistently passed over several aspects of the production that make it worthy of the attention of SF/F scholars.

In short, *Sucker Punch* is by no means simply another mindless Hollywood action movie (*Transformers II*, *Skyline*), but rather a cognitively dissonant one, a truly challenging film on many levels that merits close study for its failures as well as its successes.

We do not remain in the asylum long: after her father turns Babydoll over to a corrupt orderly and pays him to arrange an illicit lobotomy, five days elapse in the space of approximately two minutes of film-time, and Babydoll finds herself face-to-face with the lobotomist. Immediately before the fateful blow to the head falls, however, the camera moves through the portal of Babydoll's eyes and transports us to the first of her fantasy worlds. This new setting, a seedy brothel that maps very closely onto the asylum, is not only the first fantasy world, but a first-order fantasy world: only in this world does Babydoll experience those second-order action fantasies in which she battles golems and dragons and, yes, steampunky WWI German Hun zombie robots. In the first-order fantasy, the orderly has become the owner of the brothel, and the lobotomist has become an enigmatic "High Roller" who will arrive to take possession of Babydoll's body—again, in five days' time. Snyder uses Babydoll's ensuing efforts to escape from the brothel—literally and otherwise—in order to evaluate the place of "escape" and "escapism" in fantastic narrative. In this respect, *Sucker Punch* thematically resembles Guillermo del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth*, even borrowing the same fairytale model, complete with wicked stepfather and the association of fantasy with rebellion against tyranny. While *Sucker Punch* may never be hailed as "the *Pan's Labyrinth* of action movies," it may be the closest thing to one we currently have (*pace* John McTiernan and *The Last Action Hero*).

The film's shoot-'em-up second-order fantasies, then, do not represent a method of coping with menial drudgery but a genuine attempt to flee oppressive conditions. Babydoll formulates a rather uncomfortable plan of escape: she will dance, not as all the girls must do for their clients, but in order to distract the men in possession of certain key items while her friends steal them. Instead of watching each dance, we see the second-order fantasies, in which the mundane task of stealing a knife or a lighter is projected onto an epic battlescape. In both the first- and second-order fantasies, the film quite deliberately adheres to the barest bones of RPG-storytelling, and the action sequences take the form of a series of video game challenges, contextless missions that offer only as much background and narrative content as will be necessary to complete their objectives. The infamous

timed “train mission” is a dead giveaway here, but this scene challenges rather than mindlessly invokes video game logic by reminding us what it means when we can’t replay the train mission indefinitely. Yet, the film takes obvious pleasure in depicting these battle scenes, just as surely as it comments on their limitations, forcing us to consider its own limitations as serious critical commentary.

Another case in point: when we first enter the brothel-world, we see the character Sweet Pea (Abbie Cornish) playing, in a burlesque performance, the part of Babydoll in the asylum-world, strapped to the same chair and about to be lobotomized; this suggestion that Babydoll imagines Sweet Pea playing Babydoll imagining Sweet Pea results in a potentially intriguing self-reflexive *mise en abyme* effect that does not hold up through the course of the film. On the other hand, an argument can still be made that both the brothel-world and the asylum-world seem equally unreal. I am cautious about how far to press this reading, but, whatever implications we wish to draw from the fact, we must keep in mind that nothing in the film is a fantasy actually localizable to its ostensible mid-20th-century Vermont setting: Babydoll’s fantasies are unambiguously marked as our fantasies, products of the contemporary matrix of genre narratives. For instance, games like *Halo* and *Call of Duty* have given shape to the film’s military fantasies; Peter Jackson’s version of Middle-earth has left its unmistakable trace on the orcs in the high fantasy sequence; and the steampunk setting owes its existence not only to the steampunk aesthetic developed in the 80s and 90s but also the “steampunk Renaissance” of the past few years. (As such, scholars working on steampunk will want to view *Sucker Punch* if only for a first taste of what the impending wave of Hollywood steampunk—sure to come soon—will look like.) Perhaps the remarks that Sweet Pea makes after concluding her performance provide the most telling example of the film’s failed efforts at critical self-examination: “Don’t you get the point of this? It’s to turn people on. I get the sexy little schoolgirl. I even get the helpless mental patient, right? That can be hot. But what is this? Lobotomized vegetable? How about something a little more...commercial?” Here Sweet Pea calls attention to the potentially exploitative nature of Snyder’s premise, but prefers that premise and ironically rejects his auteurist deviations from acceptable “commercial” standards; once we have entered these fantasy worlds, however, one might well argue that the film does indeed become highly commercial at times, despite Snyder’s

winking celebrations of his film’s sophistication and self-awareness. Moreover, it goes without saying that a simple acknowledgment that Babydoll’s innocent pout and perpetual sailor suit are intended to titillate hardly causes those aspects of the film to cease to titillate.

Despite and/or because of its flaws, *Sucker Punch* is a must-see for scholars interested in metafantasy: buried somewhere in *Sucker Punch* is an attempt to come to terms with our desires for escape as realized in the narratives of genre fiction. A heartfelt failure, *Sucker Punch* is finally hamstrung by its own implication in too many of the structures it would critique. In certain respects, the film recalls another high auteurist commercial failure, Kathryn Bigelow’s cyberpunk thriller *Strange Days* (1995), a film at once condemnatory of vicarious media violence and all too willing to serve it up in gluttonous portions; like *Strange Days*, *Sucker Punch* peddles what it would condemn. In the end, it is difficult to assess the extent to which the compromises Snyder surely had to make in order to create a more commercially viable product may have compromised his efforts to comment on issues like escapism, the values of the typical fantastic sci-fi action flick, fan culture, and so on. If *Sucker Punch* disappoints us as an effort to transcend genre clichés and avoid pandering to a lowest common denominator, its failings may finally lead us to question the possibility for significant self-critique in the medium that Snyder has chosen, that of the Hollywood action movie distributed by a major studio and expected to generate a proper return on investment for a budget approaching \$100 million. ■

***The Tempest* [film]**

Dominick Grace

The Tempest. Writ. and Dir. Julie Taymor. Perf. Helen Mirren, Djimon Hounsou. Touchstone, Miramax, Chartoff, 2010.

THE TEMPEST is Julie Taymor’s latest film and second Shakespearean adaptation. Shakespearean adaptation to film always poses challenges, despite the superficial similarities between film and theater as media, and though *The Tempest* may not be the most problematic to adapt, it nevertheless presents challenges. Some can be dealt with easily (the elaborate and artificial masque from the play, for instance, is replaced with a CGI tour of the cosmos). Others (the irreducible artificiality of the language, the fact that Shakespeare’s plays depend

for their effect precisely on the overtly artificial nature of theatrical illusion rather than the inescapable realism of the film camera, etc.) are less tractable. Taymor's adaptation succeeds moderately well in converting from one medium to the other.

The narrative is compressed into a few hours but is linked to events from a dozen years before, when Prospera, duchess of Milan (sex-changed from Shakespeare's Prospero), had her position usurped by her brother Antonio (in cahoots with the King of Naples), being set adrift at sea with her infant daughter Miranda and a supply of necessities, such as clothes and her books. Washing up on a desert island, she finds the spirit Ariel trapped in a tree (placed there by Sycorax, a witch previously marooned on the island while pregnant with her son Caliban—the parallels are deliberate) and the now adolescent Caliban the sole human(ish) inhabitant of the island. Twelve years later, Caliban and Ariel are Prospera's subjects (the term slave is explicitly applied to Caliban), and Antonio, as well as the King of Naples, his brother, and his son (Ferdinand) are in the orbit of Prospera's influence as they return from Tunisia by ship. The titular tempest maroons them on the island and sets up the main action; the preceding comes by way of extensive exposition. The plot involves Prospera's plot to avenge herself and reclaim her realm while orchestrating a match between Miranda and Ferdinand; meanwhile Antonio plots with the King's brother to murder the King, and also meanwhile, the King's drunken butler and Jester (Stephano and Trinculo) fall in with Caliban and plot with him to murder Prospera and replace her as its ruler.

The conversion of Prospero to a woman allows Helen Mirren to tackle the part and arguably changes the dynamic of the narrative. It also is linked to an unfortunate change to the original narrative; in the play, Shakespeare makes clear that Antonio's usurpation is in part engendered by his brother's neglect of his ducal duties, but the film oversimplifies, settling for making Prospera the pure victim of fraternal malice. This blunts the play's points about the problematics of governance, but to her credit, Taymor does not downplay the play's acknowledgement of the potentially despotic aspects of Prospera's treatment of Caliban and Ariel.

Caliban (played powerfully by Djimon Hounsou) especially poses a problem, both ideologically and performatively. What Caliban should look like is notoriously difficult to determine. He is described as deformed in the play's *dramatis personae*; Trinculo calls him a fish and refers to his limbs as fins, and Prospera tells us he's

the hybrid offspring of a witch and a devil, but performative practice has diverged widely, rendering him as everything from a literal monstrosity to a literal native. Similarly, how sympathetic he should be is open to debate. He tried to rape Miranda in the past and plots Prospera's murder in the present, but he also has legitimate grievances and is less monstrous in some respects than the fratricidal humans in the play; he also is given the play's most beautiful poetry. Taymor's choice here is perhaps the film's most daring element. On the one hand, she strongly associates Caliban with native African tradition, playing up the tendency in post-colonial criticism to see the play as a critique of colonialism. On the other, she also renders him as multiply hybrid: part black and part white (with literal demarcation lines on his flesh), part human and part animal (he has webbed fingers), and part animal and part earth (his skin erupts in places with lava-like encrustations, literalizing the idea of him as creature of the earth). Taymor does not overplay the extent to which Ariel and Caliban represent higher and lower aspects of the human, though she does use the film medium effectively to get the idea across (Ariel first appears in a pool, as a sort of reflection of Prospera; Prospera and Caliban last look at each other across the same pool).

The realism of film, despite Taymor's attempts to use effects (especially in the depiction of Ariel, who is digitally manipulated, as well as made up in various ways) to suggest the unearthly magical world of the island, ultimately works against the privileging of how one conceives of oneself over external reality on which the play depends. Because we must imagine the setting when watching the play, we can't be sure which of the different and mutually exclusive visions of the island reported by the characters is "real," but film prevents that openness. Consequently, Shakespeare's notion of the plasticity of reality, or "magic" as to some extent a function of the perspective a character chooses to adopt (as when Prospera chooses to eschew vengeance in favor of reconciliation) is weakened. Nevertheless, the film offers a creditable version of the story.

The film offers obvious benefits to anyone doing a course on Shakespeare, as its ideology engages with the current post-colonial thinking about the play. As a fantasy, it would also serve well in a course on the fantastic, or even in a course on SF, since it links Prospera's magic, at least visually, with alchemy and early science. The film's meditations on gender and hybridity in relation to the normative and the othered offer much to discuss, as well, as does its association of mag-

ic with any number of forces, from the elemental to the imaginative. *The Tempest* is not entirely successful, but its strengths are many and it would lend itself well to classroom discussion. ■

***The Adjustment Bureau* [film] and *Source Code* [film]**

Ritch Calvin

The Adjustment Bureau. Dir. George Nolfi. Perf. Matt Damon, Emily Blunt. Universal, 2011.

Source Code. Dir. Duncan Jones. Perf. Jake Gyllenhaal, Michelle Monaghan, Vera Farmiga. Vendôme, 2011.

THE FILM *The Adjustment Bureau* is “based” on a short story entitled “Adjustment Team” (1954) by Philip K. Dick. Of course, as has so often been the case with adaptations of Dick’s work, the film bears little resemblance to the story. “Adjustment Team” centers upon a man, Ed Fletcher, who arrives to work in the middle of an “adjustment”—an alteration of people and things in order to affect future events. Fletcher has seen behind the façade of reality. “I saw what was really there,” he tells his wife (278). Because he’s gotten this illicit glimpse, he is taken away to meet the Old Man, who explains why adjustments are necessary: “the natural process must be supplemented—adjusted here and there” (283). The Old Man agrees to not wipe Fletcher’s mind if he agrees to never reveal what he knows. Fletcher agrees and the Adjustment Team intervenes to help him keep the information secret.

The story ultimately hinges upon Dick’s usual obsessions—the nature of reality, the nature of choice, and the nature of control. Something or someone (here, the Old Man) has a Plan, and a team of professionals are working behind the scenes “for your good” (284). The narrative suggests, then, that our actions are not exactly predetermined but, rather, determined by a benevolent entity. At the most basic level, these elements remain in the film, even if the particulars are drastically altered.

Adjustment Bureau tells the story of two star-crossed lovers, David Norris (Damon) and Elise Sellas (Blunt). Morris is an up-and-coming political star in New York state politics. As his senatorial bid collapses, he meets Elise in the bathroom of a hotel, and she inspires him to give a concession speech that becomes the basis of his return to politics. Of course, the meeting was not chance, as it appeared, or even fate. Rather, it was an

adjustment by the Bureau. However, according to the Plan of the Chairman, if David is going to continue his political rise, David and Elise must never meet again. Furthermore, if Elise is to continue her rise as a dancer, she must also forgo her relationship with David. The remainder of the film narrates the twists and turns in their attempts to remain together.

Late in the film, Thompson (Terence Stamp) explains the purpose of the Adjustment Bureau. Norris argues for “free will”; Thompson says they tried allowing humans free will, but the result was the Dark Ages. Since then, “for six hundred years we’ve taught you to control your impulses with reason.” He tells Norris that we do not have free will, but rather only the “appearance of free will.” And yet, David and Elise are determined to remain together, despite the Plan. And with the help of one team member who sympathizes, they create a new Plan.

Unlike *Adjustment Bureau*, *Source Code* was developed from an original idea by writer Ben Ripley. The story centers around a helicopter pilot, Captain Colter Stevens (Gyllenhaal), who was shot down in Afghanistan. He “awakens” on a train, in unfamiliar surroundings. The woman sitting across from him, Christina Warren (Monaghan), acts as if she knows him. She believes that he is Sean Fentress, a history teacher. Eight minutes later, a bomb detonates, and Stevens “awakens” in a capsule. From within the isolated pod, Stevens communicates with his handler, Colleen Goodwin (Farmiga).

Over time, she explains to him that a bomb on a commuter train outside Chicago had exploded, killing everyone. Believing that the bomber was going to detonate a second bomb within Chicago, the team, code name Beleaguered Castle, sends Stevens back in time via the “source code,” a quantum computer program that allows Stevens to inhabit the body of Fentress because the brain retains some element of life force for eight minutes after death.

Each time Stevens goes back into time, he comes closer and closer to finding the identity of the bomber. When he finally does, he gives the information to the team, and the bomber is apprehended before the second bomb goes off. Dr. Rutledge (Jeffrey Wright), the inventor of the technique, calls it another “powerful weapon in the war on terror.”

But, of course, that can’t be all there is to it. As Stevens returns to the train each time, he learns more about Christina, and he wants to save all the people on the train and have a relationship with Christina. Rutledge

explains that his actions only occur within the source code, that they cannot affect the continuum that they all inhabit. According to Rutledge, time is linear and the past cannot be changed. Goodwin also contends that “this is real life here” and that another Goodwin in another continuum who made different choices does not exist. Stevens, much like David Norris, cannot accept that. Through his persistence and the help of a sympathetic team member, Stevens re-writes the present time continuum.

Both films, then, raise similar ideas: what is the nature of time? Can the path of history be altered? Do we have free will? Do events occur by chance or by design? Whose design? A benevolent entity (whether called Old Man, Chairman, scientist, or God)? Can we perceive reality? Are the things around us really as we see them? And, of course, can love be the force that transcends all of these?

It seems significant, given the global economic, political, and religious chaos and uncertainty in the world today (2011), that both films would suggest that it's all going to be OK. We needn't worry because secret—benevolent—forces are at work behind the scenes. These teams—the adjustment teams who are like diligent businessmen, or adjustment bureau members who are like angels, or scientists who are like gods—have everything under control. They intercede on a daily basis and make corrections that will ensure the lessening of militaristic tensions, or ensure the right candidate rises to power, or stop an immanent terrorist attack. And even if, sometimes, the powers-that-be seem overly harsh or just a little bit inhumane, a sympathetic member will intercede.

Nevertheless, both films also argue that the powers-that-be are not always correct, and that valiant warriors, those with the greatest of motives—love—can and will circumvent the designs of those in charge. Despite the explicit statements that we do not have free will and cannot control our own plan, the protagonists of *The Adjustment Bureau* and *Source Code* show us otherwise.

A number of other recent films address the issues surrounding free will, including *Gattaca* (1997), *Donnie Darko* (2001), and *Minority Report* (based on another Dick story) (2002). Other recent films address the nature of and manipulation of reality, including *The Matrix* (1999) and *Inception* (2010).

Both films are engaging, visually and narratively. While both films employ visual effects, they choose to emphasize story over effects. The plot holes might be troubling to some; however, a class focused on free

will, the appearance of will, and the control of it (benevolent or malevolent) can effectively steer away from those thorny issues. Further, both films would fit into any class that addresses the relationship between Us and Them (in whatever form They take). ■

Works Cited

Dick, Philip K. “Adjustment Team.” *The Collected Stories of Philip K. Dick*. Vol. 2. New York: Citadel Twilight, 1995. 269-87. Print

Announcements

Calls for Papers

Compiled by Jason Embry

Call for Papers- Conference

Title: Fantastic Narratives and the Natural World

Deadline: September 30, 2011

Conference Date: 27-28 April 2011

Contact: fantasticnarratives@gmail.com

Topic: We invite contributions that address the intersection between the natural world and the fantastic and particularly welcome cross-cultural and interdisciplinary approaches. The colloquium to be held at Dalhousie University on 27-28 April 2012 and a selection of the contributions to the conference will constitute a special thematic issue of the refereed journal *Belphégor – Popular Literature and Media Culture* (<http://etc.dal.ca/belphégor/>)

Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Nature as a background/ protagonist of the fantastic
- Fantastic, marvelous, uncanny nature
- Allegorical and poetical readings of imaginary landscapes
- Enchanted forests
- Imaginary vegetations, impossible ecosystems
- Strange and supernatural animals
- Metamorphoses and hybrid creatures,
- Fantastic intrusions in scientific discourses that address the natural world

Submissions: Send a 300 word abstract and a one page CV to fantasticnarratives@gmail.com by September 30 2011. The colloquium to be held at Dalhousie University on April 27-28, 2012 and a selection of the contributions to the conference will constitute a special thematic

issue of the refereed journal *Belphégor – Popular Literature and Media Culture* (<http://etc.dal.ca/belphegor/>).

Call for Papers - Article

Title: Classical Traditions in Science Fiction

Deadline: August 1, 2011

Contact: brogers@gettysburg.edu, bstevens@bard.edu

Topic: A rich and relatively under-explored area in modern receptions of classical traditions is science fiction. How does science fiction imagine ancient thinking as contributing to or challenging modern discourses with special regard to those discourses' scientific aspects or interests? How does it constitute the classics in light of master narratives of modern scientific knowledge and practice? By raising these and other questions, this volume will ask how ancient Greco-Roman classics continue to speak – or are received as speaking – to a modern world separated from antiquity by such profound processes as the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution.

Science fictional receptions of classical traditions raise questions not only about science but also about, for example, religion, philosophy, social thought, political theory, and literature. This volume will thus seek to address the complex interaction between (1) science fiction's continuous but mysterious reference to scientific method and to the historical results of that method's applications, and (2) the classical tradition's status – in a mixture of historical fact and fictive imagination – as pre- or non- or differently-scientific. We aim to produce a volume of collected essays that will be scholarly in content yet accessible and engaging to an array of audiences.

We seek submissions on a variety of topics that range from science fiction's arguable point of origin – Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (whose subtitle “The Modern Prometheus” alludes to classical meditations on the use of technology to create and control nature and human life) – to ‘classic’ authors as Jules Verne, H.G. Wells and Frank Herbert, to more recent genres such as space opera and steampunk, as well as direct but complicated retellings of classical tales. The editors will select articles for inclusion on the basis of clarity and cogency of argument, as well as for how the contribution complements a diversified collection on this emerging and exciting area.

Submissions: Submissions must be received by August 1, 2011. We request that potential contributors send an

email expressing their interest by April 1, 2011. We seek submissions approximately 6,000 words in length (12 point font, double-spaced, in .doc or .docx format). We also encourage the appropriate use of visual material. We request that you submit an abstract of 200 - 300 words along with your submission. Submissions and questions may be addressed to the editors: Dr. Benjamin Stevens (bstevens@bard.edu) and Dr. Brett M. Rogers (brogers@gettysburg.edu).

Call for Papers - Conference

Title: Masculinity in Superhero Comic Books and Films

Deadline: September 30, 2011

Conference Date: 15-18 March 2012

Contact: derek.mcgrath@stonybrook.edu

Topic: With comic books becoming more mainstream, thanks to numerous summer blockbuster films focusing on superheroes—2011 bringing audiences Thor, The Green Hornet, Captain America, X-Men: First Class, and Green Lantern—this session welcomes all papers looking at ongoing portrayals of masculinity in works of popular culture that focus on male superheroes. Possible topics include but are not limited to adherence or subversion of masculine archetypes in superhero comic books, graphic novels, films, plays, and other works in popular culture.

Submissions: Submit 250- to 500-word proposals to Derek McGrath (derek.mcgrath@stonybrook.edu). Please include with your abstract the following: Name, affiliation, email address, and A/V requirements if any (\$10 handling fee with registration). Interested participants may submit abstracts to more than one NeMLA session; however, panelists may only present one paper (panel or seminar). Convention participants may present a paper at a panel and also present at a creative session or participate in a roundtable. For more information, visit the NeMLA online at <http://www.nemla.org/convention/2012/cfp.html>.

Call for Papers - Conference

Title: Paranoia and Pain: Embodied in Psychology, Literature, and Bioscience

Deadline: November 15, 2011

Conference Date: 2-4 April 2012

Contact: paranoia.pain@gmail.com

Topic: Paranoia and Pain is an international cross-disciplinary conference, seeking to raise an awareness of

various intersections of literature and science. The conference aims to explore overlapping paradigms of paranoia and pain in psychology, biological sciences, and literary texts/contexts.

Considering the diversity of themes and questions for this conference, individual papers as well as pre-formed panels are invited to examine the following three key areas, proposed by the conference organizers. Other inter- and multi-disciplinary topics, relevant to the conference, will also be considered:

Impressions - Expression of paranoia and pain in literary/scientific contexts; Metaphorical and literal exposition of pain and paranoia; Paranoid texts, painful contexts; The image of paranoia and pain in poetry, prose, and visual arts; Textual culture and the symbolics of pain; Stylistics of pain and paranoia in communication; How does the narrative of pain/paranoia identify with studies of affect?

Intersections - The biology of pain and the emotional interpretation; The biology/literature of anaesthesia; Physical symptoms, emotional translations; Aesthetics

and affective perspectives on pain/paranoia; How have cultural attitudes to the experience of pain and/or paranoia changed over the course of history?

Dissections - Faith and the formation of our ideas on pain/paranoia; Side effects of pain-relief medication; Ethics and the questions of double effect; Is it ever appropriate to withhold pain relief in order to extend the life of a sufferer where analgesics have the side effect of shortening life?

Submissions: Deadline for 250-300 word abstracts for 20-minute papers and a 50-100 word biography for individual presenters (including each presentation within potential panels): November 15, 2011. Deadline for full draft of accepted papers and registrations: February 25, 2012. After the conference a selection of presentations, developed and edited, will be considered for publication. Please send submissions and enquiries to the organising board at paranoia.pain@gmail.com.

SFRA 2011 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Dreams Not Only American: Science Fiction's Transatlantic Transactions
Lublin, Poland July 7-10, 2011

Topic: Science fiction has become a truly global phenomenon, encompassing national and international exchanges and intersections (the status quo addressed by the Eaton Conference in February 2011). Despite its incredible variety, however, science fiction (SF) first emerged as a discrete literary practice in the United States and several European countries. Bearing in mind these origins and the fact that this is only the second SFRA conference to be held outside North America, it seems only natural that the organization's 2011 meeting should focus on all modes and aspects of SF transactions between Europe and America(s).

We invite paper and panel proposals that focus on all forms of science fiction and that address (but are not limited to) the following aspects:

- * Roots – the circumstances of independent emergence of SF in Europe and America
 - * History and politics of Euro-American SF transactions
- * Identity discourses and constructions – does “science fiction” mean the same in the U.S., Great Britain, France, Spain, Germany or Russia?
- * Exchanges – how have European and American science fictions influenced and inspired each other?
- * Differences – are science fictions written in America and in Europe different thematically or formally?
 - * National “schools” in Europe and America – their characteristics, peculiarities and exchanges;
 - *Is Western European SF similar to that from Central and Eastern Europe?
 - *How is Canadian SF different from the texts produced in the U.S.?

Papers and panels on all other topics pertinent to the Science Fiction Research Association's scope of interests are also welcome.

Due Date: Abstracts and proposals should be submitted by March 31st. All abstracts and proposals will be considered on a rolling basis. Please note that all presenters must be SFRA members in good standing.

Contact: Pawel Freluk (pawel.freluk@gmail.com)

Science Fiction Research Association

www.sfra.org

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

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W0515 Melville Library
Stony Brook, NY 11794-3360
rcalvink@ic.sunysb.edu

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