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Summer 2014

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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.

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Non-Stop

Chris Pak

THIS ISSUE FOLLOWS on the heels of the joint SFRA/WisCon conference, a splendid collaboration that still leaves me astonished at the scope and energy of the scholarly and fan engagement with sf in the US. I found it especially exciting to have finally crossed the Atlantic for our annual gathering to meet once again, some of you for the very first time, I having previously attended just one SFRA conference in Poland in 2011. With this year's conference just barely over, I can't help but look forward to SFRA 2015 in New York.

We have a busy *Review* to match the excitement of the conference, featuring this year's award remarks and speeches, candidate statements for the EC elections, and two reports on conferences in the UK: Susan Gray discusses "Stage the Future", a conference on theatre and sf, and I report on "Current Research in Speculative Fictions" (CRSF) 2014. Having attended both in what has become a whirlwind of a summer, I can say that they speak to the vitality of sf scholarship in the UK.

We have two Feature 101 articles: Cătălin Badea-Gheracostea, a Romanian scholar and columnist, explores in "No CNN at the Four Gates of Recent Romanian Imaginary" four works of non-Anglophone sf that engage with contemporary political and social realities. Our very own Lars Schmeink explores the confluence of biology and technology in his "Biopunk 101". We also have the regular series of non-fiction, fiction and media reviews to round out the issue, including a review from our Pilgrim Award winner Joan Gordon.

The summer is not over yet. In August London will host Loncon, the 72nd World SF Convention, while Mark Bould and Rhys Williams' two conferences, "Irradiating the Object" and "SF/F Now" will be held at the University of Warwick. The Science Fiction Foundation will also be hosting their eighth Masterclass in SFF criticism. I'll be attending all these events. Do let us know of any events that you'll be attending via a report for the next issue of the *Review*. Until then, enjoy these pages.

Meanwhile, at the EC HQ . . .

Pawel Frelik

BY THE TIME you're reading this, we're all packing to go to Madison for the joint SFRA/WisCon conference. Or we are in Madison. Or we have just come back from Madison after a highly successful conference. In any case, things have been happening in SFRA.

First of all, but really once again, I would like to welcome the new crew of *SFRA Review* editors: Chris Pak, who has taken over as the main Editor; Dominick Grace, who is now Nonfiction Editor; and Kevin Pinkham, who is helping Dominick as Assistant Nonfiction Editor. After Doug and Michael, they have big shoes to fill, but I have no doubt that they will not only succeed but also take the *Review* in new and exciting directions. Chris will be sending out regular calls for contributions, but allow me to take this opportunity and encourage all members to be pro-active, too. If you have suggestions for new columns or sections, contact Chris. If you have a one-off text that you think would be of interest to other members, contact Chris. If you have any ideas that would fit the format (and do remember that *SFRA Review* is now fully electronic, so there are very few limitations on what can be done), contact Chris. And for those media reviews that haven't always been coming, contact Ritch.

In other news, we have finally commissioned the graphic redesign of the SFRA website. Although it was long overdue, it was not easy to find someone who would understand what we are about as an organization AND would not bankrupt us. We believe the result will be satisfying for everyone. The new look is tentatively scheduled to be unveiled by the time we meet in Madison for the joint SFRA/WisCon event in late May. We will also restructure and dramatically extend the selection of resources available on the website.

Also in the realm of the organization's public presence, by the end of May we will have unveiled the new look of SFRA's website, which has been completely redesigned by Lukasz Fedorowicz. The overhaul was also accompanied by some restructuring of information, including such new sections as the Conference Archive, where we want to maintain our organizational memory. Several

annual meetings are already covered, but if you ever ran a conference – particularly more than a decade or so ago – and still have the program booklet, or a conference badge, poster, or any other event-related material (dare we say, also photographs?), do contact us. We will scan them and return the originals. Given that the annual conference is one event that brings so many members together, it would be difficult to overstate the importance and centrality of remembering previous meetings to the organization’s identity and mission. So rummage through your archives and get back to us. We know you have that stuff somewhere!

Last but not least, follow our Twitter feed at [@sfranews](#) and visit our [Facebook](#) page, both of which are now linked from the new website. We would really like to move some of the interactions that have been going on on the listserv to these new media. While the traditional email format has its advantages, easier archiving among them, Twitter and Facebook offer increased immediacy and clarity that could be beneficial to some interactions or types of news. Do stop by and comment or start a discussion.

In entirely other news, the 2015 conference will be hosted by Ritch Calvin on Long Island. Originally, we wanted to go abroad, to Brazil, but the gauged interest was too low to warrant holding a conference with few members. Still, the current EC – and, hopefully, the future ones, too – is still deeply committed to the internationalization of the organization, so that plan has been put on hold, rather than cancelled. Before the decade is over, we should definitely try to go outside North America again. Over and out.

VICE-PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

WisCon/SFRA 2014

Amy J. Ransom

THIS YEAR’S SFRA conference was held in conjunction with WisCon on Memorial Day weekend. It was a great success and a unique experience for many of us as WisCon “First Timers.” Madison is a lovely, conference friendly city with lots of downtown restaurants and a Saturday a.m. farmer’s market to enjoy! We kicked it off with a packed-house reading at the “A Room of One’s Own” bookstore by SFRA Guest Author Nisi

Shawl and closed with an interpretation of Jonathan Glazer’s film *Under the Skin* by Guest Scholar Sherryl Vint. In between, participants fully explored the theme of “Feminism, Fans, and the Future: Traveling the Shifting Worlds of Writers, Readers, Gender, and Race in SF.” Among other topics, I heard papers on early feminist utopias, on the work of WisCon’s guests Eleanor Arnason and N. K. Jemisin, but I think the “most papers on an individual author” award goes to Octavia Butler this year. Speaking of awards, we honored new Pilgrim Joan Gordon, new Pioneer Jaak Tomberg, and Lisa Yaszek took home two awards: Mary K. Bray and Thomas D. Clareson. The student essay award went to Michael Jarvis, studying at UC-Riverside. A number of us benefited from the special elements that WisCon involved: I attended an amazing reading by GoH Hiromo Goto and visited the “Dealers Room”; braver souls attended SFRA paper sessions after visiting the face-painting booth! Photos will be up on Facebook and the website soon and we encourage you to post your own photos from various events.

At the Business Meeting, I reported that—with the help of our publicist Emily Connelly—I plan to act on several initiatives for recruitment and publicity this summer. Thanks in part to Keren Omry’s excellent record keeping for the Pioneer Award, I’ll begin a letter writing campaign to inform scholars in the field publishing on SF who may still not know about it. In addition, a spreadsheet of outlets to publicize the organization and the conference will be developed, (including journals, list-serves and so on) so that calls and so on can be sent out quickly and efficiently to the largest number of constituents possible. Finally, since we need to cultivate the next generation of SFRAers, I’ll be compiling a list of graduate and undergraduate programs that offer courses in SF literature and media, fan studies, etc. I NEED YOUR HELP for this extensive project and would appreciate any tips and leads to newsletters you edit, courses and programs you teach, and so on. Please contact me with such tips at: ransolaj@cmich.edu.

Have a great summer, but start thinking about the topic for your paper for next year’s conference to be held in Stony Brook, NY!!

Candidates for the 2015-2016 SFRA Executive Committee

Ritch Calvin

Below please find the eight statements from the respective candidates for SFRA officers. Please read and consider the statements, and cast your vote.

I would like to, first, offer my appreciation to these eight individuals for their willingness to run (or stand) for office. The SFRA (like any volunteer organization) depends entirely upon their efforts, and I hope you will all acknowledge their participation and effort.

In addition, I would like to note that the current EC is in the process of reviewing and revising the SFRA by-laws (including those regarding elections), which, at this moment in time, seem fairly antiquated. We now have all kinds of sfnal technologies at our disposal; here's hoping that we can find a way to make use of them.

Presidential Candidates

Craig Jacobsen

Professional associations like SFRA exist to facilitate the work of their members, and to stay relevant and vibrant they must continually adapt to the changing ways in which that work is produced, distributed, and consumed. That's the central mission of the SFRA, and every part of the association (the website, the *Review*, the conference, etc.) should work to keep the best of what helps members and to develop new strategies. I've served two terms as *SFRA Review* co-editor, and both times we re-examined the publication, kept what members said they liked, and added new features, like the "Approaching..." features that invited a group of scholars to write about their analysis and teaching of a particular text, the "One Class" features that presented not just what was taught in a course, but its context and the rationale for its construction, and the "101" features—brief introductions/overviews of portions of our increasingly complex (and potentially fractured) field. As an *SFRA Review* co-editor and organizer of the 2010 conference, I've worked with several groups of SFRA officers, so though I've never held elected office in the association, I know well how it operates. If elected, I'd use my term as president to ask the membership what they want and need most

from SFRA, and work with the officers and interested members to keep the association robust and relevant.

Amy Ransom

During the past year and a half I have been learning much about the running of SFRA from President Pawel Freluk and Immediate Past President Ritch Calvin. One of their on-going projects has been to develop institutional memory that is held electronically and available to access for members and future officers and committee chairs. Because of my own commitment to that goal, which it feels like we have just begun, I have agreed to run for the office of president to help carry on that work. My platform, then, will be to move forward with the revisions of the constitution that the current EC will bring forward later this year, to continue to develop the quantity and quality of information we have on the web-site and in drop-box accounts for officers, committee chairs and so on, to support initiatives for increasing our on-line presence through the website and social media, and membership initiatives to continue growing our base of support across generations, across national borders, and across the various media and fields of study now linked to SF as it becomes an increasingly present paradigm in contemporary society.

Vice-Presidential Candidates

Keren Omry

I am both excited and honoured to have been nominated for the position of Vice President of SFRA. I have been a member of the organization since 2010, a student and scholar of science fiction since 2000, and a reader of SF...well, let's just say I've long been devoted to the field! Should I be elected I hope to turn my dedication to practical use, working closely with the chosen EC to further streamline and standardize the SFRA processes from within, and to increase the visibility, improve the accessibility, and enhance the attractiveness of the organization to more and more scholars and students, from without.

Since my first SFRA in Phoenix, in 2010, through the numerous conferences, list serve exchanges, and personal communications, I have been repeatedly struck by the collegiality, intellectual generosity, and professional dedication of the SFRA community. I feel we are in a unique position to capture the attentions and efforts of the fast-expanding global community of SF Studies scholars and I am committed to the success of this task.

I am an Assistant Professor of American Literature at

the University of Haifa, in Israel, and for the past decade have been dedicated to promoting the study of SF at this and other universities in the country. In this capacity, I have taught introductory and advanced courses, given talks and lectures, advised graduate and post-graduate students, and served on planning committees for a variety of popular and academic conferences, in line with growing local interest in an academic landscape still only sparsely populated by science fiction scholars. As we know, the field of SF has long since moved out of any US-centred perspective it may once have been tied to. I believe that my position as a non-US scholar can further serve to extend both the scope and the structure of the SFRA vision.

Among other factors, my understanding of this vision has been informed by my three-year run as committee member and then chair of the Pioneer Awards, which I have now completed. The nature of this somewhat daunting and highly rewarding task has granted me a rare chance to engage rigorously and comprehensively with the most cutting-edge SF scholarship, a perspective which I believe will contribute directly to my ability to perform the duties of the Association's VP.

In addition to serving as a judge on the committee, I used the opportunity in my role as chair this past year to begin standardizing, streamlining, and systematizing the award-committee tasks. With input from the other committee-members, I built a database, devised a worksheet and template, and helped determine rules and criteria for regularizing what can otherwise turn into a somewhat Sisyphean and shambolic exercise.

Through these and similar activities in the past years, I have had the pleasure and the privilege of working with a fair few members of the SFRA community, making genuine friendships, valuable colleagues, widening research interests, deepening work relations, and opening numerous opportunities for further development both personal and professional and for this I am warmly thankful. I believe, moreover, that these accomplishments have well-prepared me for successfully meeting the challenges and commitments as Vice President of SFRA and thank you in advance for considering my candidacy.

Alfredo Suppia

I am Alfredo Suppia, a professor of Film Studies in the Film Department at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp), Brazil. As a member of SFRA since 2007, I served the association in the SFRA's Student Paper Award committee for three years (2010-2012), made

many friends and found precious academic collaborators amidst the SFRA community. A substantial part of my academic research has been dedicated to the study of world science fiction cinema (history and theory), with an emphasis on a more inclusive approach to Latin-American, non-Western and independent filmmaking.

I am extremely honored to be nominated as a vice presidential candidate. If I am elected as VP, I intend to work intensely to promote SFRA around the globe, focusing on the recruitment of new members from all over the world. In order to do so, I would like to help expand SFRA advertising and presence in the worldwide academic and non-academic SF communities. I would also be glad to constantly improve SFRA's website by expanding and perfecting its functionalities with the help of technical collaborators. In this scope, I see both SFRA's website and the *SFRA Review* as important flags for attracting new members and collaborators. Therefore, I deem valuable the inclusion of the *SFRA Review* in new electronic databases and its publicity amidst new academic and SF communities, particularly in Latin America and the Southern hemisphere. And naturally, I would like to hear from SFRA members about your individual or collective demands, suggestions and projects, optimizing communication between the executive committee and the SFRA membership.

In summary, as a Latin-American member of SFRA's executive committee, I would work for the strengthening of SFRA's north-south integration, promoting SFRA worldwide.

I thank you all for considering my nomination. If you wish for further clarification of the above, or if you have any other questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Secretarial Candidates

Susan A. George

When Ritch put the call out on the SFRA listserv regarding candidates for the Executive Committee (EC) elections, I was quick to respond. I attended my first SFRA/Eaton conference in 1997 on the Queen Mary and since then I tried to attend at least every other year. I volunteered to work the conference registration table in Atlanta and served as an author liaison. I was a member of the Mary Kay Bray Award committee for three years and previously served as secretary.

As some of you may know, I ran and was elected to serve as Treasurer. However, because of daunting personal and professional obligations, I stepped down after

my first year and, with the EC's permission, asked Steve Berman to take over for me and he graciously agreed. Now that my schedule is lighter, I would like to continue my serve to the organization.

If elected I promise SFRA members three things, I will:

1.) complete my term and carry out the duties of the office efficiently and on a timely basis,

2.) work with the rest of the EC to streamline and improve the membership and subscription renewal process,

3.) work with the rest of the EC to make sure the organization continues to grow, is open to new areas in SF scholarship, and provides a place for new and accomplished scholars and authors to exchange ideas.

Although I certainly understand any trepidation the members may have regarding voting me into office after I stepped down as Treasurer, I would truly appreciate your vote and a chance to continue my service to this organization.

Thank you for your time.

Shawn Malley

I am writing to announce my candidacy for the position of Secretary in the upcoming SFRA executive committee elections. For those of you who don't know me, I am a full professor in the English Department at Bishop's University in Sherbrooke, Quebec, where I teach a range of courses including Cultural Studies, Postcolonial Literature, Literary Theory, Creative Writing, and Science Fiction Film and Literature.

I have been a member of the SFRA for four years, and my research interests and publications have been fully committed to the field of sf studies in that time. My particular interest is representations of archaeology—or, rather, archaeology as a mode of representation—in sf film and television. This work evolved out of my monograph *From Archaeology to Spectacle in Victorian Britain: The Case of Assyria, 1845-54* (Ashgate, 2012), which concludes with a case study of contemporary sf film representations of Mesopotamian archaeology and the military occupation during the recent Gulf War.

I am currently writing a monograph under the title "Excavating the Future: Archaeology and Geopolitics in Contemporary Science Fiction Film and Television," a proposal for which is under review at Liverpool University Press. The project is being funded by the Social Sciences Humanities and Research Council of Canada. Parts of this study have appeared in *Science Fiction Film and Television, Genre: Forms of Discourse and Culture,*

and *International Journal of Baudrillard Studies*. I invite you to visit my academic profile for further information: <http://www.ubishops.ca/academic-programs/humanities/english/faculty.html>.

Aside from my academic interests in sf, my desire to serve on the SFRA executive has been perked by my extremely positive experiences at the annual conferences. I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting so many of you, listening to and engaging with your ideas and projects, and sharing in the pride and care you all have for the discipline and its rich critical and creative history. I am also heartened by the experimental sensibility of the organization, the willingness to search for new modes of tapping into the vast universe of sf studies. I always come away from the conference inspired by the collective energy and good will of all the participants.

In terms of management I have at this stage in my career been chair of many important hiring and Senate committees, served as departmental chair, am coordinator of the Cultural and Media Studies and Creative Writing programs, and am currently occupying the position of University Ombudsperson.

I thank you all for considering my credentials, and look forward to continuing what I trust will be a long and prosperous relationship. If you need any clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Candidates for Treasurer

Steve Berman

Ever since I was asked to be Treasurer of SFRA in April 2013, I have found the position both time-consuming and challenging. However, I have the time and I enjoy meeting the challenge, so once again, I would be very happy to serve as Treasurer of the SFRA for 2015-2017 term of office.

I have been a member of the SFRA since 2006. I have delivered several papers over the past few years, and I have published several media reviews in the *SFRA Review*. I have not published any articles in journals, but I do keep up with scholarship and incorporate it into the Science Fiction and Fantasy course which I developed for my college 12 years ago.

At present, I am a full-time instructor at Oakland Community College (Auburn Hills, Michigan) where I served as Department Chair (1992-2000) and where I regularly incorporate science fiction into my composition, film, art, and literature courses (both online and face-to-face). I also have a strong interest of late in science fiction and fantasy poetry.

Two years ago, I was one of the hosts of the 2012 SFRA conference in Detroit. My role as conference host was to communicate with the conference membership (over 600 emails from July 2011 through June 2012), make event arrangements with the hotel event manager, invite and make arrangements for the featured guests, and handle all the conference financial transactions, which included receiving payments from the guests, paying the hotel bills, and providing refunds to guests who had to cancel. I am happy to say that the conference was a resounding success. We even managed to return some of the seed money to SFRA at the end of the conference.

As Treasurer of the SFRA, I will continue to keep a close watch on the organization's finances, pay the bills, manage journal subscriptions, and work with the Executive Committee to find ways to cut excessive costs.

Thank you for considering my candidacy as Treasurer of the SFRA.

If elected, it will be my pleasure to serve.

Ariel Wetzel

I am Ariel Wetzel, a brand-new English PhD out of University of Washington, and I have accepted nomination for treasurer. I taught several courses on SF as a graduate student, and am looking forward to teaching a first-year seminar on SF at Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle this September. I joined SFRA as a graduate student in 2008, and had the pleasure of meeting many of you at the 2008 and 2014 conferences. As a teacher and scholar of SF, I continually draw on the past research produced by SFRA members and am immensely grateful for the work they have done in legitimizing the academic treatment of SF. I would like to give back to the organization by serving as treasurer. Though I have not served as a professional organization's treasurer before, I anticipate that many of my skills as a teacher will translate to treasury work: clear communication skills, accountability to those I serve, and managing numbers on Excel.

Thank you for considering my candidacy.

Stage the Future

Susan Gray

Keynote speakers: Dr Jen Gunnels and Dr Nick Lowe.
 Co-organisers: Susan Gray and Christos Callow Jr.
 Plenary panel: Prof. Isabella Elferen, Tom Hunter, Dr Nick Lowe, Dr Jen Gunnels. Chair - Prof. Adam Roberts.

THE CONFERENCE, which took place on the 26th and 27th April, was created not only to discuss the position of Science Fiction in Theatre, but also to create links internationally to practitioners of the subject (whether it is in an academic or creative context, or both) to collaborate and network for some exciting future projects. The presence of this form can be seen as a rather precarious one. It has a long, extensive history but has had relatively little critical dialogue. There have been many Science Fiction plays written, but many have not been produced. Ralph Willingham had catalogued over 321 Science Fiction plays in his 1994 book *Science Fiction and the Theatre*, although naming one of them would be arguably harder than naming a film or television series.

However, this is starting to change. SF theatre is becoming more prominent and the conference was the extra push to add to this creative momentum. Since Theatre relies on human presence and involvement (as do the live arts in general, of course), the conference speaks to audiences, creators and academics on a global scale. Productions and collaborations are discussed and shared from all over the world, so that performances, ideas and collectives which we would otherwise never hear of are brought to our attention. Science Fiction Theatre is here to stay—and we are all invited to the party. In this way, we were debating and discussing our angles on a topic that has been critically and creatively ignored, that is, relative to the written word of the SF novel and the numerous film and TV offerings, but looking forward to the future and seeing where SF Theatre fits in.

For this reason, we structured the days according to Past, Present and Future. The first day focused on what had been written and staged in SF Theatre, from Dr. Nick Lowe's keynote speech on "The colonisation of space", outlining the numerous theatre productions that have already taken place, such as Ken Campbell and Chris Langham's Science Fiction Theatre of Liverpool and

such examples as Neil Oram's play cycle *The Warp* and the adaptation of *Illuminatus!* as well as Ray Bradbury's contributions to the stage, which have been catalogued by Ralph Willingham in *Science Fiction and the Theatre*. Many of us will remember the jukebox musical *Return to the Forbidden Planet* based on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, which was under the critical lens of Monica Cross. Dr Claire Kenward focused on dramatic presentations of the Moon from c.1590 to 1902, using such examples as Offenbach's dramatization of Jules Verne's *De la Terre à la Lune* to Georges Méliès' *Voyage dans la Lune*. Plays such as Noel Coward's *Peace in our Time*, Robert Nichols' and Maurice Browne's *Wings over Europe*, which were discussed by Glyn Morgan and Dr Mariano Martín Rodríguez respectively as well as *Return to the Forbidden Planet*. Alan Ayckbourn's *Henceforward* and *Comic Potential* examined by Dr Martin Mc Grath and Joanna Laurens' reworking of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Poor Beck, discussed by Dr Stephe Harrop, also made an appearance as examples and case studies for papers.

For the present day, practitioners such as Whole Hog Theatre company showcased their adaptation work of the anime *Princess Mononoke*, a perfect example of how the "impossible" could be made possible through clever staging. Brittany Reid followed on through the examination of the numerous *Frankenstein* adaptations, while Kelley Holley examined the portability of such characters and tropes as embodied histories—how, as we approach the stage, we cannot escape a chain of memories that each audience member will bring to the table. Therefore SF theatre can help us to examine what we know and provides new questions for us to answer and stretch our imaginations, using our past memories to create future ones. We have the questioning of "impossible language" and the inability to escape our current lexicon in order to create an alien language as a part of alternate reality— as introduced by Jo L Walton. We also had the SF twist on *Hedda Gabler*, *Heddatron*, examined by Dr Louise LePage. China Mieville's *Deep State*, a mixed media presentation that housed film and live performance was put under the critical lens of the Theatre of the Oppressed, handled skillfully by Christina Scholz.

We also had performances of Bob Moyer's *Public Service Robots*—a homage to Čapek's *RUR*, a performance of *In Between Lives* (written by Natalie Katsou, performed by Katerina Watson), *Been On the Job Too Long* (written by James Charlton, performed by Tom Hayes) as well as discussing performances of Tajinder Singh Hayer's *North Country*, Dr. Boyd Branch's *The Theatre of Science*, Superbolt Theatre's *The Uncanny Valley* and Susan

Gray's *Terra Firma* and Bella Ponyton's Theatre portfolio, examined by John Hudson and The Sex with Robots Festival, was discussed by Dr. Carrie J Cole. As a part of the future debate, we also had a proposal for a new Replicant Theatre, as proposed by Arthur C Clarke award director Tom Hunter.

The next day focused on a series of dialogues about Science Fiction Theatre's future, headed by Dr. Jen Gunnels. Her keynote speech explained the next step of this medium that is, to quote from Mac Rogers, "already a tradition". She mentions that to deal with this rupture is to create connections and networks all over the world, so that practitioners and academics from all around the world would be aware of what was going on so that works could be collaborated on, reviewed and supported. This passed over into the plenary discussion, with closing remarks to the ever blossoming potential of the staging of Science Fiction. We agreed that SF Theatre should play to the strengths of stage and live performance - and that it will fail when trying to emulate the forms of Film and Television.

We want to thank everyone for their time, support and fascinating ideas - to all participants and audience members. We particularly want to thank Dr Nick Lowe and Dr Jen Gunnels for their inspiring keynotes, as well as Adam Roberts for all round support.

Current Research in Speculative Fictions (CRSF) 2014

Chris Pak

ON THE 20TH JUNE 2014, the fourth annual CRSF conference took place at Gateway Centre in Liverpool. Fifty-four attendees from the UK, Finland, Germany, Ireland, the USA and Venezuela gathered for thirty-four papers that, all told, give a sense of some of the current postgraduate and early career research being conducted in science fiction, fantasy, gothic horror and other liminal forms of speculative fiction. I co-founded CRSF with the chair of the committee, Glyn Morgan, in 2011, and reported on CRSF 2012 in the *SFRA Review* 301. This year, our committee included co-organisers Leimar Garcia-Siino and Molly Cobb, whose stellar efforts organising the event this year paid off with another exciting CRSF. The purpose of the conference is to give

postgraduates and early career researchers working in the various fields of speculative fiction a space to showcase some of their research to their peers and to give attendees an opportunity to gain some vital conferencing experience. It also offers a valuable opportunity to knit together a community of scholars and to highlight the various publications that they could contribute to.

We were absolutely delighted to welcome this year's keynote speakers, Mark Bould and Roger Luckhurst. In previous years CRSF keynotes included Adam Roberts and Andy Sawyer (2011), Fred Botting and David Seed (2012), and Pat Cadigan and Peter Wright (2013). Both Bould and Luckhurst did much to engage our delegates and speakers throughout the day, and delivered refreshing and penetrating keynote talks. Bould opened the day with his survey of Blaxploitation film, in which he explored with much humour (and some great clips and soundtracks from *Shaft* and other films) some of the science fictional intersections in such film in his talk "It Ain't No Jive, Trying to Stay Alive": Insurgency and Epidermality in Blaxploitation SF'. Drawing on Marxist approaches and the work of Franz Fanon, W.E.B. Du Bois and others, Bould explained the surprising frequency of science fictional interpenetrations into Blaxploitation film as a way to explore the relationship between violence and the epidermalization of inferiority - a term drawn from Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*. Luckhurst's simply titled 'Corridor Horror' delved into Rudyard Kipling's lesser known 1890s story "At the End of the Passage," which, being set in India, takes place in a house with no corridors. After surveying the appearance of corridors in contemporary horror films such as *The Shining* and elaborating on what he describes as 'The Corridic Episteme', Luckhurst notes that the word 'verandah' was borrowed from the Hindi *varandā* or the Bengali *bārāndā* to describe an 'external corridor' that wraps around the outside of the Indian colonial bungalow. Corridors become labyrinths, they feature as 'a distinctly modern space for haunting' and they metaphorize the operation of metaphor itself, as a space of transfer from one room to the next.

The rest of the papers were, as with previous years, exciting, lively and intelligent, from faces familiar from past CRSF events and from attendees new to the conference. There were thirteen panels in just over three streams running throughout the day, including panels on 'Dystopia', 'Apocalyptic Visions', 'Cityscapes', 'Post-humanism', 'Video Games', 'Comics and Manga', 'Performance', 'Female Roles', 'Undead Narratives', 'Magic Stories', 'Metaphysics and the Occult' and 'Building

Fantasy'. In the 'Cityscapes' panel, Yvonne Cornejo and Rowan Lozada-Aguilera presented papers on Buenos Aires and Caracas respectively, in their papers 'Memories of the Future: Trauma and the City in Spinner's *La Sonámbula*' and 'The Caraquenian Utopia: Nostalgia vs. Optimism in Blanca Strepponi's Short Story "Caracas, 2050"'. Cornejo discussed how Argentina operates as both a physical and a mental 'mindscape' that brings together the past and the future in the space of the present. The disappearance of people in the city's suburbs and neighbourhoods correlate with a cultural amnesia, and she suggests that the film portrays a new history of the city being written upon its spaces like a palimpsest. Lozada-Aguilera explores the cycles of demolition and rebuilding in Caracas that have completely transformed the shape of the cityscape, and points toward a tension between a dictatorial history and a relentless optimism that looks toward a more prosperous future for the city. This panel concluded with Rose Harris-Birtill's "A Row of Screaming Russian Dolls": Escaping the Panopticon in David Mitchell's *number9dream*'. She explores the invention by Jeremy Bentham of the panopticon in the 18th century and deploys a Foucauldian reading of the structure to explore how Mitchell combines this device with the multi-level mirroring at smaller scales suggested by the motif of the Russian doll. This structuring device allows Mitchell to explore the layers the overlay power and agency.

In the 'Metaphysics and the Occult' panel, Francis Gene-Rowe explored Philip K. Dick's metaphysics in his excellent paper 'Countering "Dead, Causal Reality": The Fusion of Material and Metaphysical Oppression in Philip Dick's Late Work'. Exploring in some detail the motif of the veil as a symbol for the interrelationship between the phenomenal and noumenal (my term), Gene-Rowe explores the metaphysical system that Dick constructs through the accelerations of normalcy and the layering of experience that he portrays. Aren Roukema in his paper 'The Divine-Centred Magus: Charles Williams on Magic' explores the work of an oft overlooked writer, Christian and active practitioner of magic. Roukema explores Williams' approach to magic and the magical symbolism that feeds into his literary work. Drawing a distinction between magic that is aligned with the spiritual world, and selfish magic aligned only with the magician's own desire, Roukema's was a fascinating discussion of a complex and—from our contemporary vantage, at least—apparently contradictory author. Rounding off this panel was KJ Swanson's 'Sinners, Saints, and Angels on Fire: The Remarkably Religious Soundtrack of

The Hunger Games' Secular Dystopia'. I was particularly pleased to see some exploration of the musical dimension of speculative film, though Swanson's approach focused particular attention on the frequency and character of primarily Christian references in the lyrics of *The Hunger Games*' popular soundtrack. Her contrast between this secular film with the ostensibly religiously themed *Twilight* sequence, which includes significantly less references than the former, made a convincing case for the secularism of *The Hunger Games* providing a second remove for playing with sacred themes.

The last panel of the day that I was able to attend was the 'Building Fantasy' panel. Sandra Mänty, in 'Good Against Bad: Animal Helpers and Animal Adversaries in Tolkein's Stories,' explored the various animals, both "natural" and modified, that appear in *The Lord of the Rings*. Mänty distinguished between those creatures that appear little changed from those familiar to the reader's world, those that were contorted through magic into animal shapes, and those spirits who take on animal shapes but who are not animals at all. Arthur Newman presented a compelling paper that explored the cosmology and mythos of *Corum* in 'Far From the Mabden Crowd: Michael Moorcock's Alternative Creations.' Newman argues that the Eternal Champion series, and the exemplary set of texts known by their protagonist Corum, is structured around what Robert Graves called 'the single poetic theme'. Through Moorcock's use of satire and ostentation, Newman points to a meta-commentary that is being constructed throughout the narrative. Myth and proto-myth are personified in a multitude of ways, for example, one of which is the act of Gods replacing other Gods as a representation of myth superseding myth. The last paper of the panel, Chuckie Patel's 'Perfect Epic Empires: Examining Chaotic Cycles of Governmental Systems in Sanderson's *Mistborn*', brought some of aspects of chaos theory to bear on the structure of time and moral action in fantasy. Patel analyses time's arrow and cyclical time as connected to a static equilibrium between good and evil (or the Law and Chaos of Moorcock's work, with Newman's previous paper in mind) and that of revolutionary change.

CRSF 2014 ended with a traditional group photo, wine reception, a meal at a local restaurant, and a chance to continue the discussions that we had been having throughout the day. The breadth and quality of new research being conducted by postgraduates and early career researchers promises an exciting expansion of the study of speculative fiction. I would like to thank Mark Bould and Roger Luckhurst for their time and generous

engagement with our speakers' papers, and for presenting their current research in two excellent keynote talks. Thanks, too, to Andy Sawyer (who also attended the conference and provided us with insights in the form of questions, comments, and discussion) and David Seed for their continuing support of CRSF, and to the University of Liverpool's School of the Arts for sponsoring the conference with a grant. Finally, thanks must also go to all of the attendees for once again bringing together their scholarship to make CRSF the valuable and rewarding experience that it is. Glyn Morgan has collected tweets about the conference posted by attendees throughout the day in a [storify thread](#), and more information about the conference can be found on the [CRSF blog](#).

TREASURER'S REPORT

Steven Berman

ALTHOUGH THERE WILL BE a drop in membership numbers from 2013 to 2014, SFRA's finances are still quite healthy. There were 353 members of the SFRA for 2013 probably due to the high number of students who signed up for and presented at the SFRA/Eaton conference in April 2013.

So far, for 2014, there 247 members (8 of which are joint members); however, there should be from 25-50 more members signed up by the end of the year. In 2013, 28 new and renewing members signed up after the April 2013 conference.

SFRA Membership for 2013 and 2014

	2013	2014
Individual US	172	133
Individual Canada	8	7
Student Canada	5	5
Individual Overseas	53	39
Student USA	59	19
International Students	14	9
Institutions	12	9
Pilgrim Winners	24	22
Emeritus	6	4
	353	247

In the future, we should aim at recruiting more institutions.

Journal Payments

To *Science Fiction Studies*: \$7255 for 2013; \$6190 (through June 2014).

To *Extrapolation* and *SFFTV*: \$7764 for 2013; not yet billed for 2014: estimate \$6000.

To *Foundation*: \$1072 for 2013; \$977 (through June 2014).

To *Femspec*: \$323 for 2013; \$160 (through June 2014).

To *Locus*: \$544 for 2013; \$679 (through June 2014).

SFRA Review: \$420 to LuLu online press for 2013; \$230 (through June 2014).

Various Grants for 2014

Seed Money for 2013: \$1000 (returned to SFRA by Eaton Conference); 2014 SFRA conference \$1000.00.

Travel Grants 2013: \$600.

Travel Grants 2014: \$1300.

Income

Royalties \$624 for 2013; \$209 (through June 2014).

Donations

Scholar Fund: \$385.00

Expenditures

In accordance with the by-laws, travel and hotel room money was given to conference honorees:

2013: \$1750; 2014: \$2089

PO Box and Postage: \$532 for 2013; \$143 (through June 2014)

Award Plaques: 2013 and 2014: \$220

Small Orange annual website fee: \$43 for 2013; \$43 for 2104

Network Solutions: Five year renewal for domain name—sfra.org: \$211

In-design for SFRA Review: \$327 for 2014

SFRA 2014 website upgrade: \$3060.00 includes \$60 wire transfer fee

Total Expenditures for 2013: \$2435

Total Expenditures for 2014: \$5983

Current Balances

Checking Account: \$51,944.15

Savings Account: \$20,423.71

Paypal: \$1283.35

TOTAL: \$73,651.21

Important Notes:

We noticed that several people did not receive their subscription to *Extrapolation* for 2013. If any member did not receive his or her copies of *Extrapolation* (either print or E-only), please let me know and I will arrange for you to receive your copies. There should still be some print copies left. Please contact me a sdberman1121@gmail.com.

Lastly, to maintain our non-profit status through the state of Ohio, we need the name and address of a member who actually lives in Ohio. If anyone from Ohio is willing to volunteer his or her name and address, it will be very helpful. If we move non-profit status to another state, it means dissolving the organization and then re-organizing it. Please contact me at sdberman1121@gmail.com.

Executive Committee Business Meeting Minutes [May 22nd and 24th, 2014]

Jenni Halpin

In attendance: Pawel Frelik, Amy Ransom, Steve Berman, Ritch Calvin, and Jenni Halpin. Also in attendance for relevant portions of the meeting: Emily Connelly (re: social media), Chris Pak (re: *SFRA Review*); Michael Levy (re: 2014 conference).

1. SFRA Annual Meetings

- a. 2014: Madison (WI, with WisCon). Michael Levy with Rebecca Holden and Victor Raymond. We have approximately 90 persons registered, with a good number of papers on gender and fan studies. Partnering with WisCon has allowed some benefits of working with a longstanding association but also challenges in that they do speak their own language and translation has sometimes been difficult.
- b. 2015: Stony Brook (NY). Ritch Calvin. Plans are coming into place, including arrangements with the hotel on campus for a \$129 rate and an option for lodging in a dorm at a lower cost (intended for graduate students but available to anybody). The guests of honor are being confirmed, including filmmaker M. Asli Dukan and writer Vandana Singh. Ritch is also looking into arranging tours at nearby Brookhaven and Cold Spring Harbor labs. The CFP is drafted and the dates will be June 25-28, 2015.
- c. 2016: Seneca College, Toronto (ON). Graham Murphy. Looking at early July for dates. Lars Schmeink has also suggested the possibility of meeting in Germany.
- d. 2017: Liverpool or Manchester (UK). Chris Pak.
- e. 2018. It might be about time to hold the conference in the West or Southwest again.

2. Membership

- a. We have over 230 members at this time.
- b. We'd like to continue to adjust (and improve) processes around renewal of membership.

3. Financial Matters

- a. Steve is about to make the final payment for the website revisions.

- b. As of tax-time, we had \$10,000 more this year than last year.
- c. We are renewing our .org status to continue as tax exempt in the state of Ohio.
- d. Domain hosting needs to be renewed every five years (this is separate from the annual IP hosting renewal); that renewal should be noted in a master calendar so that it doesn't take us by surprise again.

4. Officers

- a. It's time to begin seeking candidates for 2015-2016 terms. We need at least two candidates to stand for each office. Candidate statements will be published in the Review.
- b. The bylaws could stand further revision; the EC will draft changes and make the new version available for comment in August or September, with the intention of circulating a final draft for review 60 days before the 2015 conference, at which a vote would be held.
- c. The next meeting of the EC will be held via Skype in August.

5. Organizational Memory

- a. The current dropbox for the SFRA is a folder in Pawel's account; Pawel will transition that to a stand-alone folder linked to an SFRA e-mail account.
- b. We are working on getting the *Review* indexed and will be looking into linking to UCF's digital archive of old issues.
- c. Lengthening officers' terms would also increase institutional memory; that will be included in the bylaws revisions.

6. Social Media

- a. Amy and Emily are particularly focused on recruiting younger scholars, including identifying graduate programs (not just English) hospitable to SF and media studies.
- b. They are also building a table of places to send publicity, CFPs, and membership drives (such as other organizations' listservs).
- c. To make our Facebook account more visible, we need people to like, share, and comment on our postings.
- d. The website now tracks our Facebook and Twitter postings as well.
- e. Now that the new website design is up, our next focus will be on filling in the content, including an archive of past conferences, award winners, and committee members.
- f. In response to a query from the listserv's modera-

tor, we are restricting PR announcements: while we welcome them from the authors and editors who are members of the list, we do not wish to clutter the list with advertisements from publishers or public relations personnel.

7. *SFRA Review*

- a. The transition to new editorship went well.
- b. Chris has been lining up UK scholars to contribute new 101s.
- c. Chris will also be revising submission guidelines (including removing an indication that we do not accept unsolicited items).
- d. We'll need new nonfiction and media editors.

8. A Book of 101 Articles

- a. Doug Davis and Ritch have recruited a number of new 101s as well as revisions on previous 101s. They are looking at publishing the collection digitally through Weightless books.

9. Awards

- a. We will soon need more plaques for the awardees.

10. Adjournment.

As well as expressing our thanks to WisCon, we should consider contacting the presenters on their academic track. Joan Haran runs that. We could reach out to the academic track to see if they are interested in joining the SFRA. The EC will send thanks to the SF3 board.

Treasurer's Report (Steve Berman): A more detailed report will be coming in the *Review*. We have 235 members and will likely gain 30 to 50 more throughout the year. We have approximately \$55,000 in our checking account and a savings reserve of \$20,000.

Comment was offered that SFRA operating on a calendar year means that for many operating on an academic year the money is already gone by January. We should perhaps consider beginning to recruit in September. We should also send reminders in mid-January.

In reply: the January 1 membership date is a technical requirement coming from how the website works to track membership and from our relationship with various journals. But we do have Emily Connelly joining us as an energetic PR person focused especially on recruiting younger scholars.

Further comment: recipients of the Ursula LeGuin scholarship may be interested in joining the SFRA.

Future Conferences (Pawel Frelik and Ritch Calvin): Following only 20 people indicating in the survey that they would be able to attend the conference if held in Brazil, we are holding the SFRA's 2015 conference in Stony Brook, organized by Ritch Calvin. 2016 is planned for Toronto. 2017 is planned for Liverpool or Manchester.

For 2015, the dates and topic are printed in the current conference program. Vandana Singh is confirmed as a guest writer and M. Asli Dukan is mostly confirmed as a guest filmmaker. The conference website will be up in a week or two. There are a hotel and a block of dorm rooms on campus; to get to campus, fly into JFK and take the train. Ritch is also working on field trips to Brookhaven and Cold Spring Harbor Labs. If Jen Gunnel can be the critical guest of honor, she may want to arrange a trip into the city to see an SF play. All of these field trips will be checked for interest before being confirmed.

Bylaws. (Pawel Frelik and Jenni Halpin): The EC will be proposing changes to the bylaws for vote at next year's meeting. One of the major items is a desire to increase the officers' terms to three years. The EC plans to provide a draft for review and comment in late August or early September. Following four weeks of comment the EC will finalize revisions and present the document for review by mid-April 2015.

SFRA GENERAL BUSINESS

General Membership Business Meeting Minutes [May 25th, 2014]

Jenni Halpin

Meeting called to order at 8:37 a.m.

All of the EC was in attendance (Pawel Frelik, Amy Ransom, Steve Berman, Ritch Calvin, and Jenni Halpin) as well as some 12 other SFRA members.

2014 Conference (Michael Levy): 90 people are here for the conference and we have had good participation from WisCon members as well, as we anticipated given WisCon's longstanding academic track. A number of our members have been down to WisCon, and our dinner was well attended by SFRA and WisCon members.

Partnering with WisCon has been great, as they have an established way of doing things and many people interested in helping out, though their website was rather difficult for our members to navigate. A number of people also gave papers both at SFRA panels and on the WisCon academic track.

Comments were offered in favor of three year terms, possibly with staggered starting and ending dates. Review by lawyers was also recommended, to ensure that changes don't endanger our nonprofit status.

Elections (Pawel Frelik and Ritch Calvin): We are in the process of assembling a slate of candidates and would welcome interested persons. We will put out a call to the list and the website and other media. The slate will be announced in late-summer, with an election 60 days later. In the 2012 meeting in Detroit we voted to do elections electronically and see how it went. We think electronic voting went well and will be doing so again.

SFRA Review (Pawel Frelik and Chris Pak): Chris has gone into editing brilliantly. He enjoyed putting the *Review* together and is looking forward especially to increasing contributions from Europe. We will soon be putting out calls for fiction and media editors.

Publicity (Amy Ransom and Pawel Frelik): With thanks to Emily Connelly, things are picking up on Twitter, Facebook, and Google. We need members' help to increase visibility of our postings: people are looking but not commenting. Amy and Emily are working on developing spreadsheets of listservs and other places to put out the word about SFRA. The 2015 conference theme will be helpful in reaching a wider array of interdisciplinary programs and international organizations.

Comments were offered that it might be worthwhile to pay to boost our postings. Response rates might increase with a programme of posting open-ended questions. Also, the first hit on Facebook is a dead page with only 16 members; that needs to be fixed.

We will be adding content to the website over the summer; anyone with ephemera from past conferences is encouraged to provide it. The website's new look has just recently been launched.

Comments: it looks good, clean, and professional.

General Discussion:

It was good to see so many new and young faces at this year's conference. The programming (ours and Wis-Con's) was a wealth of opportunity.

How can we ensure a greater number of members in attendance at the general meeting? Lunchtime might be better than breakfast time. Or we could hold the meeting in place of a regular (midday) session, while putting another set of sessions on the Sunday morning.

Watch Dogs is a video game being launched this month. Folks are invited to join in an opportunity to explore the possibilities of SF scholarship beyond print and film; the goal is also to consider what technological

tools might be useful to SF scholarship (and when, and how). This collaboration will be going on in the fora on the SFRA site (once we get the forums up and going). And part of the project is to figure out the best tools for collaborating on something like this. (Using the fora for a project may clutter them if we can establish reasonably clear threading.)

With no further business, meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

PILGRIM AWARD

Remarks for the Pilgrim Award

Roger Luckhurst (Chair); Lisa Yaszek; Craig Jacobsen

For lifetime contributions to SF/F studies

Craig Jacobsen

I CAN'T PROPERLY EXPRESS how happy I am to be presenting this award on behalf of my Award Committee colleagues Roger Luckhurst and Lisa Yaszek. I first encountered Joan Gordon in the early nineties while in a PhD program where reading science fiction criticism was only marginally more acceptable than getting caught reading a paperback with fleshy-headed mutants on the cover. Her essay "Yin and Yang Duke it Out" sits smack in the center of *Storming the Reality Studio*, and as I read it I was struck as much by how she made her points about cyberpunk and covert feminist science fiction as I was by the points themselves. Joan's writing was clear and engaging. Even funny, with lines like "At first glance [cyberpunk] seems to be overt masculinist science fiction—men are men, waving guns and knives, competing like all getout and plugged up to the gills with pollutant technology." My first real meeting with Joan was still years in our future, but I could clearly hear her voice. I relished the gentle irony, the sense that a literary critic could affectionately tease the texts being analyzed, that effective scholarship did not require one to efface oneself. And she managed this while making groundbreaking arguments about the need to revitalize a too-often overly pastoral and nostalgic body of feminist SF with new political outlooks and aesthetic practices. Her subsequent essays on and interviews with Suzy McKee Charnas, Sherri Tepper, and China Miéville showed how contemporary authors were already doing just that, and Joan was among the first SF critics to explore images of masculinity in fantasy. From her earliest critical works it is easy to see the dual threads that would run through her work, and continue to be visible there: a powerful command of an impressive theoretical toolkit put to work in the most sympathetic and humane ways. Yin and yang duke it out.

An achievement award like this cries out for a chron-

ological retrospective, but this is a science fiction award, so let's allow ourselves to be unstuck in time for a few minutes to visit some of the scholarly contributions whereby Joan earned this recognition.

The 2008 anthology *Queer Universes*, co-edited by Joan and sister SFRA award winners Veronica Hollinger and Wendy Gay Pearson, makes a powerful argument for the ways in which queer literary and cultural theory might transform our understanding of not just a subset of science fiction texts, but of science fiction itself.

Again/previously (we need grammar more suitable for time-hopping) with co-editor Veronica Hollinger, 1997's anthology *Blood Read: The Vampire as Metaphor in Contemporary Culture* demonstrates how the tropes and themes of speculative fiction evolve in relation to larger cultural concerns. It includes Joan's influential essay "Sharper Than a Serpent's Tooth: The Vampire in Search of Its Mother."

In 1980 Joan publishes a single-author study on Joe Haldeman, demonstrating how she successfully negotiates both postmodern and feminist concerns by examining how the relationship between "author and autobiographical character" in Haldeman's fiction purposefully challenges both New Critical and Foucauldian dismissals of authorial agency. This expression of the fundamental feminist belief that the personal is political will reappear in later studies of and interviews with Gene Wolfe, Suzy Charnas, and China Miéville that illustrate the ways in which an author's childhood experiences and familial relations inform their adult political and aesthetic practices.

Since 2001, Joan has been an editor of *Science Fiction Studies*, and for years she could be recognized by her ceremonial box of three by five cards, from which she dispensed many opportunities for young sf scholars to write book reviews for SFS. It's easy to underestimate the significance of her editorial work, as such labor is often visible only to those writers with whom one works and to one's co-editors, and on a vita with pages of impressive publications and presentations all of that work shepherding submissions to publication boils down to one line: "Editor, *Science Fiction Studies*, 2001+." Beneath the surface of that deceptively simple line, though, is some of the most crucial work of scholarship. There ought to be a line on that vita for every scholar, new or experienced, who benefitted from Joan's insight, suggestions, knowledge and generosity. There ought to be a record of all of those collaborations. But nobody wants to read through a fifty-page vita, so this Pioneer Award will have to demonstrate that we recognize the value of

such labor to our field.

Because co-editing one journal isn't enough, Joan also works on *Humanimalia*, where she continues to deploy high-powered theory in the service of exploring the nature of humanity, this time as revealed through our relationships to other beings (of the non-fleshy-headed mutant variety). Essays like "Gazing Across the Abyss: The Amborg Gaze in Sheri S. Tepper's *Six Moon Dance*" or "Animal Viewpoints in the Contact Zone of Adam Hines's *Duncan the Wonder Dog*" demonstrate her ability to synthesize the theoretical and the personal, and to show how the personal is political. And in the course of this work Joan has demonstrated that she can wield her critical faculties upon theory itself, building on Donna Haraway's notion of the cyborg and Derrida's *ambot* by coining the term "amborg" to map changing ideas about human-animal and other cross-species relations in science fiction, thereby adding a new tool to theory kit. And in writing "Animal Studies 101" for the *SFRA Review* and the animal studies section in the *Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*, Joan has provided important and accessible entry points for scholars interested in doing, or at least better understanding, animal studies.

I could go on. *Edging Into the Future* (2002), "Two SF Diaries at the Intersection of Subjunctive Hope and Declarative Despair" (1997), *Wesleyan Anthology of Science Fiction* (2010), "Hybridity, Heterotopia, and Mateship in China Miéville's *Perdido Street Station*" (2003), and, well, lots more for which we owe Joan our thanks.

This visible scholarly production, as writer, editor, and presenter may be what earned Joan this Pilgrim, but the Pilgrim Committee wants to point out two important aspects of her work as a scholar that are even harder to quantify than the value of her editorial work, but are nonetheless an important part of her contribution to science fiction and fantasy scholarship. You may not have noticed this weekend, but Joan takes notes. In conference sessions she listens, processes, and almost always has questions or thoughts to share. Not "gotcha" questions, or miniature speeches disguised as questions, but genuine, thoughtful queries and insights. It's an important facet of scholarly work, one of the major reasons why we gather in places like this, and a contribution that deserves note.

Finally, it is significant to note that Joan Gordon made these impressive and valuable contributions to our field while teaching four classes a semester at Nassau Community College. It's important that the benefits of scholarship not simply circulate amongst folks like

us in places like this. I'm confident that Joan's undergraduate students, many of them the first in their families to go to college, reaped the benefits of her knowledge, intelligence, wit, and kindness. And she doesn't do this scholarship to earn tenure or promotion. She did it because she loves this stuff, and she's really good at it. Which brings me back to that voice that first leapt off of the page for me twenty years ago. The first line of Joan's recent essay "Animal Viewpoints in the Contact Zone of Adam Hines's *Duncan the Wonder Dog*" is straightforward: "How dare we attempt to speak for other animals?" Joan asks. So I will end this attempt, and step aside in favor of this year's Pilgrim Award winner, Dr. Joan Gordon.

Pilgrim Award Acceptance Speech

Joan Gordon

RECENTLY MY HOROSCOPE SAID "Someone's kindhearted and perceptive observations could open your eyes and give you an entirely new outlook." That seemed prescient and, as I write this, I'm anxious to hear why the Pilgrim Award Committee so generously decided that I should receive the award. When Paweł called me with the news I was thrilled, very surprised, and, really, mystified. Since I had retired only a year ago, I'd just done a mental accounting of my scholarly career and decided that I had been the academic equivalent of a pretty successful utility player in baseball, another Julio Franco or Marlon Byrd, maybe, to mention a couple of former New York Mets. I did get to be a professor in my actual field, even though it was at a community college rather than someplace more prestigious where I might have taught upper division and graduate students. But I was happy there. I did publish a bunch of articles, but I never got it together to write a substantive book. I did get to be an editor for a wonderful journal, *Science Fiction Studies*, and then, another one, *Humanimalia*. I even got a Fulbright Distinguished Chair to Marie Curie Skłodowska University to teach nothing but science fiction. To extend the metaphor, I got to play in a long and satisfying career, although I never became one of the big stars; I played in the major leagues but not with one of the dominating teams; I was never in an All-Stars game but did play with teams that made it

into the World Series. And here I am, being inducted into the Hall of Fame! Thank you, thank you, thank you, to Craig and Roger and Lisa, and to my dear SFRA, for such an honor.

So now let me just tell you a little bit about my life in sf. Of course, I became an avid reader of sf in the eighth grade, the golden age of science fiction, but it never dawned on me until 1975 when I returned to graduate school that I could actually study it seriously. That's when I took the first sf course ever offered at University of Iowa, from Joe Haldeman and Larry Martin. I learned several important things from them—that sf is a broad, deep, and stimulating academic field; that it has a vibrant and nutty social life I could join; and that I should not write it myself. I went on to write the first dissertation at Iowa on sf, which meant that I was battling the ingrained prejudices of most of the faculty, until the wonderful Brooks Landon came to Iowa, became my dissertation chair, and made it all happen. I have never looked at that dissertation again, but I did carve my first little book out of it, a Starmont Reader's Guide to Joe Haldeman. Now, of course, Iowa has terrific sf courses and professors and graduate students, but back then things were pretty minimal. The equivalent of the baseball team owners really didn't want to let the scruffy science fiction crowd into the majors but we kept on plugging away and now they've given in.

And then there's my history with SFRA. I went to my first conference, at UNI in Cedar Falls, while I was still in graduate school, where I interviewed Gene Wolfe and got contracts for two Starmont Reader's Guides. Pretty snazzy. Once I moved from job one in Montana to job two in New York I became more and more active in SFRA because I could actually afford to go to the conferences, until eventually I served on all sorts of awards committees and in various capacities on the SFRA board. All along the way, the warm atmosphere of SFRA meant that people were encouraging me to write and publish, and to become an active member of the organization. Meanwhile, sf was becoming more respectable, thanks in large part to SFRA and its championing of serious sf scholarship, including its support for *Extrapolation* and *Science Fiction Studies*. SFRA has been helping me since the late 1970s, making it possible for me to have a career in the field I love, and providing me with a career that has been enriching, fun, and warmly collegial—look at all the good friends I see out in the audience. I felt that I had, in baseball terms, lots of good coaches encouraging me to give 110 percent and use my god-given talents.

Maybe I can coach some of you as well, who might

find yourselves in a similar position. As a utility player, I've had to teach four courses a semester, never gotten much money for travel, and never been strongly encouraged by my college to publish, but I've learned some ways to do my scholarship in small increments, one short conference paper at a time. So I'm here to tell you it can be done, and it can add up to a rewarding career. We can't all be Mickey Mantle, or Miggy Cabrera, but we can all get pretty far with hard work and good coaches.

Speaking of good coaches, besides thanking Joe Haldeman, the late Larry Martin, and Brooks Landon for making my career possible and the SFRA for nurturing me along, I'd like to give a special shout-out to my co-editors at SFS, who form my secondary family; to Sherryl Vint, who taught me about the great field of animal studies; to Veronica Hollinger, my closest friend in sf, who has shared with me everything from a disease to a wedding anniversary date; and to my primary editor and main fan, John Scheckter.

I don't want to go into extra innings here, so, before people start sneaking out of the room in desperation (I've seen it done) or merely start looking anxiously at their watches/cell phones, let me just thank the committee one more time. I'm totally thrilled.

PIONEER AWARD

Remarks for the Pioneer Award

Keren Omry (Chair); Amy Ransom; David Higgins

Keren Omry

THIS YEAR CHAIRING the Pioneers was an exceptional experience. It is humbling and inspiring to see the amount of exciting and innovative scholarly work being published. I would like to begin by giving honorable mention to one article that gave the winner a run for his money: Colin Milburn.

In his article, "Greener on the Other Side: Science Fiction and the Problem of Green Nanotechnology" (*Configurations*), Milburn both enriches Kim Stanley Robinson criticism and, more importantly, expands the field of what we do in grand and interesting ways. Moving beyond simply close readings or limited literary criticism, Milburn investigates SF as a mode and

mechanism of reading which carries implications for our politics, our 'real' lives, and also for how we create literature. Where Milburn encourages us to 'think the break', the winner of the Pioneer awards, Jaak Tomberg, begins to theorize it.

We read a LOT of good work this year. However, considering our criteria of innovation, diligence, style, and impact, Tomberg's *Science Fiction Studies* article "On the 'Double Vision' of Realism and SF Estrangement in Gibson's Bigend Trilogy" stood head and shoulders above the rest.

In his article Tomberg convincingly shows how in these novels SF and Realism have qualitatively merged, 'implosioning in a new mode of writing', and thus it now needs to be approached through a simultaneous double vision of generic registers. Tomberg is meticulous about defining his terms, and positions himself very carefully and responsibly within traditions of SF scholarship, as he turns to examine the poetic manifestation of the contemporary. So, not only does he re-hearse the significance of Gibson in both canonical and SFnal literary writing, but he offers a NEW way to think about the heart of SF itself. "the novum is no longer confined solely to its autonomous sphere of extrapolative/fictional outside but has become indistinguishably merged with the absolute inside of a now artificially imminent technocultural reality" (276).

Tomberg offers a concise and workable definition for contemporary SF literature and hopefully clears the road for the rest of us to expand the critical application.

Pioneer Award Acceptance Speech

Jaak Tomberg

THANK YOU for this tremendous honour.

You must excuse me if I stutter or stop since English is not my first language and I am at a loss for words anyway. I am still completely and utterly surprised by this because this was my first international publication, that is, the first one I've published outside Estonia. I didn't know there was such an award, and furthermore, I didn't even know there was such an association. It is a really nice family.

I would like to thank the organizers for this wonder-

ful conference, and I'd like to thank all of you for the interesting presentations, thoughtful discussions and lovely readings. I would also like to thank professor Brian McHale from Ohio State University for giving me thorough advice on the science fictional aspects of the essay, as well as professor Tomo Virk from University of Ljubljana, who assisted me equally with the realist aspect. I would also like to thank the editors of *Science Fiction Studies*, especially Veronica Hollinger, who organized a thoroughly educational feedback for the various drafts of the final outcome. It took five versions and four years, and the peer-reviewing process at SFS is something I have never met elsewhere.

My essay studied the hypothesis that if a cultural context becomes sufficiently technologized, its realism, respectively, becomes more and more science fictional, and this up to a point where these generic tendencies indiscernibly converge. Because I like close reading, my object of research was just the poetics of five small paragraphs from William Gibson's three latest novels. But ever since I finished the essay, I've noted the emergence of wider examples that point to the same tendency. I would like to bring out two of them here; both are major motion pictures from last year.

The first one of these is Spike Jonze's film *Her*, for which he won the Academy Award for the best original screenplay. In a way, *Her* tells a completely ordinary but beautiful love story that is emotionally understandable to a very broad audience. But it couldn't have been realized without a mild science fictional injection, a five-minutes-into-the-future extrapolation about informational technology. *Her* is a good example of how science fiction's toolkit can now thoroughly address the simple wider everyday social and psychological concerns.

My second example is Alfonso Cuarón's *Gravity*. This film, I claim, is the ultimate proof that space has finally been invaded – it has been invaded by science fictional representations and thematic motives. Because in fact, there is nothing science fictional in that movie, nothing that couldn't be achieved with the help of contemporary scientific developments, except maybe for the fact that nowadays, space expeditions don't usually go that wrong. Poetically, *Gravity* is all mimetic realism, but the gravity of science fictional thematic traditions tricks us into thinking otherwise.

If some might call these tendencies the dissolution of science fiction, I would like to call them the realization of science fiction. Our first panel here largely turned out to be a discussion about the possible fears that science fiction research as a discipline has little to contribute to

other research areas. I believe that this is not true, since science fiction as art is now more than ever capable of broadly and humanly addressing almost every aspect of life, and the toolkit of a science fiction researcher must therefore enable them to take meaningful part in their analysis. And if the realization of science fiction means some kind of change, I'm all for it, because science fiction is the literature of change. In this respect, science fiction research is living through especially interesting and exciting times.

I am thoroughly humbled and honoured by this recognition. Thank you!

CLARESON AWARD

Remarks for the Clareson Award

Alan Elms (Chair); Ed Carmien; Grace Dillon

Ed Carmien

GOOD EVENING. I'm Ed Carmien, and I'm here to chew gum and hand out an award. And I'm all out of chewing gum.

What a fitting homecoming for Lisa Yaszek, who spent so many years here in Mad-town back in the 1990s. We hope her knowledge of local watering holes has been put to good use so far at this year's conference.

Each year we search for the most fitting recipient of the Thomas D. Clareson Award for Distinguished Service. We seek someone who promotes SF teaching and study, reviews SF works, edits, writes, and publishes materials of value in the field, and serves the spine of our scholarship through the organization of meetings, through mentoring those newer to the field, and through leadership in Science Fiction and Fantasy organizations. This year, the work completed by myself, outgoing Clareson Award Committee chair Alan Elms and new member Grace Dillon proved simple.

Naming Lisa this year's Clareson winner was easy. Viewing a super-nova in the night sky is easy. Her career consists of a sprint, from the day she received her Ph.D. in this fine town in 1999, to her post-doc work and subsequent Professorship at Georgia Institute of Technology, where she produced her first book in 2002, *The Self Wired: Technology and Subjectivity in Contemporary Narrative*, through three more since then in-

cluding her work with some guy named Doug Davis on the 2012 special double issue of *Configurations* on Kim Stanley Robinson, to no fewer than 14 book chapters, to 15 journal articles...there is not enough oxygen to finish this sentence.

But the Clareson is not about scholarship. It is about service. And here too Lisa burns bright. She serves on numerous editorial boards, helping usher in the current generation of scholarship. From her seat at Georgia Tech Lisa swings mighty grants, promotes science fiction radio, serves the wider university community with her expertise, and within a few years of joining the SFRA began serving in leadership roles ranging from chief cook and bottle washer to President. Lisa helmed a conference with a console cowboy on one hip, brought the SFRA website into the present, revitalized SFRA's grant process, and helped make our organization more truly international. SFRA is more visible and connected than ever before, thanks in large part to Lisa's work and leadership

How many thousands of individuals has she influenced? Every SFRA conference-goer for many years, just for a start. Readers of *Extrapolation* and *AboutSF*. Those who benefit from grants, such as those granted by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Every member of the audience of the The State of Black Science Fiction Film Festival.

Tens of thousands? Through the quantum miracle of Lisa's butterfly wings beating hot swirls of wind through our atmosphere--hundreds of thousands? Millions? Certainly, the impact is uncountable. Remarkable.

Finally, one more reason to celebrate Lisa's contributions to our association and to the field of Science Fiction in general has to do with numbers. The SFRA is 44 years old, and we have given the Clareson to 18 recipients. We've recognized luminaries such as Frederick Pohl. James Gunn. Elizabeth Anne Hull. Hartwell. Lewis. Hassler. Gordon. Sanders. Warrick. Becker. Kincaid. Levy. Sawyer. Hall. Mead. An entire Motherboard: Fowler, Notkin, Klages, Gomoll, Smith, and Murphy. *The* Arthur B. Evans. Rob Latham. Never before, however, has the SFRA recognized someone as youthful as Lisa Yaszek, making this recognition even more amazing. Please join me in loudly, raucously, and vigorously appreciating Professor Lisa Yaszek as the SFRA presents the 19th Thomas D. Clareson Award for Distinguished Service.

Clareson Award Acceptance Speech

Lisa Yaszek

IT WOULD BE an honor to receive the Clareson award at any time, but it is particularly special this year when the SFRA conference takes place in Madison, where I began what would eventually become a career in SF studies and where this year's conference co-organizer, Rebecca Holden, first introduced me to WisCon. In the spirit of returning to roots and reconnecting with good friends, I want to use my moment at the podium to thank a few people who facilitated my first forays into science fiction studies.

I did my graduate work right here at the University of Wisconsin and so I want to begin by thanking my mentor and dissertation director, professor emeritus Thomas Hill Schaub. For those of you who don't know his work, Tom is a pioneer—maybe even what we would call a Pilgrim—in the world of contemporary literature. He did groundbreaking work in Cold War and Pynchon studies while running the English department, teaching both graduate and undergraduate courses, and editing the journal *Contemporary Literature*. Although he never tells the story himself, he is probably the only literary scholar in the world to have met (and played poker with!) Thomas Pynchon and indeed rumor has it that he might actually *be* Thomas Pynchon—a rumor that both thrilled and terrified his graduate students. Whatever the truth of the matter, I will be forever indebted to Tom for modeling how to be a scholar with an all around game and for encouraging my initial work in science and technology studies and cultural history as it intersects with speculative fiction.

I will also be eternally grateful to Tom for one specific piece of advice. I was in his office the second week of grad school telling him what I'd read over the summer and what I hoped to read during my masters program and then my PhD program and then.... At that point Tom stopped me, smiled gently, and said, "know now that you will never read everything you think you want or ought to read. And know that's a good thing to be excited about, not a bad thing to worry over." It's a brilliant way to approach our discipline, and I hope to impart that sense of possibility and excitement to others in my own work.

The next person I want to recognize is my former Georgia Tech colleague and SFRA member Irving "Bud"

Foote for paving the way to do cool things with SF pedagogy. Bud taught one of the first accredited college level science fiction classes in 1971 and brought many, many science fiction authors and scholars to Tech before retiring and donating the 8000 plus items that now form the core of Georgia Tech's Science Fiction Collection. He is universally remembered by others across Tech as—I don't know how else to say it, as a righteous dude, and the good will he sowed across campus and across the greater science fiction community laid the groundwork for the range of SF classes across media that we offer today and for my own Sci Fi Research and Radio Labs.

If Tom taught me that work in our profession should always be an adventure, Bud taught me that it should also always be fun. As those of you who knew him might remember, life was a party for Bud. Most of the work I did with Bud did not actually happen at Tech; he preferred to conduct business at different bars around the city or at parties in his home. My friend and colleague, SF author Kathy Goonan, has great stories about SFRA Mobile, when Bud shanghaied a group of scholars and authors to go swimming at his beach house. And to this day, the students who work with Bud's ephemera in our science fiction collection are very impressed by how densely he annotated his conference programs with drink recipes, lunch dates, and party coordinates. But again, as some of you might remember, for Bud the party was more than just a party, it was also a chance to get people together to talk about SF from new perspectives. Alums who studied with Bud tell me his classes were like that as well, and I hope I keep the party going in my own courses.

Finally, a shout out to our own Adam Frisch and SFRA Pilgrim Vivian Sobchack for The. Best. Administrative. Advice. Ever. When I took over as SFRA president and director of Georgia Tech's humanities programs in 2009, Adam—who had been SFRA president while chairing his department—told me that 80% of any administrator's job is listening to others, no matter how crazy they might seem at first. It's great advice because usually, somewhere in the madness, there is also great brilliance. That same year, Vivian—who had done a long stint as chair of her own department—suggested that I set an administrative schedule that would allow me to ignore email and do research at home at least once a week because "nothing happens in an English department on a Friday that can't be resolved on Monday." I've found these two bits of advice are particularly compelling together, because they suggest a balance between dedication to the community and preservation of one's self. And that

balance is, I believe, very much at the heart of the Clareson Award in particular and at the heart of the SFRA in general. Thank you.

MARY K. BRAY AWARD

Remarks for the Mary K. Bray Award

Joan Haran (Chair); Tim S. Miller; Larisa Mikhaylova

Joan Haran

I WOULD LIKE TO begin by thanking my fellow judges, Larisa Mikhaylova and Tim Miller, for reading all the reviews and 101s published in the SFRA Review in 2013. This year's Mary Kay Bray Award goes to Lisa Yaszek for "Narrative, Archive, Database: The Digital Humanities and Science Fiction Scholarship 101" in issue 303, Winter 2013. Taking a leaf out of Lisa's book—indeed, borrowing from the introduction to her 101—the following is a 'loose transcription' of the speech I gave when presenting the award at the SFRA Banquet in Madison in May 2014.

Lisa's 101 is an exemplary piece of work which explores the epistemological and methodological issues attendant on the relationship between the digital humanities and science fiction scholarship. Importantly and distinctively, it situates these issues in the contexts of both the contemporary political economy of the academy, and the future of science fiction scholarship. The piece is thus a superb primer for both junior and experienced scholars, including those who wish to embark on interdisciplinary research projects as well as those who simply seek new ways to pursue the questions that have always animated them.

"Narrative, Archive, Database" is both informative and interrogative, providing an overview of digital humanities resources and tools and challenging readers to think deeply about how these new means might alter their approach to research. Examples of these tools in action are given along with the surprising (or not) findings they facilitate and the new modes of collaboration they enable. Lisa also asks important epistemological, methodological and ethical questions about who counts and who gets credit in the processes of collective knowledge production that digital tools permit. These are not simply rhetorical questions; she works them through in

relation to her own collaborative research and publication projects. In so doing, she models best practice for teachers and scholars in science fiction studies.

My fellow judges had the following to say. Tim Miller said: "Lisa Yaszek's very useful and very timely 101 feature begins by identifying one major (useful, timely) point of contact between SF studies and the digital humanities: both can bridge the old "two cultures" divide. Her piece not only provides an overview of potential applications of digital tools in approaching the SF archive, but makes a solid argument that the digital humanities could be "crucial to the ongoing development of SF scholarship" based on her own productive experience with data mining. In addition to including a brief but invaluable bibliography of recommended readings, the body of the essay also introduces some key concepts for digital humanities theory and practice—such as Lev Manovich's articulation of the distinction between "narrative" and "database" as modes of understanding—in an accessible way while also managing to complicate and critique them. What more could one ask for in a 101?" Larisa Mikhaylova, with enviable economy, stated: "It's simply very good." I urge any SFRA members who have not yet done so to read this 101, and to disseminate it widely as a teaching aid.

Mary K. Bray Award Acceptance Speech

Lisa Yaszek

FIRST, I WANT TO THANK Joan for such a kind introduction. And second—thanks to the committee, and really all of you, for your continued support of my work. I'm really glad you like this essay—I like it too! In fact, one of the things I like best about this essay is that it came from a series of research, writing, and consulting adventures that took me all over the internet, across my campus, and around the globe. Along the way, I met a lot of very smart and very dedicated people who shaped my thinking about humanities research in a digital age. I'm delighted I have this opportunity to acknowledge a few of them.

I want to begin by recognizing the men and women who are on the front lines of SF digitization. The fans behind websites such as pulpworld.com and unz.org have been particularly tireless in their crusade to get

ephemeral SF materials online—and to figure out how U.S. copyright law pertains to the reproduction of SF imagery and texts. I'm particularly grateful to Ron Unz of unz.org for help in this respect. If you haven't ever done so, you should visit his website and maybe even make a donation. I also want to recognize all the university librarians, archivists, and information specialists who are transforming science fiction studies research with digital initiatives. Katherine Calhoun and the entire information delivery staff at Georgia Tech have been phenomenal at working their interlibrary loan connections to provide whatever SF materials my students and I need, often going above and beyond the call of duty to find nontraditional, nonacademic sources for rare materials we could not otherwise access.

I also want to recognize the two groups of academics who have been most instrumental in helping me articulate the meaning and value of digital research in SF studies and the humanities as a whole. My colleagues in digital media, the digital humanities, and even software engineering at Georgia Tech are often on the front lines of transforming creative practices in their disciplines, and they have been incredibly generous about sharing how that experience leads them to grapple with this questions of authority, community, and knowledge that I gloss on in "Narrative, Archive, Database." In the spirit of this year's conference theme I'd like to particularly thank my feminist comrades in arms Janet Murray, Celia Pearce, and Lauren Klein for their wit and wisdom. If you don't know their work, you should look them up online, it is more than worth the effort. And of course, I am, as always, indebted to all of you here in the SF studies community for listening patiently to my adventures in digital research, writing, and theorization. Thanks in particular to Rob Latham at UCR for providing the initial forum in which I discussed these adventures, and to past *SFRA Review* editor Doug Davis for encouraging me to write them up for publication. I've always found one of the most appealing aspects of the SF community to be the ongoing collaboration between author, editor, artist, and fan. I'm glad to see this continues as fans, librarians, and scholars work together to update humanistic creative and analytic practices in a digital age. Thank you.

STUDENT PAPER AWARD

Remarks for the Student Paper Award

Sonja Fritzsche (Chair); Eric Otto; Shawn Malley

THE COMMITTEE WAS unanimous in its decision to give this year's award to Michael Jarvis for his paper "Wherever you go, there you are": Postmodern Pastiche and Oppositional Rhetoric in *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the Eighth Dimension*." Jarvis is a graduate student at UC Riverside. This year the competition was quite significant, as we had many excellent submissions. Yet, this paper easily stood out above them all in its theoretical approach, overall quality, and innovative analysis. We particularly appreciated Jarvis's reexamination of a less-studied comedy that is often dismissed as meaningless. (Not by anyone here of course!) Through a careful discussion, Jarvis analyzes Chela Sandoval's notion of pastiche as a post-modern subversive form and the associated critique of Jameson's dismissal of pastiche as a closed system. Having set this groundwork, Jarvis then shows how Richter's film via that same meaninglessness dismantles the dichotomies of Cold War ideology without reinscribing those same dichotomies in a new way. We wish to congratulate Michael Jarvis and we look forward to his future projects.

Student Paper Award Acceptance Speech

Michael Jarvis

WITH APOLOGIES for My Absence:

I am surprised and proud to have my work honored with the SFRA Student Paper Award. Many thanks to the award committee for their time and consideration, and for all the SFRA/Eaton conference-goers who attended my panel last year. I would especially like to thank Sonja Fritzsche, who, as my fellow panelist, actually heard my presentation first-hand, and was still kind enough to remind me about the award submission deadline.

When I submitted the abstract for this paper in my

seminar on Rhetoric and Ethnicity, the professor returned it to me with a mock-glare, and said something like, “Thanks a lot...because of you I had to *watch* that silly-ass movie.”

It is quite silly, but I love it, and I can say that I’ve never enjoyed writing or presenting anything as much as I have these thoughts on Buckaroo Banzai. Nothing feels quite as good as doing what you love; except, of course, receiving an award for it. A heartfelt thanks to the SFRA and all of the organizers, committee members, and administrators. I am extremely happy to have my work recognized by this foremost organization of SF scholars.

No CNN at the Four Gates of Recent Romanian Imaginary

Cătălin Badea-Gheracostea

JUST BEFORE 15th March 2014, I had four weeks of “zapping”, a performance for somebody who does not own a TV set. After those four weeks, I found out something: firstly, the spot where Romania sits under the sun goes around still using the XIXth century legitimization fictions¹, at odds with the new saying that the new media modifies or becomes the message itself; secondly, the fundamental legitimization fictions in and around Romania are still of literary origin, pseudo-historical fictions, and not at all TV fictions, broadcasted as “live” breaking-news.

On and around 15th March 2014, these fictions have two insertion points in the immediate Romanian reality. Although they are not considered fictions, the Celebration of Hungary’s Independence in the Szeclars region from Transylvania, as well as the Annexation of Crimea by Russia are in obvious conflict with the current Romanian legitimization fictions. The following text is not an approach on international politics, but an essay on four different ways of using the Romanian imaginary to transcend the present conflict.

I hope nobody will be astonished that I give as examples for the four ways of transcending this conflict four recently published books with Romanian authors.

Ștefana Czeller’s novel, *Ozz*, one of the winners of the sf&f contest organised by Tracus Arte publishing house last year, it is fit to show the transcendence of a conflict

1 In this article, the syntagma “legitimation fiction” is used according to the Postmodern Condition by Jean-François Lyotard. The French theoretician sustains that everything we do in the world today needs a narrative to be legitimised. Linked to nations, states and people, the most common legitimization fiction is the “national history,” with its founding myths and with results in political discourses like “Great Romania”, “Great/Old Hungary”, “Mother Russia,” etc. Obviously, “Great Romania” contradicts “Old Hungary” and both are contradicted by “Mother Russia,” which further engulfs any “Ukraine” and can be legitimised by any narrative. Furthermore, all the citations given are translated from the Romanian original text into English by myself.

by its avoidance. In other words, it is the *escapist solution*, through which and author exerts his—in this case her—narrative art by ignoring all his/her cultural luggage, as given by nationality, attempting to reach the universality or the integration with other national or linguistic imaginary. *Ozz* of Ștefana Czeller does both because it is well written as fan-fiction of Frank L. Baum’s variety—being an agent for Baum’s “universality”—and because it is well written as a result of a *successful individual acculturation*—in the points where it has nothing in common with the initial fantastic American narrative, but rather with urban or teen fantasies like *The Twilight Saga* or *The Vampires Diaries*.

A.R. Deleanu (witty pseudonym: read in one it means literally “The Transylvanian”) gives the *realist solution* with his short stories volume *Acluofobia*. This author puts together the national background with universality. He is “glocalizing” his fiction. Sampling from the ten “macabre” stories of A.R. Deleanu, my first choice is *Ash (Scrum)*—where a couple of Romanian young lovers, Ignațiu and Camelia, have a city-break in a beautiful Budapest, trying to overcome an alleged post-traumatic syndrome of the man who just returned from Iraq; the effort is lost by her adultery, which is his pretext for murder. Everything is written in a hallucinatory and/or horror key. The second choice is *When We Weren’t (Atunci când nu eram)*—in which a couple of young Romanian lovers is set apart by an alien invasion; the world is transformed into a dystopic colony for the invaders, with the humans changed into nationless, cultureless, emotionless individuals; even the remembrance of love or the simple fact of recognizing the old lover is a crime. The *realist solution* to transcend the conflict we are talking about is opposed to escapism via a new humanism, paradoxically demonstrated in an sf and horror manner by A.R. Deleanu, a very good link to today’s literature and less to the literature manuals, which are still under the prejudice that humanist valours are to be seen only in the mainstream.

A third notable book is the uchronic novel *Das Mioritza Reich*, by Victor Cilincă, second winner of Tracus Arte’s contest. This is the *heuristic solution* because by literary treatment the question “what if Romania entered WWI according with her pre-war treaties, alongside Germany?” we can find the definition of uchrony or alternate history. It is a fashionable intellectual game, beyond literature, a real new academic field—the counterfactual history. As classic in the genre as *The Man in the High Castle* is, in Romanian literature, the prose *Finis Romaniae*, by Al.N. Dariu, since 1873, set

the course for the “vintage uchrony” of Victor Cilincă. The savor of the heuristic solution does not come from the historical permutations and combinations, but from its literary quality. In *Das Mioritza Reich* are matters that the author wrote before in realist historical prose, alongside with his journalistic inquiries.

Last but not least, the last gate for the Romanian imaginary around 15th March 2014 is the best novel ever written by Sebastian A. Corn, *We Shall Be Back in Muribecca* (*Ne vom întoarce în Muribeca*). This volume of more than 600 pages is the example for the *universal solution* in the way of a too real conflict between the collective and individual imaginaries. Somebody cynical would say after reading the book that The Great Conspiracy has launched the Russian invasion of Crimea only to make the Romanian public pay attention to a story with Russian characters. It is simpler than that: the novel *We Shall Be Back in Muribecca*, written by the Romanian Sebastian A. Corn, needs Russian-Jewish characters caught in the Amazon with an archaeological pretext to say in a narrative-symphonic crescendo a story about the last revelation, that of the essential identity of every human being with any other human being. The *universal solution* in the written form given by Corn is that more powerful as it is lacking pathetism, though has greatness, and it is more realistic exactly when it comes closer to poetry. In a way, a book and a solution like *We Shall Be Back in Muribecca* contains the already mentioned solutions, because in this book one can escape reality, understand reality or modify reality according to his/her own choice during reading.

These four books are the gates in the Romanian imaginary of today and they show, in my opinion, that this imaginary is alive and healthy. What I want is that, after 15th March 2014, the reality of the legitimization fictions' conflict around Romania shall not fall into tragedy, as it did 100 years ago. Only one who reads can remember; I am not sure that one who watches TV can.

Following the Blood Trail over the Yellow Bricks: Ștefana Czeller

THE THREE NOVELS published under Ștefana Czeller's signature, an investigative journalist by trade, indeed does profit at large from the author's life experience, even if they are—according to her confession and corroborated by the reading itself—an escape route from immediate reality. Saying that Czeller's novel *Ozz* is an *escapist solution* in the conflict between legitimization fictions around Romania, I feel the need to enlarge the argument by adding the previous two novels (a diptych),

Ink and Blood (*Cerneală și sânge*) and *Transformation* (*Transformarea*). Also, I believe the short stories from her debut are useful.

Ozz is declared as being written as fan-fiction after *The Wizard of Oz*. Using a simple comparison between the two writings, there can be found some characters and conflicts used by Ștefana Czeller to organize her escape and the reader's escape too. However, as in her previous novels, a Vampire in Love, while caught in a death and mystery intrigue, is the central element, almost to be named “the invariable” in every fictional construction of Czeller. It is true, and perhaps her originality lies here, that neither in *Ozz* nor in the diptych *Ink and Blood*, the first person narrator-character—formerly known as “the main”—is this Vampire in Love. In *Ozz*, “the main” is the transmuted coward lion of Baum's original, named in cvasi-parodic key “Lion” (cvasi-parodic because the author's irony is not directed at the character but at herself), which conquers his fear like the original lion, in heroic deeds. In the diptych, the action takes place in a Romanian town from the present, but this is modified by characters and conflicts coming from medieval Russia; “the main” is a young woman, a journalist, who unravels a vampire conspiracy, falls in love and becomes the mate/wife/mother-of-his-child to the Vampire Lord (who becomes the president of Romania...), while trying to stay alive and human. There are several episodes of mystery solving, crime covering, with historical and political consequences, all which escalate toward the final judgement: on which moral side does her lover stand? Is he a vampire for Good or is he a vampire for Evil?

I never met in the Romanian genre prose with such an art of ambivalence, an art of the moral suspense, like that in Ștefana Czeller's novels. It is not a quest for an already known equilibrium, the ambivalence is not given by romanticist contradictions like “bad-yesterday, good-today”, the vampires and those near them do not evolve towards redemption, neither toward a change in their nature, or toward a wedding. The ambivalence of Ștefana Czeller's vampire comes from the fact that in her fictional world, He is a form of normality, even if we include the genre's fireworks and the reader's preconceived ideas. And precisely here lays the success of the escapist solution trademark of Ștefana Czeller: in the *natural* way of life the vampires have among us no special effects. This is why the secret passion of the author for Him had craved a purification through a parody of normality... as two-time “natural”. This happens even in the prose of her debut, *The Strange Nights of Vasile Cotineață* (*Noptile*

stranii ale lui Vasile Cotineafă), in which this Basil Henshed-aggressive overweight drunkard, chronically unemployed, living with his wife in a gray derelict Stalinist era block of flats, somewhere in Romania-becomes a vampire. It was the only time when Ștefana Czeller has laughed together with her reader; they laughed together at the daily grotesque and the banality because there were about to come some novels with vampires "for real". A natural follow-up, one would say.

The Discreet and Discrete Realism of A.R. Deleanu Nightmares

THE SHORT STORIES comprised in *Acluofobia*, "10 macabre stories"-as the author tempts his readers-are almost simultaneous with the novel *The Waters' Tamer* (*Îmblânzitorul apelor*) and they should be kept together for a future literary history. Written between 2010 and 2013, in three towns important for the intellectual build-up of the author (Brașov, Ludwigsburg and Oxford), the texts from *Acluofobia* are important together with *The Waters' Tamer* because they redefine in the Romanian literature a genre-the hybrid coming from gothic/horror and weird with soft sf and oneric and surrealistic tropes-and, at the same time, a modality of writing-slipstream.

A.R. Deleanu does not invent anything, he does not discover anything, he is not even the first of Romanian writers after 2000 who writes a story to climb up from anguish to fear, to climb down from the traumatic perception of the immediateness into the engram and to exit the backstage, not necessarily into the light, through dream and hallucination, toward the irreversible alteration of the given immediateness. With books published in the last decade of the previous century, Radu Țuculescu (Cluj) cannot be forgotten. With a web and editing activism more effective than his own only volume, Oliviu Crâznic (București) must be remembered. Unfortunately not so well known, Alex Marinescu (Iași) would deserve more readers for his novel and short stories, manifestos for gothic between Țuculescu and Crâznic. This is the time of A.R. Deleanu (Brașov/București) and it goes very well with the new appetite of the Romanian public for the new/old genre. It is true, four authors with all their imitators do not build a genre into a literature, but the fact they come out in towns remote from each other and outside of any recognized literary school or coherent publishing policy says that the "terror" genre (as John Clute would have liked to call it before 9/11) restarts in Romanian.

Acluofobia is, in my opinion, the best book in the Ro-

manian language within the genre with the local definition and history just sketched above. Before *Acluofobia*, this genre, in the Romanian language, was either too covered in the national daily specificity (Țuculescu), or too careful to cover all the elements of the foreign definitions (Marinescu), or too ambitious (Crâznic). A.R. Deleanu succeeds in avoiding every extreme and succeeds through a dynamic equilibrium between the content and its expression. He can write with Romanians in Romania or with Romanians outside Romania, he can write with aliens (like foreigners or strangers or ... aliens) brought into or felt in a space of Romanian day by day life. Also, A.R. Deleanu makes a terse passage between the states of consciousness of his characters, which means he trusts his reader to catch the suggestion and taste the poetry. The style of *Acluofobia* is artistic and not commercial, in a genre some would still call commercial. However, A.R. Deleanu keeps his temper and, with all the images and phrases which would give the chance to other authors for detours into narcissism-like experimental, autobiographic or calophile-, he remains loyal to the self-imposed narratorial rhythm, from the beginning to the end. Examples: "The last syllable fell at the awakening, on the other side of the dream." - so begins the short story *Dream with Ants*; "Alex despised television. He didn't sympathise journalists and he was proud that, since Alina had been born 8 years ago, no journalist voice has been being heard in their home." - so begins *Kilimandjaro*; "Sleep tight, my love. Sleep tight. It is time, Queen calf, small, oily, yellow, covered in rags, caught by tubes, baby from heaven, my cub." - so begins *When We Weren't*. The prose starts with powerful sentences, with an emotional impact that creates an intellectual expectation for the lines to come. A.R. Deleanu exploits this in his own manner by contradicting the initial emotional data by a surprising final confirmation, at the end of the reading, of a psychological state superior in intensity. In other words, for the first time in the Romanian genre literature, it does not matter what it is the author is starting to tell as long as in the end the reader is astonished and thrilled. Therefore *Dream with Ants* is not an onerotic prose; *Kilimandjaro* is not a realist story; *When We Weren't* is not science fiction.

Maybe here is the place to repeat that I named the type of prose practiced by A.R. Deleanu as the generator of the *realist solution* in the solving of the conflict between the Romanian legitimation fictions and those of her neighbours. Also, it is the place to explain the subtitle: A.R. Deleanu give a *realist solution* with his prose because he never loses the contact between local and

universal as well as the contact between rational and irrational, these contacts having at their centre the perception of reality in no matter what state of consciousness. The characters and the worlds of A.R. Deleanu start in the Romanian language and in a Romanian civilizational space, and the individual perceptions and reactions start from normality. The literary intervention, the story, this is what alters the subsequent realism, allowing for it short comebacks, discontinued, to arrive at the hybrid ending, via dream and hallucination, with the most probable awakening in horror. A.R. Deleanu does not need to kill one or several characters—as in *Kilimandjaro*—to create the horror, but he can only suggest the loss/the estrangement of humanity—as in *Dream with Ants*—or construct a dystopia after a contact with ET—as in *When We Weren't*. A.R. Deleanu migrates between well defined sub-genres without regard for their definitions (which makes him differ from Crăznic, Marinescu and Țuculescu), but according to the immediate interest of his artistic message. This courage to erase borders, besides the continuously shone artistry, is giving me the chance to hurl the superlative.

Questions are Answers from Victor Cilincă in *Das Mioritza Reich*

THE “VINTAGE UCHRONY” signed by Victor Cilincă, the novel *Das Mioritza Reich* is one of the most surprising works of speculative fiction written in Romanian after 1989. It can be said without any fear of error that it is a book which comprehension takes into account at almost every angle: a sf fan who is looking for the content effect of cognitive estrangement will find it in the coherence of the parallel realities; a reader looking for realistic characters will find some in every fictional reality inside the book; a passionate reader of (auto)biographies will be happy with the balance between the large, national history and the small, individual one.

Das Mioritza Reich allows the contact of several Romanian typologies, some before World War I, some right before the 1989 Revolution and one from a possible XXIIInd century. Victor Cilincă obtains an extraordinary “reality effect” with the narrative contact between these typologies and with the inclusion in a compact fictional core, as equals, of three sources: a complete historical documentation, a journalistic rendition of the life experience under the communist regime and a skillful usage of the bibliography on alternate history. In a short afterword from the author, the reader gets the explanation for the “reality effect” because they see that Victor Cilincă has written historical fiction and made journal-

istic inquiries before, plus his own life is looking more like a novel than a CV. None of this would guarantee a literary effect. It is not enough to know, to find out, one must be able to adequately express all that. I dare to sustain that, in *Das Mioritza Reich*, we meet with the most adequate expression of *uchronic (auto)biography* from the post-1989 Romanian literature.

The story is simple: the inflexion point between the parallel realities from the novel is in the evening of the Crown Council from July 1914, when it was decided that Romania stays neutral (in the “real” history) or to follow her treaty with the Central Powers and go to war against Russia (in the fictional history). The inflexion point is passed between realities by a comical and grotesque character, Camil Surupăceanu, citizen of Socialist Romania under Ceausescu, from “our” 1988—a vulgar, half-wit, but joyful 50-something man—, who accidentally causes the death of I. Brătianu—the politician who drove Romania in 1916 towards the Allies, in the real history—by poisoning with oysters altered by time travel. However, an attentive reader would feel at the end that the uchronic story is rather a pretext for Victor Cilincă to let his speculative mind play with parallel realities, having one centre and two references: the Present-Past of the *kronotrotter* Surupăceanu (from our 1988) between the Possible Future of *kronotrotter* Felix (22nd century, nations and national languages are gone, the Romanian space becomes the IVth Nokia district, the population lives in infinite life-films – virtual reality scenarios with rare links in concrete environments) and the Past-Present of Missy (Queen Maria, in the real history; only to become a writer of whom the Crown Prince Ferdinand was forced to divorce after the German victory, in *Das Mioritza Reich*). The author’s game comprises fiction in fiction (sf-ul written in the sciences’ notebook by the *kronotrotter*’s son, EuGENIUS), the fictionalized historical document (the Crown Council’s evening is lived by Camil for two times, after two temporal jumps, one without altering the reality and the second bringing the fatal modification; also, the sequences from the queen’s life, before and immediately after the war; also, some sequences from the public manifestations from Romania’s capital before the war), as well as an ironic discourse on the philosophy of history (the dialogues between Felix and Camil or the infrequent author interventions when speaking to the reader).

Here is the place to say why a writing like *Das Mioritza Reich* is a *heuristic solution* in the legitimation fictions’ conflict covering the Romanian space. Victor Cilincă does not give answers, but suggests every ques-

tion to follow the “What If?” Romania was to fight WWI according to her secret treaties. He masters the art of bringing history to the individual level, to show on the small scale the effects of major events, without being pathetic or grotesque. His character of queen Maria is an evocation, but also a covered love letter (mark the emotional ambiguity of Felix, the character allowed to get close to the queen!) written after a century. So, if a writer succeeds in writing so much about a big community of people—be that the Romanians—as well as an exceptional person—be that their queen Maria—, his book is not only a literary achievement, but a precious help for any counterfactual history. *Das Mioritza Reich* gives the *heuristic solution* in keeping the “reality effect” indistinguishable from the aesthetic effect.

***We Shall Be Back in Muribecca* Led by Sebastian A. Corn**

THE NOVEL *We Shall Be Back in Muribecca* (*Ne vom întoarce în Muribecca*) is simultaneously the simplest and the most complex fiction ever written by Sebastian A. Corn in his career of over 20 years. *We Shall Be Back in Muribecca* is also the closest Romanian example of *universal solution* in the legitimization fictions’ conflict about which we are talking since 15th March to this day. Under every interpretative attitude, which finds simplicity or complexity, the last book by Sebastian A. Corn keeps the essential reference of Romanian language constructions; *We Shall Be Back in Muribecca* cannot be dissociated from the language it was written, more so than any other recent Romanian book in the genre, with all the observations ready to be made for the probable straightforward translation. One observes from the very first lines of the analysis the pairs of contradictory terms: simple-complex, local-universal, translatable-untranslatable. I believe that the extraordinary impact of this novel is due to this simultaneous presence, during the act of reading, of the tensions resulting from the interpretative possibilities—and this is a measure of the level of artistry achieved by Sebastian A. Corn.

A discourse on a perceived simultaneity can be uttered, unfortunately, only in a succession: therefore I shall speak first about the *simplicity* of *We Shall Be Back in Muribecca*.

This book is an adventure novel, a character novel and a novel of ideas. Every single one of these approaches will find its own deep currents from the beginning of the reading to its end. The author has the knowledge and the skill to build his narrative with clear moments of action, easily identifiable behind the many faces of his discourse:

an easy trick is the presence at every chapter’s start of some guiding lines resembling in content and role those from the books about exotic journeys, like *Il Millione* by Marco Polo and the “voyages extraordinaires” by Jules Verne. It is perfectly legitimate to read *We Shall Be Back in Muribecca* only as an adventure novel and nothing else. The zest of this reading comes from the exploration of the Amazon forest looking for the mythical town of Muribecca by equally exotic characters—among them, a Russian family with Jewish roots—caught in a branched but intelligible plot. We get hunting trips, earthquakes, quests in the green hell, violence and hallucinations, witty dialogues, everything at a fast pace, a chase along 49 chapters for which Corn prepared his reader with the previous novels.

The character novel is also an honourable reading for *We Shall Be Back in Muribecca*. At least at the same level with his previous novels, Sebastian A. Corn builds his structures on strong antinomic pairs, with an absolute novelty, the pair made by the Russian teenager with a French name François and the native young man Kiaui. This pair is the core of the book in the character novel’s reading as it gives the author the chance to try the narrative of an initiation path, not explicitly, but by poetical suggestion, and/or the narrative of the passage between psychological and spiritual ages. It was a writer’s bet, because in all his previous books Sebastian A. Corn dealt only with mature characters, with stable psychologies who were able to keep their place in the story on the same moral coordinate (positive or negative, for the human characters, debatably neutral for the non-humans). The binary character François-Kiaui allows Corn to win the bet by making equivalent the evolution of the two youngsters coming from extremely different levels of culture and civilisation. I repeat, even if only for the adventures of the two boys, the reading of *We Shall Be Back in Muribecca* is truly satisfactory.

With this book, it is not the first time Sebastian A. Corn tries the novel of ideas. No further back than 2012, *Interzone Skipper* (*Skipper de interzonă*) was a novel I interpreted as *hard science fiction* because it built its own catastrophies’ science in cvasi-prescriptive chapters (the term is M.M. Rodriguez’s). And before the *Skipper...* there is the amazing *Empire of the Great Graal* (*Imperiul Marelui Graal*), where an attentive reader can see beyond the classical temporal surgical interventions a very personal socio-cultural theory and, more than that, the first exploitation in Corn’s writings of the fictional capabilities of phonetics – the same “pathology” of sounds from the first chapters of ...*Muribeca*. Even only on

this string, we reach *Aquarius*, where linguistics comes into the hardcore of this author's reservoir of ideas. On the other hand, the socio-cultural experiment, with an accent on its communicational dimension, was a permanent presence in Corn's writing: *The Tallest Tower of Baabylon* (*Cel mai înalt turn din Baabylon*) and *The Brunds' Book* (*Cartea Brundurilor*)—and *Muribecca* have all the data to be a Babylon for someone who looks at internal parallels in Corn. I do not want to be understood as I reduce the novel of ideas from *We Shall Be Back in Muribecca* only to a very elaborate speculative fiction construction, though it is something like this too. The major difference between this book and what was before in the author's writing, from the point of view of the fiction of ideas and of literary ideology, is that for the first time Corn is letting open the moral judgement over an idea in a realist key, while before this book he preferred the closure of a more or less neutral amorality. In other words, in Corn's previous novels, there was no moral value added to the one who was winning the race. The ending from *We Shall Be Back in Muribecca* has a strong ethical suggestion, hidden in the poetical discourse, but impossible to ignore, precisely through the presence of what/whom François and Kiauì have become.

That is enough for the moment, about the simple universality of the solution from *We Shall Be Back in Muribecca*.

I was saying that this novel of Sebastian A. Corn's is his most complex writing to date. It might make somebody wonder, but I believe the complexity is easier to model than simplicity, especially in literature. One must only get scientific about the textual analysis, the critical follow-up needs a well structured argument in a clear style. In other words, the complexity of a literary text is a gift for the critic.

Therefore, I emphatically choose to by-pass the analysis which is fashionable today. And because I trust more that every reader of *We Shall Be Back in Muribecca* can build his or her own model of complexity, I dare to stay in poetics.

The spiritual part of literature is poetry. Or: poetry comes before literature as a spiritual experience of the language. Or, closer to the subject: poetry explores new territories, literature colonizes them. These propositions are useful to me as to say more than "the novel *We Shall Be Back in Muribecca* is a fictional construction with poetic architecture"—because this would only mean that I just treasure the technicalities in Corn's writing. He obviously has skills (see the hymn-monologues, his citation technique, his very personal pathology of signs—

sounds or letters—, the visual effect of the last page etc.), but these skills do not make him unique. What is giving him uniqueness is *poetry*, not *poeticity*.

I dare to show how Sebastian A. Corn prepared this effect: he needed two other novels, *Cut me with the Edge of your Scalpel, Wrote Josephine* (*Să mă tai cu tăișul bisturului tău, scrie Josephine*) and *The Healer* (*Vindecătorul*). Although these are good books too, they are not among the public's preference nor on genre critics' lists, as it is considered "too realist"—...*Josephine*—or as having "not enough" speculation—*Vindecătorul*. This is correct up to one point, because the "too realistic" is one of the definitions for *naturalism*, and the limit of speculation does not automatically mean *mimetic fiction*. (For the sf fanatics: naturalism is one of the literary sources for sf because it requires detailed description of the "real" object, don't you think?) Both these novels expand the epic tension of a particular approach to language. In ...*Josephine*, forgetting the words and brutal action, the story is told from two different points of view that are tantamount to each other. In *The Healer*, the substance is *finding the words*, while the action is developing, climbing the stairs in their usage, and is equal to the discovery of the world. Hence we have, beyond concept, and into a well articulated narrative, an exploration of the white zones of the language, a *mapping* of these, which can (in *The Healer*) or cannot be (in ...*Josephine*) a *reification*. Sebastian A. Corn takes the language games very seriously, up to that point where he develops his own poetics for his own usage, based on a strong language philosophy. The exercise of finding the formal expression for Corn's poetics is not hard at all, in my opinion.

To close this essay together with the closure of the series of "solutions for the legitimation fictions' conflicts around the Romanian space", I say that the ending of *We Shall Be Back in Muribecca*, with the suggested sacrifice of the hybrid being, Kiauì, to save his blood-brother, François, produces catharsis according to the Aristotelian definition. This novel of Sebastian A. Corn, written in Romanian, but wonderfully translatable, is the best recent example of a *universal solution*, necessary and sufficient, peaceful and pacifying, epic and poetical, which is given to the world by the Romanian imaginary.

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Biography

CATALIN is a 45 year old Romanian scholar with a PhD thesis on Romanian sf&f literature called “Romanian Fantastika After WW2.” He has been active in Romanian sf&f fandom since 1984, and has three books published in the Romanian language on sf&f between 2001-2013, mainly critical articles spiced with some theoretical essays.

Catalin has one booklet in English on the history of Romanian sf: *Short (Hi)Story of Romanian Speculative Fiction*, MediaTech, Iasi, Romania, 2012, available here: <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/short-c-x0103-t-x0103-lin-badea-gheracos>. Since 2012, Catalin signs the weekly column about Romanian sf&f subjects, “SFada cu Literatura” (“Quarrell with Literature”) in “Observer Cultural” (www.observatorcultural.ro).

Biopunk 101

Lars Schmeink

IN THE APRIL 2002 issue of *Rolling Stone*, “The Cool Issue” (#893), the prophets of cultural significance, who determine music fads, fashion icons and the attitudes of our times, professed to know the newest trends of anything cool in culture. On page 80, a smallish item of geeky science fictionality appeared in pop-culture’s great chronicle of cool. The self-proclaimed Zeitgeist-icons had identified a concept promising the new millennium the “trendiness of cyberpunk” (“Gene Hack-Men” 80) not simply in literature but as a wholly new cultural formation: biopunk. Biopunk purportedly follows up the last two decades of cyberpunk but instead of computers and information technology it rather deals with “biotechnology and hacking the gene pool” (80). *Rolling Stone* identifies biopunk culture in the works of writers, such as “Jeff Noon, Paul Di Filippo, Octavia E. Butler and Michael Marshall Smith” (80), in James Cameron’s TV show *Dark Angel*, but also in bio-artist Eduardo Kac’s creation of a glow-in-the-dark “transgenic bunny”

and an order website for bio-technological equipment—biopunk is everywhere, the short and slightly sardonic piece suggests, and it is most definitely being noticed in popular culture.

Moreover, by the time the first workable assembly of the human genome was released for public use in 2000, the term “biopunk” had already been connected to a new form of non-professional research practice and an anti-corporate agenda in science journalism. As early as 1990, Sylvan Katz had, in an article in the *New Scientist*, polemically (and prophetically) warned about the “emergence of amateur genetic engineers,” whom he dubbed “biohackers” (66), within the next decade or so. Ten years later, biohacking had become a reality, prompting Annalee Newitz to announce in the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* that “Cyberpunk is passé,” before claiming its radical potential for “the biopunk revolution”:

Biopunks are the visionaries whose imaginations were set on fire by the knowledge that we had finally sequenced the human genome last year. Biopunks get off on creative genetic engineering, RNA research, cloning and protein synthesis. Biopunks hack genomic data, lining up human genomes next to mouse genomes to find out what the two species have in common and what they don’t. (Newitz, “Biopunk”)

Newitz identifies several cultural aspects of the “movement in the making” in addition to the scientific ones and remarks that one of its strengths is that “the biopunk revolution has yet to be codified or legitimized” and that “it’s as ill-defined as the genome itself” (“Genome Liberation”; cf. also “Biopunk”). A look at internet platforms and blogs dealing with biopunk² reveals though, that the same ill-defined nature might also be recognized as a weakness. Bloggers and self-declared biopunks indulge in squabbles over which cultural objects to include under the title (if any), and understand artistic production only as a minor aspect of a possible definition. The continuous debate about the *Wikipedia* entry reveals a clear lack of coherence: the entry originated in literature, but

2 The most impressive array of discussion forums on the topic can be found at <http://www.biopunk.org>; blog examples are: http://www.genomealberta.ca/blogs/main_07290801.aspx and <http://sciencefictionbiology.blogspot.com/2009/04/gregor-mendel-died-for-your-sins.html>; (Sites have been accessed on 25 Apr 2014.)

by today science fiction has become merely a “related” subsection of the larger socio-political movement.³ Possible candidates to be included in this cultural variant of biopunk now include: Bruce Sterling’s *Schismatrix* (1985), Margaret Atwood’s *MaddAddam* trilogy (2003-13), Greg Bear’s *Blood Music* (1985) and *Darwin* series (1999-2003), Peter Watt’s *Rifter* series (1999-2004), Marc Budz’s *Clade* (2003), Paolo Bacigalupi’s *The Windup Girl* (2009), Paul McCauley’s *White Devils* (2004), Octavia Butler’s *Xenogenesis* trilogy (1987-89), Nancy Kress’s *Sleepless* series (1991-99), the TV-series *Heroes* (2006-10), *Dark Angel* (2000-02), and *Alphas* (2011-12), films such as *Gattaca* (1997), *I Am Legend* (2007), and *Splice* (2010), the films and video games of the *Resident Evil* franchise (1996-) and video games such as the *BioShock* series (2007-).

Biopunk, in its broad definition, can thus be a designation for the individual biohacker, who uses public domain information about genetics in order to work on do-it-yourself (DIY) biology in their home basement laboratories—people like Meredith Patterson, whom Marcus Wohlsen in his journalistic study of entrepreneurs and figureheads of DIY biology calls a “self-taught bioengineer [who] spliced genes at her dining room table” (37). Patterson epitomizes the biohacker because of her “primal urge to tinker” (Wohlsen 40) and because she has written the movement’s first unofficial statement of intent. Her “Biopunk Manifesto” is a form a self-proclamation and call to join ranks. Both Newitz and Wohlsen further argue that these individual DIY scientists form a loose network—the biopunk movement as proclaimed by Patterson—with lawyers, social and political activists, writers and artists, all of whom fight for public domain access to genomic data. The move-

3 The original entry from Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biopunk> dates to September 2004 and defines “biopunk” as a subgenre of science fiction. In October 2005 a section on a “Movement” was added. By January 2007 the focus had shifted and the socio-political meaning of the term had been moved to the foreground. One year later, January 2008, the order had been rearranged again, and by the end of February 2008 the entry provided a tri-part definition (the hacker as person, the movement and the literary genre). A discussion on which cultural products to include under the term ensued, which was cut short in January 2012, when the tripartite definition was removed and the above mentioned subsection established.

ment is decidedly anti-corporate and empowered by the “‘information-wants-to-be-free’ hacker ethos” (Newitz, “Genome Liberation”; cf. Wohlsen 5) that originated in the computer hacker scene of the 1980s and 90s. The inclusion of artists and writers in this movement reflects the need to culturally negotiate these technoscientific processes and concepts as well as the political consequences—it is here that biopunk functions as a literary and visual genre and thus forms a larger cultural formation, to use Lawrence Grossberg’s concept of apparently disparate but nonetheless interconnected cultural practices producing a new cultural articulation (70).

What most definitions of biopunk fail to properly acknowledge and what is necessarily important in terms of the “historical relations which *enabled* its appearance” (70), is that the term originated *specifically* in relation to science fiction, long before the technological development made the realization of such a movement even possible, and that it is thus already pre-determined in its cultural associations and metaphoric signifiers.

The Origin of Biopunk—Some Historical Notes

IN HIS SF-dictionary *Brave New Words* Jeff Prucher defines the term “biopunk,” etymologically a derivative of the words “*biology* + *cyberpunk*,” to mean “a subgenre of science fiction which explores the societal effects of biotechnology and genetic engineering” (16). He then cites the roleplaying game GURPS as the earliest use of the term in 1992, before his second citation, in *Interzone* 54/1 in 1997, reveals the strong connection that the etymology describes and that his own definition neglects: “cyberpunk described ways of positively enhancing the body by mechanical or silicon chip implants; biopunk examines a more fundamental consumerist option, change not just of our bodies but of our cells” (16). Aside from the dubious opposition of “body” and “cells,” this use of the term implies that biopunk is not just a subgenre of science fiction, but a subgenre of cyberpunk, a variant on the themes and tropes of this notorious science fictional subgenre itself.

Prucher not only neglected to stress the relation of biopunk to cyberpunk, but also its most likely coinage by Brian McHale in his 1992 book *Constructing Post-modernism*. In his final chapter “Towards a Poetics of Cyberpunk” McHale identifies cyberpunk not as a literary movement or cultural object but as a literary mode, whose poetics can be described in “three large bundles or complexes of motifs”: “worldness,” “the centrifugal self,” and “death, both individual and collective” (246f.). As part of the second complex, McHale identifies cyber-

punk's tendency to deal with the "dispersion and decentering" (255) of the self by creating visions of a diversity of posthuman futures. It is here that Thomas Foster most strongly identifies cyberpunk as an "intervention in and inflection of a preexisting discourse" (xiii) on the posthuman, blazing a popular cultural trail for the different inherent concepts.

In order to understand the historic debt of biopunk to cyberpunk (and thus the prototypical elements of its cultural formation), a closer look at McHale's differentiation might be warranted. He provides a "convenient taxonomy" (255) of the possible representations of the posthuman within cyberpunk science fiction by using Bruce Sterling's *Schismatrix* story cycle to map out its extreme positions. In *Schismatrix* two posthuman factions vie for power, the Shapers and the Mechanists. The Mechanists "use electronic and biomechanical means to augment themselves," while the Shapers "use bio-engineering techniques—cloning, genetic engineering—to achieve the same ends" (255). This opposition of mechanical versus biological augmentation then prompts McHale to conclude, in regard to his cyberpunk poetics, that there are two sets of aesthetic conceits employed by the authors: "We might call the first set, corresponding to the Mech option, cyberpunk proper, and the second set, corresponding to the Shaper option, 'biopunk'" (255). Thus, McHale coins the term to mean a subgenre of "cyberpunk proper" that he understands to function within the poetics of that parental literary mode, citing Greg Bear's *Blood Music* (1985) as another example of biopunk.

In 1993, the British journal *Vector* devoted a special issue to a little known and short lived 1980s Czech literary movement dubbed "biopunk." In this issue, Miroslav Fiser, in a reprinted and translated article from 1991, argues that "Biopunk is, after the robot, the second original contribution of Czech fantastic literature" (17) and then contends that it is limited to former socialist Eastern Europe due to its lack of technological advancement and the corresponding mindset of a technologically saturated society. To him, "biopunk is an antithesis of cyberpunk" (17), the answer from socialist societies lacking most of cyberpunk's imaginary. He argues that Czech biopunk refrains from using cyberpunk tropes of information technology, that it is a dystopian rather than a utopian outlook at technology, that it is charged with questions of environmentalism and feminism and that it is even more indebted to the punk movement because in a socialist political climate punk represented not only a gesture of rejection but equaled political

revolution. Therefore, Fiser refers to biopunk as "a cry from the depths of the maltreated soul. A cry expressed through programmatic foulness, allegory and rebelliousness" (17).

Neither article had been published in English before 1993, so it remains unclear who originally coined the term. But as the introductory notes to the issue state, by 1992 "biopunk" had become a localized referent for a historically specific, concluded movement—socialist oppression ended and neither Hauser nor Fiser wrote biopunk anymore, leaving the mode to be regarded as "the afterimage of a [*sic*] artistic impulse which belongs to a completely different social paradigm" (Simsa 12). Just as Bruce Sterling attempted in his preface to *Mirrorshades* to establish cyberpunk as science fiction's literary avant-garde, antagonistic to established SF-forms, Hauser and Fiser similarly enact a sort of literary self-exaggeration by emphasizing differences to cyberpunk (such as the socialist experience) and downplaying similarities. They are setting up biopunk as something radically new and use the dominant science fiction mode at the time to do so in comparison. Viewed with historical distance the statements thus, in my opinion, need to be relativized—cyberpunk is not always utopian or ignorant of feminist and ecological concerns, nor is it always created in privileged societies, though all of these critiques have been rightfully brought up at *some* point, against *some* cyberpunk writing. Nonetheless, both historic literary uses of the term "biopunk" emphasize a connection to cyberpunk (either through contiguity or adversity), and both see the tropes of the latter transformed from cybernetic to genetic—the scientific emphasis shifts from physics to biology, if you will.

Towards a Definition

HAVING ESTABLISHED the socio-political practices surrounding biopunk, as well as the literary historical relations from which it stems, at this point a short interjection might be necessary. As I have argued in my dissertation, I believe that biopunk in its contemporary usage might be somewhat of a misnomer (cf. Schmeink 18ff.), or at least signaling an emphasis where none should be. Given the original themes of early cyberpunk—the devil-may-care stance, the dirty and beaten settings, the low-down loser characters and the open connection to music culture—the emphasis of "*-punk*" in cyberpunk seems obvious. In biopunk, on the other hand, most of the time the emphasis of punk seems construed, sometimes even disparate and jarring. As Paul

Di Filippo notes in his “Ribofunk: The Manifesto,”⁴ a new, biologically-themed science fiction would need to take leave from any cyberpunk roots, because punk was already a “dead music when cyberpunk was born, a cul-de-sac” (Di Filippo). But since punk itself is a protean monster of variant definitions, of course, some generic elements still resonate even in biopunk. As noted before, the biopunk movement declares itself anti-capitalist and anti-government, and authors sometimes still feel drawn to down-and-out-characters for their stories. Nonetheless, the perceived historic specificity of cyberpunk—the connection to 1980s popular culture and socio-political realities—has led many scholars to declare the genre dead time and again (cf. Murphy and Vint xi-xii) and, in an attempt to move beyond it, all that follows as second-wave cyberpunk, “post-cyberpunk” or “cyberpunk-flavoured” (Butler 15; cf. Frelik). Biopunk seems similarly fraught with historic connotations that are mostly unjustified. And as much as I would like to propose an alternative, the examples from my introduction here have made it abundantly clear that biopunk has already become a cultural formation—misnomer or not, it is here to stay.

Acknowledging its generic debt to cyberpunk then, the question still remains: what qualities make a work of literature, a film, a video game, “biopunk”? In short, what is “biopunk”? Some working theses:

Biopunk thematically emphasizes biologically driven nova, especially genetic engineering. The proliferation of genetics as the site of the most radical scientific progress since the late 1990s, with successes like the genetic manipulation and patenting of foods (i.e., the Flavr Savr tomato in 1994), cloning (i.e., Dolly, the cloned sheep in 1997), transgenic experimentation (i.e., the “earmouse” of Dr. Vacanti in 1995 or the spider/goat splice of Dr. Randy Lewis in 2010), and the deciphering of the human genomic code, its mapping and publication (in 1999, 2000 and 2001 respectively), prominently placed genetic engineering at the centre of a public debate of science (cf. Ness 336, 351). Biopunk reflects this shift of scientific prominence in general discourses and provides a creative exploration not only of the technoscientific possibilities of further progress in genetics, but also of the environmental and social consequences that

they might bring with them. Atwood’s *MaddAddam* trilogy, for example, discusses genetic engineering and the social cost of transgenic experimentation. Bacigalupi’s *The Windup Girl* deals with genetic patenting and the terrible consequences of genetically altered food plagues. In *Gattaca*, humanity is able to manipulate fetal DNA to the wishes of parents, creating a superhuman society. In both *Heroes* and *Alphas*, a genetic mutation brings forth a superior species with superhuman abilities. *Splice* extrapolates the moral battlefield of creating a human-animal hybrid. And *Resident Evil* explores the consequences of genetically altering viral DNA in order to create biological weaponry.

Biopunk addresses a critical posthuman subjectivity. Contemporary posthumanism consists of not one but several strands of discourse that try to describe the posthuman condition, though most of them seem to reference an end or crisis in humanism (the conceptual condition of the human) and/or a change in the technological environment of life (the ontological condition the human). I would like to point out two main strands of posthuman thought as being important for the distinctiveness of biopunk. On the one hand, there is the “trans-humanist fantasy of escape from the finite materiality of the enfleshed self” (Braidotti 91), best represented in William Gibson’s *Neuromancer* (1984) and its depiction of the body as prison and an escape to the virtual world of the matrix. For Pramod Nayar, this strand is defined by its popular cultural appeal, as it simply describes the technoscientific improvement of a flawed and ultimately failing body. At the heart of this argument though, as Nayar points out, lies the implication that “there is a distinctive entity identifiable as the ‘human,’ a human ‘self’” (6). This is the posthumanism depicted in most cyberpunk texts and quite a few of Hollywood’s more successful franchises, from *Terminator* (1984) to *The Matrix* (1999).

The second posthuman strand then, critical posthumanism, by contrast represents a non-anthropocentric view of subjectivity, preferring to see the posthuman as “becoming-animal, becoming-earth and becoming-machine” (Braidotti 66), as “co-evolving, sharing ecosystems, life processes, genetic material, with animals and other life forms” (Nayar 8). Subjectivity is understood as complex, evolving and interrelated to all life (*zoe*) on earth. This is, at least prototypically, the posthumanism of biopunk—and it resonates with critical theory discussing feminist studies, animal studies, disability studies, post-colonial studies and even teratology studies, all of which interject new forms of subjectivity into a privi-

4 Di Filippo suggested “ribofunk” as an alternative term, which in turn was just as limited in scope—basically describing only his own writing style—and never got established as a genre in academic discourse of science fiction.

leged humanist perspective as the suppressed Other. In *Resident Evil*, human society is thus literally eaten up by a better suited, genetically altered species: zombies. In *Splice*, the human-animal hybrid proves much more complicated in her subjectivity than a mere division into human and animal sides. And in Bacigalupi's *Drowned Cities* (2012), a human-dog splice becomes the central character for reflections on the morality of a post-capitalist world.

And because of this interconnected zoe-centric view, most biopunk texts emphasize the human as a global force, pointing towards the earth's entry into a new geological era, the anthropocene. Geologists argue that considering the effect human activity has had on the planet—from climate change to fresh water collection to the spread of domestic animals—"humankind, our own species, has become so large and active that it now rivals some of the great forces of Nature in its impact on the functioning of the Earth system" (Steffen et al. 843). Biopunk picks up cyberpunk's idea of "worldness," which enacts culture and technology as global, and turns it against itself, extrapolating the environmental and social costs and consequences of a global society. In Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy, in Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl*, in the *Resident Evil* film series, and Alfonso Cuarón's film *Children of Men* (2006), human activity causes cataclysmic changes of the earth's environment—droughts, rising sea levels, mass extinctions, all of which cause a need to change human existence. Biopunk, then, enacts the anthropocene.

Conclusion

AS I TRIED TO SHOW, biopunk has become an independent cultural formation of the new millennium. As such, it has its historical origins and generic development in 1980s cyberpunk, but has since grown into an independent array of cultural tropes; it has evolved and been shaped into something quite distinct from being simply the biological version of "cyberpunk proper" (McHale 255). With the rise of biology within the general public debate as the forerunner of scientific progress, and genetics delivering the most radical advances in technoscience, biopunk texts have become inextricably linked with other cultural practices: DIY biology, biohacking, an anti-corporate sentiment in matters of biology, scientific critical concepts such as posthumanism, an awareness of the new geological era of the anthropocene. As such, it represents a chance for science fiction, both creatively and academically, to explore the dystopian and the utopian possibilities that these new tech-

nologies open up and the theoretical frameworks they bring with them. Biopunk, then, is a recently discovered but strongly growing field of science fiction inquiry.

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The Science Fiction Reboot: Canon, Innovation and Fandom in Refashioned Franchises

Susan A. George

Heather Urbanski. *The Science Fiction Reboot: Canon, Innovation and Fandom in Refashioned Franchises*. Jefferson: McFarland, 2013. Paperback, 240 pages, \$40.00, ISBN 978-0-7864-6509-5.

Order option(s): [Paper](#) | [Kindle](#)

THIS 2013 RELEASE from McFarland examines two popular topics in current science fiction research—fandom and the reboot. It starts with a preface and introduction in which the author, Heather Urbanski, sets out the parameters of the book. She also identifies herself, following Henry Jenkins, as an Aca-Fan—both an academic and a fan of science fiction. Urbanski’s concept for the book started to solidify in 2009 when she “was convinced that the ‘reboot experience,’ as I began to conceive it, was worth capturing and then analyzing in a systematic way. I was no longer content to merely catalog what had been changed and what had been maintained. I wanted to know how these reboots worked” (5). The theoretical approach of the book, as she goes on to explain, is heavily informed by Narratology, especially the work of Jason Mittell, Mieke Bal, Brian McHale, and David Herman. I found Urbanski’s writing style interesting and engaging, particularly in the dedication, introduction, and all the places where she does her rhetorical analysis of the various films and series discussed, including the *Star Trek* franchise, the *Star Wars* films, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Caprica*, and *V*. Her clarity and directness in these sections and passages are among the book’s strengths.

One weakness of the book is its organization. In an effort to uncover just “how these reboots work . . . in a systematic way” (5), George follows the introduction with five sections: Narrative Theory, Text, Story, Fabula, and Narrative Worlds of Science Fiction. Each section begins with its own additional introduction that reviews the theories to be used again, which makes for a choppy, disjointed reading experience. The multiple introductions disrupt the forward momentum of the book’s argument. The book spends so much time setting out the

theories and defining each theorist’s terms that it is easy to forget Urbanski’s larger project.

Another problem caused by the book’s organization schema is that by chapter six and seven specific examples used in earlier chapters are repeated. I kept thinking that if the author’s argument and analysis were foregrounded and the theory used as tools to clarify and support her readings, it would be a much more engaging and cohesive book. The book works best, in fact, when Urbanski discusses the texts in connection with the larger concerns of the individual chapters (including Digital Effects, Music and Sound, Setting and Place, Actors and Characters, and Actors and Function) and stays focused on how these “refashioned franchises” nostalgically remind and challenge the spectator of the original while at the same time making significant and important changes that invite new spectators.

The book’s multiple introductions create several other issues. First, at times, it seems more like a review of the literature than a book about “refashioned franchises.” Instead of using Narrative theory to inform her close textual reading of the various reboots, Urbanski presents summaries of the theories or pulls out various key quotations. Then she fits her rhetorical analysis into the theoretical framework she establishes. Her analysis, then, is more about the application of the theory than a critical analysis of the texts. While this strategy can be informative, I find it far less interesting and, in this particular case, it limits the analysis as the author must force her textual readings into the template set up in each section’s introduction and the chapters themselves. The book’s organization and the emphasis placed on the theoretical framework fragment the author’s argument and, ultimately, weaken it.

In addition to the thirteen chapters divided into five sections, the book has an “Afterword: The Fandom Experience” and an “Appendix: For Further Reading.” Some of the afterward could have been used to establish Urbanski’s unique argument more powerfully earlier in the book, and those sections seem awkward at the end. The rest of the afterward adds little to the larger issues discussed in the book and is clearly more on the fan side of the Aca-Fan spectrum. The appendix provides an annotated bibliography of two Fandom wikis and six works on Narrative Theory that are useful, if limited. The index is short and some key terms and names important to the book’s purpose are missing. For example, “reboot” and “refashioned franchises” are not listed in the index and neither are many of the actors and characters discussed. Since whole sections of the book focus on actors and

characters, they should be included in the index for research purposes and quick reference.

Postmodern Science Fiction and the Temporal Imagination

Leon Marvell

Elana Gomel. *Postmodern Science Fiction and the Temporal Imagination*. London: Continuum Literary Studies, 2010. Hardcover, 192 pages, \$110, ISBN 978-1441123954

Order option(s): [Paper](#)

WAY BACK IN 2003 I was asked to teach a course on postmodernism for visual arts students. Postmodernism? I thought to myself, that is *so* twentieth century. Yet here we find a book holding to the notion that postmodernism is still a relevant concept to explore, particularly as it relates to SF and conceptions of time. In the preface Gomel quotes three very different writers—John Keats, Walter Benjamin and Alastair Reynolds—and concludes that for these writers, at least in the passages to which she is referring, time is standing still, and the flow of time is an illusion. One might object that for Gomel, critical theory itself seems to have stood still, and not to have moved on from discussions of its once favorite child, postmodernism. Be that as it may, Gomel's contribution to the continuing life of postmodernism proves to be a bracing antidote to such a curmudgeonly assessment.

A first glance across the pages of Gomel's book would immediately reveal the breadth of the scholarship that was involved in its creation. The author displays a masterful understanding of the many contributory ideas that form our understanding of postmodernism, name-checking all the key theorists—such as Lyotard, Jameson, McHale—while also invoking the ideas of lesser known theorists, all of whom Gomel artfully references to substantiate her own particular take on “postmodern narratology” as it pertains to SF.

In her Introduction Gomel surveys the effects of postmodernism's privileging of spatial conceptions of narrative over those of temporality. *Contra* such postmodern strategies, Gomel's argument is that “time has never gone away,” and that postmodernism is “characterized not by depletion of temporal imagination but

by its explosive growth” and that these “new forms of time, new *timeshapes*, [are] generated by evolutionary theory, quantum mechanics, cosmology, cyberspace, globalization and resurgent fundamentalism” (3). The word ‘timeshapes’ is an invention of Gomel's, and of course one is immediately reminded of Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope. She quickly turns to a discussion of Bakhtin's influential conception of the “time space” of narratives, noting Bakhtin's own acknowledgement of the import of Einstein and Minkowski's conception of spacetime in the formation of his idea. In particular Gomel reminds us of Bakhtin's rejection of Kant's idea of the purely cognitive basis of our conceptions of space and time. Following what one might call the “thermodynamic revolution” of the late 19th century, time and space were no longer mental abstractions but actual properties of the world. Einstein's proposal of the “block theory” of spacetime reified these various developments in the physical sciences.

Throughout *Postmodern Science Fiction and the Temporal Imagination* Gomel seems to vacillate between invoking Bakhtin's idea of chronotope and her own idea of “timeshape,” often using both terms in the one sentence. This is of course rather confusing, and at times her use of timeshape seems quite superfluous when juxtaposed with Bakhtin's term in the same discussion. When one remembers however that Gomel's term cleaves to the *temporal* implications of the text rather than the space-and-time dimensions of the work, then one becomes a little more reassured.

Gomel announces that she is going to discuss SF as a postmodern genre (as distinguished from *postmodern SF* as a subset of the SF genre), and in doing this she will be looking at three key aspects: *time travel*, *alternative histories* (or counterfactuals), and *apocalypse*.

Her first chapter provides the template for her subsequent investigations: a discussion of Wells' *The Time Machine* that recognises the novel as the first of its kind, and as a site of perturbation that activates many of SF's postmodern tropes and philosophical extemporisations. Gomel's opening gambit is well played: that which distinguished Wells' *The Time Machine* from any of its supposed predecessors (Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* for example) is that by “inventing a time *machine* Wells created a new kind of chronotope firmly rooted in science. The Time Traveller's long and scientifically plausible explanation of time as the fourth dimension of space serves the same rhetorical function as the cogs-and-wheel device. Both are means to validate his ontological *novum* in terms of scientific cogni-

tion rather than supernatural faith.” (28). Wells’ novel conveniently employs different ‘timeshapes’ (articulated in its embedded narratives), and this allows Gomel to “analyse each chronotope of the novel against a particular strand in the *fin-de-siecle* debate on time” (30). As one can appreciate, the strange vacillation between her use of ‘timeshapes’ and Bakhtin’s chronotope throws into question her very invention of the term time-shape—but luckily this momentary doubt on the reader’s part is assuaged by her oftentimes brilliant discussion of Wells’ temporalities, chronoclasms (such as the famous “grandfather paradox” of time-travel), Einstein’s theories of relativity, Darwinism, determinism, and the fact that *The Time Machine* “both argues against, and succumbs to, its deterministic timeshape” (37).

Chapter Two opens with a discussion of Heinlein’s story “...All You Zombies...,” arguing that the “splintering of the temporal continuity of the self in time-travel narratives parallels the postmodern ‘death’ of the subject” (53). This begins her exploration of what Gomel calls the “postmodernism of contingency, with its ‘total acceptance of the ephemerality, fragmentation, discontinuity and the chaotic’...” (62). The idea of ‘contingency’ follows on both thematically and logically from her earlier discussion of determinism and chance in the very first chapter. It also allows Gomel to reference the ideas of Richard Feynman and consequently to state that quantum mechanical uncertainty “ceases to be an *epistemological* concept and becomes an *ontological* one,” (71), thus confirming McHale’s idea (which she has earlier approvingly cited) that SF is an ontological literature rather than one concerned with epistemology.

The following chapter, “My Name is Might-have-Been”: Contingency, Counterfactuals and Moral Choice” is an original and enlightening discussion, in part, of the idea of alternative histories and in particular of the importance of “counterfactuals” for the historian and the cultural theorist.

The final chapter of the book—quite appropriately placed, one might note—deals with a peculiar (and perhaps peculiarly American) manifestation of the SF genre: Christian apocalyptic SF. This is prefaced by a discussion of recent disaster and apocalyptic cinema (*2012*, *Independence Day*, *Day After Tomorrow*, etc) and Kant’s and Burke’s ideas about the sublimity of terror and torment, thus allowing Gomel to conclude that, “We are all junkies of the sublime” (119). Gomel proceeds to analyse the apocalyptic Christian SF of *The Left Behind*, intersections with the Book of Revelations and fundamentalist ideas of the Tribulation and the Rapture. This

analysis allows her to return to her main theme: “What is particularly striking about the apocalyptic plot is the way in which it separates time and space by linking the former to the horror of the Tribulations and the latter to the perfection and quietude of the millennium” (122).

Gomel’s work is an unusual rehearsal of postmodernism’s main theories and an original critique of these theories, with the added spice of the implications of 20th century quantum mechanics for readings of “SF postmodernism.” Her choice of texts for analysis is eclectic and wide-ranging, and her ideas and conclusions are more often than not challenging and original. And if indeed the gears of postmodernism are still slowly turning, then this book is certainly a scintillating spanner in the works.

The Heritage of Heinlein: A Critical Reading of the Fiction

Rafeeq O. McGiveron

Thomas D. Clareson and Joe Sanders. *The Heritage of Heinlein: A Critical Reading of the Fiction*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2014. Softcover, 232 pages. \$45.00, ISBN 978-0-7864-7498-1.

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THOMAS D. CLARESON and Joe Sanders’ *The Heritage of Heinlein*, the 42nd in McFarland’s Critical Explorations in Science Fiction and Fantasy series, is a thorough, even-handed, yet also probing investigation that should be enlightening to academics, to students, and to ordinary readers who wish to explore further the trends and themes of the work of perhaps the most famous science fiction writer of all time. Covering the entirety of Robert A. Heinlein’s fiction, from “Lifeline,” the author’s first published story, through *To Sail Beyond the Sunset*, his last novel, the text also addresses his formerly unpublished first novel, *For Us, the Living*, and even includes a brief appendix on four notable works of non-fiction: *Grumbles from the Grave*, *Tramp Royale*, *Take Back Your Government*, and, because of the entertaining fillers and factual essays that accompany its stories, *Expanded Universe*.

The Heritage of Heinlein is a fine and engaging read, and the Foreword by the late Frederick Pohl—who in a dryly witty and occasionally self-deprecating man-

ner provides interesting anecdotes of Heinlein's life and career, gives a verbal thumbnail sketch of the different economies of "pulp" and "slick" magazines, and comments offhandedly that we are indebted to Claeson and Sanders for having described *For Us, the Living* so that we "never have to read it" ourselves (3)—seems a beautiful way to begin. Really, despite the text's nuanced analyses and its discussion of previous scholarship, something of this good-natured breeziness remains throughout; never do we forget that this is the work of a pair of professors who at heart are careful and attentive readers rather than pickers of nits or strokers of pet theories, and who are not averse to a stray first-person aside or a bit of waggishness when waggishness is due.

Sanders begins by noting his own "long and uneasy relationship with Heinlein's writing": enjoying as a youth the postwar stories and the novels through the 1950s, later being "appalled" by the longer works from the 1970s onward, and yet finally growing to the conclusion that, like Claeson, he "love[s] the man this side of idolatry" (12). This, Goldilocks-wise, seems the perfect approach—being neither a slavish fan ready to swallow anything nor a critic determined to sneer at everything—and it allows the authors "to look fairly and clearly at what [Heinlein] wrote" (13). Readers of course may disagree with the authors on occasion, just as they may with the ideas of Heinlein that are being discussed. Never, however, can Claeson and Sanders be accused of partisanship or of a slipshod approach.

The book is comprised of seven chapters: "A New Calling: *For Us, the Living*" by Joe Sanders; "Early Professional Writing," "Transitions," and "The Juveniles for Scribners," begun by the late Thomas D. Claeson and finalized by Sanders; and "The 'Classic' Period," "*Stranger in a Strange Land*," and "The Final Period" by Sanders. Each chapter then discusses, in chronological order, every one of Heinlein's works of fiction within that particular period. Really, even if the book never went beyond basic description with plot summaries and details of original publication—which of course it does—it almost still would be worth buying merely for the encyclopedic overview. Claeson and Sanders, however, make sure to address the commonalities and contradictions of Heinlein's writing throughout, and to situate their discussion within the existing criticism as well.

The authors "pay attention both to the continuity of Heinlein's work and its variety, assuming that a writer may test persistent concerns in different ways during his career and that grappling with contradictions may lead to the irritation and energy that can produce art"

(11). Solipsism is one concern, both of the literal "All You Zombies" and "By His Bootstraps" variety and also that which occurs not only in fiction to a Jubal Harshaw or a Lazarus Long but even sometimes in the monthly faculty meeting in our own world: "a response to recognition that one is the smartest person in a conversation, a group, or a neighborhood. If those other people don't deserve respect for their ability to process information or to act effectively, why bother with them at all?" (108). Yet bother with them we must, and Heinlein knows it. Free will versus determinism, the "deep tension between reverence for the free individual's potential and disappointment at how most people actually behave" (111), personal choice within the context of duty, the many meanings of the word love, how to organize and run the family—all of these of course are discussed. As Sanders observes, "Heinlein is capable of seeing opposing positions, putting them together in the same work, and somehow getting away with endorsing neither or both. That barely disguised uneasiness is, in fact, the source of such stories' lasting power" (120).

Claeson and Sanders' text "doesn't pretend to be the only reading of Heinlein's fiction" (11), and it helpfully acknowledges the analytic and evaluative conversations that have come before. This is done not by some grand ritual slaughter of the critics but simply by identifying connections as they happen to come up in this book's explorations. In this respect, Claeson and Sanders have nothing to prove: they either nod approvingly to or tack judiciously away from the major works of criticism, and some lesser known ones as well, as appropriate, but it is in calm self-assurance rather than any need to catalog every article in the field. No critic is kowtowed to, and neither is anyone skewered, though I did note that H. Bruce Franklin—whose book sometimes shows the unflappable righteousness of a Marxist who seems never to have heard the word *gulag*—had a fair number of evaluations mildly, and I believe correctly, tweaked.

The Heritage of Heinlein: A Critical Reading of the Fiction thus is a pleasure for the scholar, the student, and avid reader of the man who helped shape modern science fiction. Urbane and sometimes deliciously sly, Thomas D. Claeson and Joe Sanders succeed in "respect[ing] the diversity of Heinlein's fiction as he grappled energetically with basic, perhaps unanswerable, human questions" (214). If I, who have used Heinlein's juveniles around the house as Kip Russell's father uses Jerome K. Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat*, may crib again from Claeson and Sanders' conclusion, which itself cribs from the Master himself, "On the whole, [they]

gave ‘a good performance’” (214)...and then some.

Dark Lightning

Doug Davis

Varley, John. *Dark Lightning*. New York: Ace, 2014.
Hardcover, \$26.95 USD, 352 pages, ISBN 978-0425274071.

Order option(s): [Paper](#)

Dark Lightning is the fourth book in John Varley’s entertaining young-adult Thunder and Lightning series. The novel is set twenty years after the events of *Rolling Thunder* (2008) aboard the starship *Rolling Thunder*, a hollowed-out asteroid containing 35 square miles of picturesque living space presently traveling at three-quarters of the speed of light on a decades-long trip to New Sun. Like the previous two books in Varley’s Thunder and Lightning series, *Red Lightning* (2006) and *Rolling Thunder*, *Dark Lightning* is told from the point of view of the offspring of the previous book’s protagonist, in this case Podkayne’s twin daughters, Cassie and Polly. However, while *Dark Lightning* features many of the characters from Varley’s previous books in the series, it also marks a departure from the tenor of the previous two books, and not just because it is told across a generational divide. With *Dark Lightning*, Varley has left Earth behind both literally and thematically. While the first book in the series, *Red Thunder*, is a rollicking teenage adventure, the subsequent two books feature more weighty subject matter modeled on the real-life terrors of the 21st century such as terrorist attacks, wars and climate change. Now that his ever-growing Garcia-Strickland-Redmond-Broussard clan has left a ruined, invaded earth behind them, Varley is no longer modeling his plot on current events. Instead, he returns his readers to the comforts of home, which in Varley’s case has long been an off-world habitat.

Where the first three books in Varley’s series feel much like an homage to Heinlein, *Dark Lightning* feels more like an homage to Varley’s own earlier work in his Eight Worlds universe and Gaea trilogy. Varley has long explored life away from Earth, building homes, vacation destinations, and whole fantasy lands out of moons, asteroids and ships. It is a pleasure to read about Varley’s little words; no matter the crises his characters face, life in Varley’s engineered habitats is generally full of expanded possibilities and new experiences, kinds of sub-

jectivity, forms of kinship and ways of life. Even when their technological systems fail, some of their inhabitants become brutal, or their AIs go mad, Varley's worlds never tilt toward dystopia. Instead, in his off-world stories Varley has consistently imagined super technologies that allow his characters to live life without its usual limits. His characters are not limited to living on Earth or maintaining human form; their technologies allow them to cheat disease and death. If people could put life on Earth and the everyday perils of scarcity and mortality behind them, Varley's off-world tales seem to ask, what would they then do? Where and how could they live? What new problems would they face and solve?

In *Dark Lightning*, Varley builds another stunning little world, this time sustained by the Thunder and Lightning series's super technology of bubbles, which can both serve as massive clean power sources and also preserve their contents in a timeless state. Both narrators Cassie and Polly were born aboard the *Rolling Thunder*. It is a wondrous place, a nostalgic simulation of life in small-town Earth. Much of *Dark Lightning's* pleasure derives from following Cassie and Polly as they explore the ship and discuss its society and inner workings. Using the vast wealth he amassed through his family's ownership of bubble technology, Travis Broussard—who by now has become the Thunder and Lightning series's Heinlein-esque patriarch—has built a near-paradise out of the architectural remains of old destroyed earth for the twenty five thousand residents of his starship. Of course, even paradise can get into trouble. When it does, twins Cassie and Polly must seize their place in their family's storied history and utilize all of their great ship's resources to save their world.

On his blog at Varley.net, Varley writes that *Dark Lightning* will "probably" be the final book in his Thunder and Lightning series (<http://varley.net/dark-lightning-complete/>). I hope this isn't true (who ends a series midway through an interstellar journey?). The four books of Varley's YA series have become increasingly interesting for the ways that Varley handles such issues as class, gender, race and ethnicity, and family. The Garcia-Strickland-Redmond-Broussard clan have come a long way from their roots in working class Florida and Louisiana. The four generations of storytellers in the series take readers across the class spectrum. It would be instructive to explore either with students or in a work of scholarship the differences between Manny Garcia's working class point of view in *Red Thunder* with Cassie and Polly's much more privileged point of view as sci-ions of the ship's first family in *Dark Lightning*. Varley

has also shifted his series's narrative voice from male to female in a way that will interest those teaching and studying gendered narrative voices; while *Red Thunder* is told by Manny and *Red Lightning* by his son Ray, *Rolling Thunder* and *Dark Lightning* are stores told by two generations of women. Furthermore, as the hyphenated name of his ruling clan suggests, with each new book in his series Varley has created an extended family noteworthy for its racial and ethnic diversity.

Indeed, after following the adventures of four generations of Garcias and Stricklands and Redmonds and Broussards, I have become especially interested in Varley's representation of family and specifically of familial generations. Now that this series is four titles long, Varley's Garcia-Strickland-Redmond-Broussard clan has become one of the biggest close-knit (human) families I can think of in the SF megatext. Starting with *Red Lightning*, each of the Thunder and Lightning's series's daring and resourceful teenage protagonists has become a parent, then a grandparent, and then a great-grandparent. Each protagonist also accordingly becomes a character in her child's story. It has been amusing to watch each of Varley's heroes get cast into roles in someone else's story—a story not about them. With each generation, Varley's Thunder and Lightning protagonists recede into their family roles and then their family history. Manny and the other once-teenage heroes from *Red Thunder* are all aboard the *Rolling Thunder*, after all. However, given their advanced age, these intrepid explorers have been preserved, along with the fresh shrimp, in black bubbles waiting to be popped open once the ship arrives safely at New Earth. Without their efforts, humanity would have never left Earth (and would now probably be extinct). To Cassie and Polly, though, great grandma and grandpa are just black bubbles who merit only a few sentences in their story.

I recommend Varley's Thunder and Lightning series to those teaching or writing about YA SF or the legacy of Robert Heinlein as well as to scholars and educators who are interested in the specific issues mentioned above. But above all, I recommend *Dark Lightning* and Varley's entire series to all parents everywhere who wonder what their children and distant descendants will think of them.

ShipStar

Bill Dynes

Benford, Gregory, and Larry Niven. *Shipstar*. New York: Tor, 2014. Cloth, \$27.99 USD, 400 pages, ISBN 978-0-07653-2870-0.

Order option(s): [Paper](#) | [Audible](#)

ALTHOUGH THE back cover copy describes *Shipstar* as a sequel to Benford and Niven's 2012 *The Bowl of Heaven*, this novel is more properly a continuation of that work, picking up *in media res* as ruthless aliens pursue our courageous but outmatched heroes across a hostile and unforgiving terrain. As that description may suggest, *Shipstar* is—like *The Bowl of Heaven* before it—a relatively conventional SF action-adventure yarn, populated by recognizable, often sketchily-drawn, characters and hitting familiar plot beats. The narrative here is more coherent and better organized than in the previous work, however, yielding an engaging tale. Many readers appear to have been underwhelmed by Benford and Niven's initial collaboration, but the larger scope of *Shipstar* offers room for enough excitement and compelling ideas to reward those who continue the journey.

In *The Bowl of Heaven*, the crew of the interstellar ship *SunSeeker*, on their way to establish humanity's second extra-solar colony, encounter a stunningly massive artifact, a hemispherical shell cupping a red dwarf star. The star is emitting a single flare propelling it and the incredible bowl toward the same star that is *SunSeeker's* destination. The crewmembers whom Captain Redwing sends down to explore the surface soon encounter the Folk, giant birdlike aliens who appear to be the ones ruling the vast construct and the myriad species who populate it. Much of *The Bowl of Heaven* is taken up by the efforts of the human explorers to escape the Folk, who are determined either to “adopt” the newcomers or destroy them. As *Shipstar* begins, some of the desperate crew members escape back to their ship, but others remain on the run and some are captured, to be used either as intermediaries to negotiate terms of surrender or as experimental test subjects.

In some ways, *Shipstar* is tighter and more focused; since *Bowl* handled most of the necessary introductions and backstories, the follow-up is free to concentrate on driving the plot forward. The narrative shifts among several point-of-view characters, including one of the aliens, and at least one character who had only

a minor role to play in *Bowl* steps up to become a significant presence as the chase heats up. The character list provided at the start of the text helps the reader keep the roles and relationships straight, since the narrative voices often have little to distinguish them. Benford and Niven themselves take as many opportunities as they can to reflect upon the engineering marvels involved in the creation and the maintenance of the artifact—essentially half a Dyson sphere—and the star that propels it. But as one might expect of these prolific and successful hard-sf writers, the requisite monologuing is generally handled in engaging ways.

Perhaps the most compelling aspect of *Shipstar* is the manner in which Benford and Niven play with scale and, in the process, evoke the “sense of wonder” that has always been so important in their fiction. The physical scale of the Bowl is impressive enough. Far grander than Niven's Ringworld, the Bowl's diameter is more than a hundred million miles, with as much surface area as hundreds of millions of Earths. Flying above, Captain Redwing looks down over cloud formations the size of continents and planet-sized oceans. Struggling to escape, other humans slip below the manufactured surface into the maze of tunnels and undergirding structures, where they marvel at the feats of construction and invention that made the Bowl possible. It is here, beneath and beyond the “world” as they perceive it, that we first meet the true builders, and begin to see that Benford and Niven are having as much fun with Time as they are with Space. It would spoil too much of the novel's central mysteries to discuss the builders and their relationship with the Folk in much detail. However, as the protagonists discover that the Bowl has been cruising away from their own Sun for more than one hundred million years, they are forced to rethink just whom they are fleeing. By the end of the novel, we have met one species that came into being not long after the first stars were lit, and another that evolved within the magnetic fields of solar storms. No one can accuse Benford and Niven of thinking small.

Within the context of these physical and temporal vistas, one theme that emerges is the responsibility that the Folk have for the protection and maintenance of the artifact that is their home. Since there are no natural forces that can do the jobs of cleaning the atmosphere, preserving a livable temperature, or recycling the detritus of life, the occupants of the Bowl must oversee all those processes themselves. Recognizing this frequently leads the human characters to reflect upon the home world they have left behind, wondering “why had this

Nebula Awards Showcase 2014

Joan Gordon

Johnson, Kij, ed. *Nebula Awards Showcase 2014*. Amherst, NY: Pyr, 2014. Trade paper, \$18.00 USD, 301 pages, ISBN 978-1-61614-901-7.

Order option(s): [Paper](#) | [Kindle](#)

structure, vast in size and time, kept so much wildlife when Earth had not?" (216). The ship's biologist remembers "dead dry prospects of deserted suburban streets lined by abandoned cars already stripped of their paint by the hissing sands born on constant hot winds" (216). The culmination of this theme comes in the revelation of the "Great Shame" that the Folk bear in their collective memories, a haunting legacy of carelessness that reshapes the relationships among the species of the Bowl at the novel's climax.

In an Afterword, the authors describe the impetus for the novel as their interest in rethinking the conventional "Big Dumb Object," and it does seem apparent that the Bowl itself, rather than theme or character, is the most compelling element here. The challenge the authors set for themselves was to conceive instead a "Big Smart Object" and, once developed, ask how it can be used, maintained, and directed. While this approach may explain some of the limitations of the novel-characterization is necessarily going to be subordinated to the requirements of descriptive narrative—it also establishes some compelling challenges. Describing "how you get plot moves from the underlying physics," the authors assert that the shell material, something that would be able to stand up to the gravitational and magnetic stresses being imposed upon it, would need to be a "substance 100,000 times stronger than the best steel and carbon composites can do now" (409). Rather than dismiss this as "the only outright physical miracle" of the novel, the authors present it as a puzzle for bright young engineers to tackle, seeing the challenge as "a premise and still better, a promise—the essence of modern science fiction" (410). That perception of science fiction's core value—the *what?* and *how?* preceding the *who?* and *why?*—lies at the heart of the novel.

Although *Shipstar* effectively closes the narrative arc begun in *The Bowl of Heaven*, Benford and Niven have clearly left open the possibility of returning to the universe they have created here. Captain Redwing is preparing to resume his voyage toward the planet Glory and his colonizing mission, despite the fact that he has learned that the planet may itself be another "Big Smart Object" whose occupants have no interest in entertaining human visitors. Continuing the adventure will also give the authors the opportunity to explore some of the ideas that they have generated in richer and more compelling detail. Like the Bowl itself, one has the sense that the collaboration of these two important authors has a great deal of promise yet to be revealed.

THE NEBULA AWARDS SHOWCASE 2014 is not a huge omnibus volume such as Gardner Dozois's *Year's Best* books, because the editor for the Nebula volume is not picking among a wide field, but only collecting the winners, the *creme de la creme*. Since I don't read widely among all the likely candidates for a year's best, only reading the things that fit with my present obsessions or that are praised so widely even I am aware of them, I look forward to those big best-of-the-year volumes. But I also appreciate the narrower focus of the *Nebula Awards Showcase*: these are the stories that professional writers of sf and fantasy admired. In this case the volume was edited by Kij Johnson, it being one of the rare recent years in which she was not up for an award, I suppose because she has been idling away her days as the associate director for the Center for the Study of Science Fiction at the University of Kansas, writing a novel, and so on.

The 2014 Showcase actually showcases the winners for 2012, so there is an inevitable lag time that allows us to see who reappears in the 2013 awards and to compare the choices from one year to the next. This volume has all the winners for best short story, novelette, and novella, as well as the 2011 Rhysling Award winners in poetry, excerpts from the best novel and the Andre Norton Award winner for best young adult novel, and a section devoted to the Damon Knight Grand Master Award winner. In addition, two other short story finalists are included. I received an advance reading copy, one without a list of places and dates of original publication for the selections, and not every one of the brief editorial introductions gives that information: this was something I would have liked to see and I hope it will be in the final version. [Editor's note: It is.] The front matter includes information on the Nebula Awards and a list of the 2012 final ballot. I found myself wondering how much editorial leeway Johnson had: did she get to select the two stories by other finalists? The particular excerpts from the novels? The material about the Grand Master winner? Certainly she wrote the introduction that gracefully

honors and memorializes Frederik Pohl, who had been winning Nebulas since 1966, both acknowledging his immense contribution to the field and welcoming new writers to the canon. Yes, she concludes, he is irreplaceable, but “The new writers of our field will evolve and ... some will become, in their turn irreplaceable” (10). The introduction also offers some interesting statistics: while a few of the nominees and winners “might be considered an old guard,” ten are here for the first time, seven have appeared only within the last four years, and the Andre Norton Award winner is a first novel (10). Since I have the hindsight of knowing the 2013 Award winners, I can see that there is one winner who had also won in 2012 (de Bodard), and two members of the 2013 short list who had won in 2012 (Kress and Duncan). Will any of these repeat customers be among the new irreplaceables? It’s hard to say.

We know that the 2012 Grand Master is already on the irreplaceable list, since it is Gene Wolfe. Johnson, rather than making her own decision about which of his many, many fine stories to include, asked the man himself, who selected a 2006 novelette called “Christmas Inn” that had been published as a stand-alone book. On the one hand, I wouldn’t have picked that story, partly because I’m presently infatuated with his 2007 novella “Memorare.” But she didn’t ask me. Wolfe selected a story that is, as one would expect, enigmatic (a few more readings and I’d have figured out more), symbolic, spiritual, ghostly, and beautifully written, very much like “Memorare,” in fact. I was happy to have access to “Christmas Inn,” which is otherwise an expensive limited edition. And now I can continue to think about not only the meaning of “Christmas Inn” but about why Wolfe selected it. Accompanying the story were two appreciations. One was a profile by Michael Dirda while he was editor of *The Washington Post Book World*, and while, in a connected story, *Book World* was at its best. The profile, written some time in the 1980s, is dated in some of its information, but nevertheless worth reading. There was also a 2002 piece by Neil Gaiman, another one of Wolfe’s many champions, on “How to Read Gene Wolfe,” which is both charming and accurate, though it doesn’t provide any easy answers. How could it? Both pieces are pretty old by now, and their framing introductions make clear that when Johnson asked them each for something about Wolfe they had chosen these older pieces.

Will Aliette de Bodard become another irreplaceable? Certainly her winning short story, “Immersion,” is memorable and thoughtful. It shows young women im-

mersing themselves in the appearance, culture, and behavior of the ruling class in order to succeed or, at least, survive. All of this is literal as they cloak themselves in technologically-produced avatars. Thus, the story literalizes images of cultural cringe and passing to illustrate the toll such behaviors take on both the colonizer and the colonized, as well as to criticize sharply the conditions that make such behaviors seem necessary to those in the margins.

Andy Duncan’s “Close Encounters,” the winner for best novelette, does something similar. Narrated by an uneducated old man who wrote about his UFO experiences, the story gradually makes clear, with its science-fictional premise, the extent to which people like the narrator are patronized, underestimated, and dismissed by those more “sophisticated.” Duncan has been around for a while, with his funny and wise stories. This is one of his best.

Nancy Kress has also been on the scene for a while, and raking in the awards as well. Her novella “After the Fall, Before the Fall, During the Fall” is a time travel story that jumps between a post-apocalyptic future in which a few damaged human beings are trapped, apparently by overlords; the time leading up to that apocalypse; and the environmental crisis, possibly caused by those overlords, that brings it on. Clear, effective writing and good characterization make this an especially strong depiction not only of ecotastrophe but of economic inequity.

I was very pleased when Kim Stanley Robinson’s *2312* won the Nebula: I had found it an absorbing combination of speculation and story, and was absolutely transported by its beautiful imagining of the re-wilding of the earth. Here, Johnson excerpts the first pages of the novel. Later, she provides what reads like the beginning of E.C. Myers’s *Fair Coin*, the winner of the Andre Norton Award for young adult fiction. Not knowing the novel itself, I can say no more than that it has an appealing young male protagonist. This makes me wonder how much we can learn from novel excerpts in general. Nevertheless, they give us enough to let us decide whether to read the rest. Would reviews of the whole novels be helpful?

Johnson adds to the collection two finalists for the short story award, Ken Liu’s “The Bookmaking Habits of Select Species” and Cat Rambo’s “Five Ways to Fall in Love on Planet Porcelain.” Liu’s story is a beautiful meditation on the universality of reading and of books, while Rambo’s makes effective use of porcelain as a metaphor for the brittleness of economic and social strata. I had already decided to read more by Ken Liu, based

on my own experience, but now I will also seek out Cat Rambo's work.

Tellingly, the two Rhysling Award winning poems, Megan Arkenberg's "The Curator Speaks in the Department of Dead Languages" and Shira Lipkin's "The Library, After," are about the abandonment of words as languages die out and as libraries fade away. Comfort may come when they are read in conjunction with Liu's poetic story. The winner for the Dwarf Star Award, Marge Simon's "Blue Rose Buddha," is a simply an image of a Buddha unbothered by the end of the world, although not so serene that she can ignore flies. The Rhysling Awards are for 2011, I note. I note also that the poems are of consistently high quality.

A surprising proportion of the stories in this volume are concerned with post-colonialism and the inequities between rich and poor, suggesting how serious that problem is in our present, eclipsing even our concern for the environment, although some of the stories address that as well. The other commonality of these stories is their excellence. Each is beautifully crafted, demonstrating that sf is, as we have always known, a sophisticated literary genre. Dismissals and arguments keep popping up, of course, but this focus on the *creme de la creme* reminds us that if, as Sturgeon's Law says, ninety-nine percent of everything is crap, there must be another one percent that is terrific.

Empress of the Sun

Ellen M. Rigsby

Ian McDonald. *Empress of the Sun*. Amherst: Pyr, 2014.

Hardcover, \$17.99 USD, 275 pages, ISBN 978-1-61614-865-2.

Order option(s): [Paper](#) | [Kindle](#)

THE SUCCESS OF J.K. Rowling has created a glut of fantasy and science fiction YA literature, much of which is indifferently written. Thankfully, Ian McDonald's *Empress of the Sun* is an exciting and well written novel, and there is more: it is part of a speculative YA series that belongs on the shelf where one keeps good books, the best books, for readers young and old.

Empress of the Sun is the third book in the *Everness* series, a YA science fiction adventure story with more books likely to follow. The first novel in the series in-

troduces the protagonist, Everett Singh, and his search for his father, Tejendra, who is kidnapped by a group of people from an alternate earth who want a piece of code he developed called the Infundibulum (a term borrowed either from Kurt Vonnegut's *Sirens of Titan* or John Crowley's *Little, Big*). The Infundibulum has the power to disrupt the current political order in which travel between nine mapped universes is organized through gates by a kind of "UN" organization. The Infundibulum would enable point-to-point travel between universes. The second novel continues the story of the search for Tejendra and what happens when The Order recruits Everett M. (from alternate universe 7, whose earth has been colonized by a virtual reality species) to stop Everett and retrieve the Infundibulum.

Empress of the Sun continues the search for Everett's father and the attempts of Everett M. to stop Everett, and leads the *Everness*, the ship whose crew he joined, to a universe in which earth that has been transformed into an Alderson Disk. In this earth, the dinosaurs never went extinct, and in their 60-million-year head start (on Everett's earth's human timeline), built a technologically- and biologically-advanced civilization consisting of competing factions that control the technological aspects of the Alderson Disk. Each tribe controls one of the essentials for existence: water, weather, biology, agriculture, space-defense and the position of the disk relative to the sun. The head of the sun tribe and the head of the biology tribe fight for control of the Infundibulum, which Everett was forced to reveal to them when he crash-landed on the disk. In the climate of the post-911 world, one might expect the narrative to demonstrate the power of the human Earth over the alien. But that is not the direction the narrative takes. First of all, there are many earths. Secondly, not all aliens are others to the earth. This leads to an interesting set of legitimate perspectives in the narrative, and compounds the effect that the narrative is not dependent on the perspective of the protagonist. Everett is important but the narrative needs the other characters, and demands that we consider them deeply. The narrative of the books is decentered by the decision to tell the story from multiple characters' perspectives, including those of Everett M., the villain Charlotte Villiers, and several of Everett's friends. These perspectives add up to an aggregation of the narrative, so that the reader knows what happened, but not from one source.

In an interview in *Interzone* #172, October 2001, McDonald responds positively to a characterization of his writing as "dedicated to...the plight and potential

of ordinary people in “developing” and conflict-ridden regions of the world.” He notes that his background of a Scottish father and an Irish mother, who moved with him to Northern Ireland when he was five, means that he experienced the violent repercussions of the British colonization of Ireland first hand. He continues, “I grew up on the margins of the margins, so...I’d naturally identify with the marginalized...the developing and the conflict-ridden, as you put it. You...don’t pass the greater portion of your life through the ‘Troubles’ without some identification with similar conflicts in the developing world.” *Empire of the Sun* is riven with such conflicts, and the narrative charts a complex set of changing alliances and enmities between humans and across species. The delight of the narrative in this novel comes from the changing nature of these relationships and the true ethical complexities those relationships force the characters to consider. The conclusion of the book comes to remind me of the anime movies of Hideo Miyazaki, in which the villains transform to something other than enemies. The moral landscape demands more compassion from the reader than the typical black and white moralities we often see in stories for young adults. There are characters whose roles seem to be those of the counter example: how not to organize a society or how to be unethical, but their circumstances raise empathy in the reader, not the desire to eradicate or assimilate, something common to early examples of YA science fiction.

The YA sub-genre of science fiction was largely defined by the work of Robert Heinlein, who created a template for science fiction adventure that many authors followed. Later scholars criticized the assumptions and ideology of the Heinlein Hero, such as Ursula K. Le Guin. In the first volume of *Science Fiction Studies* in her review of Norman Spinrad’s parody novel *The Iron Dream*, Le Guin noted that [The SF Adventure yarn] is the kind of story best exemplified by Robert Heinlein, but she continues on to name its ideological shortcomings. An interesting thing about McDonald’s series is that he does not feel the need to choose between an adventure yarn and a series engaged with the kinds of criticism that Le Guin makes of Heinlein’s YA science fiction. McDonald is happy to use Heinleinesque story structures while criticizing and complicating the sociobiological ideology that Le Guin attributes to Heinlein. The series is an adventure yarn in the Heinlein mold, but told from what McDonald calls above, the perspective of the margins. While it is about the process of Everett’s becoming an adult, there is not a single ideology,

nor outcome, driving his education.

All of this complexity, though, I suspect will make for a bit of a workout for its intended audience. While there is nothing in the plot that would be inappropriate for the average ten-year-old reader, the language is challenging. Sen, the pilot of the ship *Everness* and all the crew speak Palari, the European underworld language from the 1700s that is a mix of Lingua Franca, cockney back slang, rhyming slang, and a little proper English, and even with the dictionaries in the back of each novel, the reader has to be patient with the language as it unfolds. Nonetheless, I strongly recommend that you put it on your shelf for those YA readers in your life to find when they are ready. McDonald does an impressive job of giving agency to teen-aged voices without banishing them from the company of adults. It is one of the most likeable bridges from childhood to adulthood that I have come across in science fiction.

Intelligence [TV Series]

Dominick Grace

Intelligence. Created by Michael Seitzman. Perf. Josh Holloway, Meghan Ory, John Billingsley, Marg Helgenberger. CBS, 2014.

Order option(s): [Amazon Instant Video](#)

NETWORK TELEVISION seems to have rediscovered SF as a genre and has been making attempts to introduce SF-oriented material into their programming, with relatively little success. *Person of Interest* and *Agents of SHIELD* seem to have found an audience, but many another recent SF-oriented program—*Almost Human*, *Revolution*, *Terra Nova*, *Touch*, *Alcatraz*, and so on—have failed relatively quickly. CBS's *Intelligence* can be added to this list, having managed a 13 episode run beginning January 2014, only to be cancelled. Given that *Intelligence* had star power (Josh Holloway, Marg Helgenberger and John Billingsley have a fair bit of genre credibility—*Lost*, *CSI*, *Star Trek: Voyager*—and relative newcomer Meghan Ory had a successful turn as Rose Red in ABC's bafflingly popular *Once Upon a Time*) and played more to the formula of a spy thriller than a SF show, this is perhaps surprising. Or perhaps not so surprising, as the SF elements were what set it apart from other thriller-oriented shows, but the program did not capitalize as effectively as it might on those elements, thereby offering a run of the mill thriller for non-SF fans and relatively little value added to provide an SF appeal.

The basic premise—government agent with technological enhancement—is not a particularly new trope. Super-agent Gabriel Vaughn (Josh Holloway), with his microchip-enhanced brain, is in some respects a twenty-first century Steve Austin (but costing billions, rather than millions), with enhanced mental abilities substituted for enhanced physical power and senses. The show's premise is that Dr. Shenandoah Cassidy (John Billingsley) has discovered a way to implant a microchip in the brain of people with a rare genetic anomaly, thereby allowing them to interface directly with the myriad forms of data streamed through the world-wide web and process it much faster than can the human brain. The gimmick is similar to that in *Person of Interest*, except rather than an artificial intelligence able to engage in universal data-mining, here we have a person with similar access.

Naturally, this cyborgization of Vaughn leads to the invocation of Victor Frankenstein, with Cassidy the doctor whose pursuit of knowledge has created a potential monster. Almost the first thing to happen in the show is that an anti-Vaughn is created, when a woman with the same genetic anomaly has a chip implanted in her brain by a kidnapped Cassidy. Mei Chen (played by Grace Huang in the pilot, and then by Faye Kingslee) is a chipped Chinese agent created not by the Chinese government but by a rogue operative. The show thereby neatly avoids not only the cliché of an Islamic villain (though some do turn up in later episodes) but even the notion of any foreign government knowingly creating such a super-soldier, placing the official use of such technology squarely on American shoulders. Gabriel is, therefore, basically a first-strike weapon and might be read as a metaphor of US technological superiority and willingness to use such technology, despite the cost. The narrative voiceover (by Marg Helgenberger as her character, Lillian Strand, in charge of Cyber Command) accompanying the credits recaps the basics for viewers while also subtly orienting the explicit perspective of the show as American. She refers to "our nation" and "our country" as well as to "we" several times, implying an identification between audience and the Agency.

However, the show itself troubles this association, in contrast to *Almost Human* (2013), which had a similar credits voiceover but that seemed to endorse the Orwellian law enforcement program the show imagined. Despite the overt appeal to the American point of view and to a notion of national unity, most episodes of the show include as a major plot point various splinter groups within the US government as the bad guys (including Lillian Strand's father, who the season—and ultimately series—finale cliffhanger revealed as the potential big bad). Despite its overt endorsement of American militarism and protectionism, therefore, the show also provides fruitful grounds for discussion of the implications of the surveillance society in which we live, and the dangers to liberty and individuality the accelerated development of technology represents. One of the stronger episodes, for instance, revealed that the US has maintained a database of children with the genetic mutation making them potential recipients of their own chips—a source of an army of weaponized Americans, basically.

The key thematic question for the show is the extent to which the technologizing of the human as represented by Gabriel affects his humanity. Even in the inevitable episode in which Gabriel's chip gets hacked, allowing enemy forces to convert his erstwhile friends and allies,

in his mind, to enemies, though, the show advances a comfortingly essentialist model of the human. Gabriel is finally convinced not to trust the data his chip is feeding him, but instead to trust his gut; no matter what the tech might do, it cannot change his essential humanity. This essentialist model emerges elsewhere, in less than progressive contexts. For instance, in an episode in which a terrorist threat could wipe out the city in which Lillian's daughter is a student, it is taken as a matter of course that her status as mother takes precedence over minor matters like national security. It's difficult to imagine a similar plot development were she a father rather than a mother. Indeed, as noted, the season moves towards revealing her father as the series' major villain, contrasting with Lillian in his willingness to put human connections aside in pursuit of his larger agenda. Whatever points the show earns for putting women in major roles (including Ory as Gabriel's "protection detail," though more often than not the show falls back on the device of having *him* protect *her*), it ends up losing again by ultimately not being able to move away from female stereotypes. Nevertheless, even this aspect of the show provides interesting grounds for class discussion.

As for the science in the fiction, the plots rarely depend heavily on SFnal components, and when they do, they tend towards hand-waving techno-solutions pulled together at the last minute by the impossibly gifted Doctor Cassidy rather than towards thoughtful explorations of the broader implications of the new technology. It would be more accurate to describe *Intelligence* as a techno-thriller rather than a genuine SF show. Nevertheless, its invocation of concepts like nanotechnology, artificial intelligence, and cyborgization give it some SF cachet, and it is skeptical enough of the sociopolitical implications of high-tech surveillance and warfare to merit some degree of serious attention. Besides, it offers attractive actors engaging in amusing if facile banter and saving the world every week, and who can object to that?

***The Man From Earth* [film]**

Chris Pak

The Man From Earth. Dir. Richard Schenkman. Perf. David Lee Smith, Tony Todd, John Billingsley, Ellen Crawford, Annika Peterson, William Katt, Alexis Thorpe, Richard Riehle. Falling Sky Entertainment. 2007.

Order option(s): [DVD](#) | [Blu-ray](#)

RELEASED IN 2007, *The Man From Earth* is a fascinating chamber film (i.e. most of the action takes place in a single room) that explores the power of storytelling, belief, science and the meaning and significance of human life. Written by Jerome Bixby, the film's website (<http://manfromearth.com>) tells us that the story of the film was originally conceived in the 1960s, but was only completed on Bixby's deathbed in 1998. It won the Best Screenplay and the Best Feature Film of the Youth Jury Award at the 2008 Málaga International Week of Fantastic Cinema, and the First Prize for Best Feature and the Grand Prize for Best Screenplay at the 2007 Rhode Island International Film Festival, among other awards and nominations. This low budget independent film received wider attention after illegal distribution amongst peer-to-peer networks, rising from '11,235th to the 5th most popular movie among visitors to IMDB' and being ranked 'the #1 independent film and #1 science fiction film on IMDB' in 2007 (<http://moreintelligentlife.co.uk/story/internet-piracy-is-good-for-films-1>). The producers – one of whom is Bixby's own son, Emerson Bixby – thanked the film's copyright pirates for the attention that they were able to bring to the film through these channels.

The Man From Earth takes place on the day our protagonist, John Oldman (a pun recalling his origin and existence), prepares to leave the city in which he had worked as a professor of history for the last ten years. Colleagues from the university surprise him with a low-key farewell party at his house, and as they celebrate Oldman's farewell they attempt to find out a little more about their mysterious yet likable colleague. Under pressure from the friends that he had made during his employment as the university, Oldman reveals to them the reason for his departure: he is a Cro-Magnon man who had survived the tens of thousands of years from his origins to the present day. His longevity means that he must travel frequently to avoid discovery.

At first his colleagues treat his story as a game and explore its dimensions as they attempt to prove it false. At one point, one of the characters likens the story to that of an sf narrative, and in line with sf's extrapolative mode these intellectuals investigate various possibilities for the veracity of Oldman's story. As the narrative develops, however, Oldman begins to unnerve his audience with the coherence of his historical observation which, as one of his colleagues (an archaeologist) confirms,

does not contravene the current state of knowledge regarding human pre-history. As tensions rise his friends are alternately challenged, thrilled and threatened by his evocative and troubling storytelling, but he is eventually called to account for the truth of his narrative. Is it true? The old question asked by children upon the conclusion of a faery-tale that they have just been told is the same question on the lips of Oldman's audience. We as viewers are in the same position as they, having listened to Oldman's account alongside them. Their questions could have been our questions.

The Man From Earth is a meditation on sf storytelling. The relationship between the storyteller and his audience, and between the storyteller and the material with which he weaves his stories from, are discussed by the various experts who gather for this last evening with a friend whom, it turns out, they do not quite know. The responses of his audience differ, too: some are outraged, some hopeful and inspired, and others show a trust in the story and the teller that exceeds and survives the dismissal of others. Many of the classic themes of sf, such as the relationship between humankind and the cosmos, the motif of the starry sky and its connection to the sublime, to stories, and to speculation about the things that make us human, come under the scrutiny of the assembled guests. It is also a meditation on memory and history itself, and on the responsibilities of individuals to others. Given Oldman's experience over the course of an apparently long life, his strategy for self-preservation speaks of some sort of judgement regarding humankind. These are some of the questions that are raised by this charming and unassuming film that points to deep currents of thought about what it means to be human.

Surprising, charming and heartfelt, *The Man From Earth* unabashedly takes an unbelievable premise and uses it to ask fundamental questions about people. It offers itself as a very useful teaching tool as it explores the ways in which people relate to stories, sometimes appealing to science or belief when confronted with astonishing and uncomfortable situations, sometimes appealing to their trust in the storyteller, and sometimes to their trust in themselves. In terms of the potential as a teaching tool, *The Man From Earth* also offers an interesting case study in fandom, the issues of digital media and piracy, and the relationship between sf film, TV and literature: Bixby wrote for all three. Finally, it is more than just a useful teaching tool. It is a poignant story of loss: for Oldman, whose account is cognisant of the lovers and friends he has lost over the course of his life (did it really happen?), and for his immediate audience,

who between them feel that they have lost a friend, their anchors to reality a sense of their own personhood. Another loss haunts the film: that of the loss of our own wonder at the universe and at the gulfs of time that separate us from our origins.

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Orphan Black [TV Series]

W. Andrew Shephard

Orphan Black. Created by Graeme Manson and John Fawcett. Perf. Tatiana Maslany, Dylan Bruce, Jordan Gavaris, Kevin Hanchard. BBC America, 2013.

Order option(s): [Amazon Instant Video](#)

A LITTLE OVER a year ago, the Canadian science fiction series *Orphan Black* premiered to relatively little fanfare stateside on BBC America. Today it has emerged from relative obscurity to become genuine cult phenomenon in fan circles and an oft-cited example of the recent trend towards "prestige drama" in science fiction television. Co-created by Graeme Manson and John Fawcett, the series concerns one Sarah Manning, a young woman with a laundry list of petty crimes to her name, who discovers that she is one of a series of clones placed around the world as part of an experiment being run by a multi-national corporation known as the Dyad Institute. Eventually, she ends up allying herself with fellow clones Alison Hendrix, a housewife from the Vancouver suburbs, and Cosima Niehaus, a hippie-ish Ph.D. candidate in Evolutionary Biology hailing from Berkeley, California. Together they work to navigate their increasingly precarious relationship with Dyad, while also dodging the Proletheans, a fringe religious movement that has been systematically hunting and killing other clones. Much of the hype surrounding the series has been justifiably focused on its star, Tatiana Maslany, whose portrayal of the nine (and counting)

clones is both a performative and technological marvel. Yet, the series has much more to offer viewers than mere spectacle. Complex characters, sharp humor, and genuine philosophical depth help to distinguish the series as one the more promising debuts in recent memory.

To a certain extent, the series could be read as science-fictionalizing a rather basic human concern, namely the nature of identity itself and the specific factors that make us . . . us. The series's premise, with its cast of genetic identicals, each with more or less the same potential at birth, becomes an ideal vehicle to explore the ways in which we are shaped by environment and personal experience. Perhaps unsurprisingly, *Orphan Black* seems to more frequently side with nurture over nature. While there is evidence of some shared tendencies or characteristics (Alison herself notes that “[r]ash seems to be genetic trait for us . . .”), the show is much more interested in the clones as individuals (“Nature”). Perhaps the most effective illustration of this theme would be the storyline of Sarah and Helena, actual in-utero twins separated at birth, who go on to lead very different lives. Sarah grows up in foster care, and winds up stumbling into unplanned motherhood and a life of rage-fueled criminality, but is nonetheless the more fortunate of the two. Prolethean-raised Helena has been rendered alternately prone to feral violence and endearingly child-like behavior due to years of intense psychological and physical abuse. A significant portion of her arc has focused on her realization of the level of damage inflicted upon her and working through it. While this particular case is a decidedly bleak iteration of such themes, the series never takes itself too seriously, and some of its more amusing moments are when the clones are forced by circumstance to imitate one another. In a way, the various types of clones we encounter feel like experiments on the writers' parts, both as tests of their lead actress's considerable range as well as the malleability of the show's central conceit.

One of the more striking aspects of the series is its handling of matters related to gender and sexuality. The fact that Sarah and her “sisters” are the prime actors of the narrative serves to invert the gender dynamics of traditional series television, with male characters in more or less supporting roles. Moreover, the series's engagement with gender issues extends beyond increased representation. Alison's storyline, much of which concerns her increasing paranoia over her snooping neighbors as potential Dyad spies, rather humorously echoes the “suburban gothic” tone of works like Ira Levin's *The Stepford Wives* (1972). In one of the show's more effec-

tive moments, she draws explicit comparison between her status as a scientific experiment and the panoptic social policing of her husband and fellow housewives: “You have pried and snooped and gossiped about me as though I was your own personal laboratory subject . . .” (“Entangled”). The satirization of suburban life also echoes John Fawcett's earlier film *Ginger Snaps* (2000), a feminist revision of werewolf narratives starring teenage girls. Amusingly, the film is also set in Alison's fictional Vancouver neighborhood of Bailey Downs.

The series has also managed to win a significant following within the LGBTQ community. Sarah's foster brother Felix Dawkins (Jordan Gavaris) has emerged as one the breakout stars of the series and joins the increasing ranks of a relatively new stock character on series television: the snarky, streetwise queer sidekick à la *True Blood's* Lafayette and *Banshee's* Job. The more matter-of-fact handling of Cosima's lesbianism makes for an interesting contrast. Her retort to another clone that “[m]y sexuality isn't the most interesting thing about me” serves as both a sharp one-liner on her part and a statement of purpose from the show's writers. While the show is not coy about either character's love life, it refuses to define them solely by it. Instead of tokens or sanitized “model minorities,” Cosima and Felix are allowed to be as complex, morally dubious, and prone to questionable decisions as anyone else on the show and are more interesting for it.

At the moment, *Orphan Black* is still just beginning to wrestle with the philosophical implications of the biotechnology itself. Nonetheless, it has made some inroads in this department. In particular, the Neolution movement headed up by Dyad's Aldous Leekie seems to be a nod towards groups like Humanity+, the transhumanist organization sponsored by Oxford University's Nick Bostrom, and their campaigns to rid us of “poisoned gifts of nature” such as biological illness and death (Bostrom 3). Yet, the series also poses the important question of who exactly will be funding the self-improvement of our species and whether profit-minded corporate entities like Dyad can be reasonably trusted with the task. Moreover, a more recent development in the series linking the Institute's research to early twentieth century eugenics programs raises another interesting conundrum for those invested in transhumanism; namely, at what point do notions of “procreative beneficence” and the like start to resemble the uglier aspects of selective breeding that the scientific community has generally rejected in the last seventy years?

Likewise, the Prolethean movement, suggests a com-

bination of religious fundamentalism and fringe science also fascinates. Their leader, played by familiar character actor Peter Outerbridge, seeks to acquire one of the clones on the grounds that “they are a part of God’s plan” (“Governed”). Quite interestingly, his forced marriage to Helena is consummated not through physical intercourse, but through an ex utero fertilization of her ovum—an act which plays as both a kind of rape and a miraculous immaculate conception. It is also a reminder that the embrace of science will not necessarily free society of patriarchal logic or a sense of proprietary ownership over women’s bodies. The show has so far only touched on such ideas, but these plotlines yield some tantalizing possibilities.

Orphan Black will likely be of interest to those concerned with the handling of gender and sexuality, both in speculative fiction and popular culture at large. Its engagement with bioethical concerns makes the series very relevant to people interested in transhumanism and its fictional representations. The series’s handling of the Dyad Institute corresponds to an increasingly prevalent concern in science fiction post-1945, namely the intervention of corporations into scientific endeavor and the deleterious effects thereof. Moreover, with an ever-growing fanbase and increasing mainstream recognition, the series may very well be considered a significant work in the genre in a few years’ time.

Apologies for the inconsistent spelling of Marleen S. Barr’s name in the last issue of the *SFRA Review*, 307-308, on page 31.

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Announcements



Date:
June 25-28, 2015

Location:
Stony Brook University
Stony Brook, NY

Guests of Honor

M. Asli Dukan (film)
<http://invisibleuniversedoc.com/>

Alexis Lothian (digital)
<http://www.queergeektheory.org/>

Vandana Singh (fiction)
<http://users.rcn.com/singhvan/>

Like any genre, and despite its historically marginal positioning vis-à-vis other genres, Science Fiction has its own canon, a general agreement on what texts are worthy of scholarly attention. But what might be revealed if we critically question the canon and consider what elisions its formation entails? What kinds of racial, gendered, classed, and sexual hierarchies are reinforced through the selection of certain texts as exemplary of the genre? What alternative genealogies might become visible if we look underneath “mainstream” or canonical SF and seek out those liminal voices that have been denied access to privileged outlets?

Given the (slowly) increasing visibility of women, LGBTQIA individuals, and people of color within the world of SF in recent years, both as creators and textual representations, it seems like an opportune moment to ask what submerged or marginal histories of the genre might be (re)constructed as well as what voices remain silenced. What can these alternative genealogies and liminal voices offer for considerations of genre definition and exploration?

Not only does taking a critical perspective on the canon lead us to ask what voices have been silenced or repressed, it also asks us to consider why SF in some media (literature, film) have been privileged over others (television, web series, theater, etc.). The development of new media technologies has generated a wealth of SF production within these emerging media. New distribution models built around streaming media services and social media platforms have provided alternative venues for science fiction films, web series, and short stories. Online fandoms have also provided generative ecologies for amateur and fan fiction in a variety of formats. What insights might be gained from more sustained critical attention to science fiction in these emerging media? What do these technological developments portend for the future of the genre?

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