

#263-4

March-June 2003

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SUBMISSIONS

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

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This is formal notice that the Executive of SFRA will introduce a Bylaw change at the 2004 Annual General Meeting in June 2004. Following the vote of the 2003 General Meeting the publication frequency of the Science Fiction Research Association Review will be set at four times per annum. The present statement:

Article VIII, section 2. "The SFRA Review shall be published ten times per year or as directed by the Executive Committee."

shall be replaced with "The SFRA Review shall be published four times per year or as directed by the Executive Committee."

The Executive Committee will exercise its prerogative (as indicated in the second half of the existing statement) to adjust the publication schedule according to the will of the General Meeting at Guelph until the Bylaw is voted upon.

News Items:

The **2002 Mary Kay Bray Award** committee, which consisted of Margaret McBride, Jeff Prickman, and Michael Levy, has chosen Farah Mendlesohn's review of Kim Stanley Robinson's *The Years of Rice and Salt* to receive this year's Mary Kay Bray Award.

Farah Mendlesohn stood down as the **Chair of the Science Fiction Foundation** March 8, 2003 at the end of two terms of office. Simon Bradshaw has been elected as the new Chair.

The **2003 Arthur C Clarke Award** has been presented to Christopher Priest for *The Separation*. The Award is for the best science fiction novel receiving its first British publication in 2002. Competition for this

SFRA Review Editor's Message

Christine Mains

As I'm sure you've all noticed, the Review is still not on schedule. What follows is both apology and excuse (or rather explanation). Since I came on board the Review nearly a year ago, it has been in the midst of a number of difficult transitions. I had originally taken over from Barb Lucas as co-editor, only to learn that Shelley Rodrigo was also stepping down and also needed to be replaced. The search for another co-editor was on, and took even longer than expected as a couple of people who had expressed interest in the position found that they were unable to take on the job after all. Thankfully, Shelley was willing to extend her stay to help us work through this period. The task was made even more difficult by the fact that we had to rewrite the job descriptions of the co-editors; while I was happy to take on the layout and formatting tasks previously done by Shelley, I could not take on the print and distribution end of things. Earlier this year, SFRA Vice-President Jan Bogstad stepped in with the support of her institution to become Managing Editor, and we thought that all of our problems were solved. Finally, we would be able to move ahead and get the Review back on schedule.

Unfortunately, we were faced with a completely different problem, one familiar to me from my experience editing the IAFA Newsletter. We can't put together a decent issue of the Review if we don't have sufficient content. For that, we need the support of the SFRA membership. First of all, we need reviews to be completed and submitted in a timely manner, so that we have enough to include in each issue. One of the key delays in finishing the issue that you're holding right now was simply that it took so long to collect the reviews. Second, we need to revive some old features and hopefully generate new ones. In this issue, as in past issues, you'll find an interview conducted by Mike Levy; we'd like to print more interviews of this sort, so if you're in touch with an up-and-coming or established author, make plans to ask him or her some intriguing questions about their work and submit the interview to the Review. We'd also really love to print contributions to the "Approaches" series or the "Theory and Beyond" features which have run in past issues; unfortunately, we can't print what we don't have. To get things started again with "Approaches," we'd welcome any ideas about teaching any texts, rather than asking for a specific focus on a single text as has been the case in the past. As for "Theory and Beyond," if you have some ideas for exploring theoretical issues but are uncertain what to do with those ideas, Joan Gordon has offered to help to shepherd such articles for the Review, so please contact her for advice and encouragement. Finally, if you have ideas for new features that you think would be interesting and informative, please contact me at cemains@shaw.ca and share your thoughts. One feature that we're hoping to get off the ground is a column on international science fiction; if you're an international member of the association, or working on texts from a global perspective, we really want to hear from you.

A final note: In an effort to get back on schedule, we've done a couple of things. First, this is another double issue. We've combined #263 with #264. The consensus at the SFRA board meeting in Guelph was that timeliness was of more importance than the number of pages; we hope that you'll agree. Second, beginning with #265, the SFRA Review will become a quarterly publication. This change was agreed to at the business meeting in Guelph; the bylaws of the association will also be amended to reflect the reality of a quarterly publication.

SFRA President's Message

Peter Brigg

What do we change? How do we change?

Getting ready for SFRA Guelph brought a couple of issues about SFRA into focus for me, and I would like to raise them here to prompt feedback and new ideas.

Reaching out to the membership to advertise a conference or to solicit membership renewals is a fairly puzzling process. My Director tells me that Early Modern scholars are doing all this by email and web sites, but about 40 of our 287 members don't have (or won't give us) email addresses. Mike Levy estimates that only half our members read the Listserv although those who do are probably aware of what an extraordinary resource it can be when one wants arcane and scholarly important information. Being in the middle of this revolution, with the possibility of saving a lot of postage over the years beckoning and the other benefits of instant open debate and exchange of knowledge approaching, makes me wish we could agree to do business only on-line just as soon as possible. But is that possible yet? And how could we decide?

Close to this is the question of on-line journals. *SFRA Review* is on-line, with a two-month time lag. Perhaps that is adequate, for now. But we are spending about \$625 an issue for six issues a year. We are in the unique/unfortunate?/advantageous? position of not being in control of the other major journals in our field, *SFS*, *Extrapolation* and *Foundation*. But should we, as an organization, make our wishes felt as to whether our membership wants to see them on paper or on-line (perhaps with password accessible subscriptions?). And how could we decide?

The conference in Guelph this June saw over 35 people in the Prospective Members category, and the renewal of our Association is an issue of real importance. Associations may grow old, but if they (their members) grow elderly then the Associations can fade away. We need to know what our new and prospective members want and need from SFRA, and how we can deliver within the general framework of our traditions. We have always mentored informally (lunch with Tom Clareson was an entire programme in the study of the genre and its role in the university) but are there things we need to do and services we need to offer to keep the Association current?

This all boils down to the question of how SFRA is to keep up with its mandate as the times and the faces change. This message is meant to open up discussion, both of the ways we should change and the ways we should do it. I hope to hear (letters to SFRAR would put issues before the whole membership) from as many members as possible.

PILGRIM AWARD

Introducing Westfahl

Adam Frisch

Good evening. It is my pleasure tonight to present the Science Fiction Research Association's 2003 Pilgrim Award. And it is my duty tonight to be brief, a difficult charge when this year's award winner has more important publications and more professional honors than Canada has hockey teams. But brief I shall try to be.

This year's Pilgrim Committee had a two-part constituency: 1) me, and 2) two scholars who actually knew what they were talking about: the internationally celebrated S.F. critics John Clute, from London and New York City,

year's award was particularly strong, and all the novels on the shortlist deserve high praise: *Kil'n People* by David Brin; *Light* by M. John Harrison; *The Scar* by China Miéville; *Speed of Dark* by Elizabeth Moon; *The Years of Rice and Salt* by Kim Stanley Robinson. Submissions are now invited for the 2004 Arthur C Clarke Award. The judges are Iain Emsley and Carol Ann Kerry-Green for the BSFA, Mark Bould and Geoff Ryman for the Science Fiction Foundation, and Dave Palmer for the Science Museum.

This year's **Pioneer Award** will go to Lance Olsen, for his essay "Omniphage" from the *Edging into the Future* collection edited by Veronica Hollinger and Joan Gordon.

The Clareson jury, chaired by Carolyn Wendell and featuring Mack Hassler and Wendy Bousfield, has selected Joe Sanders to receive the **2003 Thomas D. Clareson Award** for Distinguished Service. The award is presented for outstanding service activities, including promotion of SF, teaching and studying, editing, reviewing, and similar types of activity. The Clareson Award was established in 1996.

Hal Hall tells us that anonymous donors have given the University of California, Riverside a rare copy of the second edition of **Thomas More's Utopia**, published in 1517. The book will go to the J. Lloyd Eaton Collection of Science Fiction, Fantasy, Horror, and Utopian Literature. Only seven other U.S. repositories have copies of the 1517 edition: the university libraries of Brown, Columbia, Harvard, Princeton, University of San Francisco and Yale and the Newberry Library, an inde-

pendent research repository in Chicago. The Eaton Collection is the world's largest catalogued collection of science fiction, fantasy, horror and utopian literature, containing 80,000 books, 10,000 pulp magazines, 30,000 comic books and more than 200,000 science fiction fanzines, as well as the literary papers of several influential sci-fi writers.

Research Survey: Robin Anne Reid would like volunteers to participate in her research survey. She is currently working on a book-length project titled *Living in The Borderlands: Feminisms and Speculative Fictions*. The purpose of the project is to consider the extent to which different feminist philosophies, issues, and concerns are reflected in fantastic literatures in English published from the 1960s to the 1990s. She would like to survey those who read feminist speculative fiction on their definitions of feminism and their sense of what "feminist speculative fiction" might be. The goal in surveying readers of feminist speculative fictions is to consider to what extent widely differing definitions of feminism exist among both readers and published authors whose work may be considered or self-identified as "feminist." The survey should take no more than 30 minutes to complete. Responses will be kept confidential; no email or physical address will be stored. Any information that you do provide will be altered to protect your identity. Contact <Robin_Reid@tamuc-commerce.edu> if you want to complete a survey; responses must be returned by September 1, 2003

The **Sunburst Award** committee is pleased to announce the following short list of books for its third

and Veronica Hollinger, from Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario. The three of us last fall began considering possible Pilgrim recipients, both living and deceased. Yes, we did briefly consider giving for the first time a posthumous award, but then became a bit uneasy about the nature of the acceptance speech that would then follow this introduction. Very quickly in our research one name stood out: Gary Westfahl.

Everyone who knows Gary Westfahl's work agrees that already his scholarship has attained the prerequisites required for this society's Pilgrim Award, specifically: "a body of work done over many years—rather than a specific book or essay—that demonstrates lifetime contributions to SF and fantasy scholarship." Proof positive of Gary's wide influence on current SF studies: the many times he has been cited as a reference in papers presented at this very conference. Gary has achieved this impact through publications far too numerous to detail completely. Just a sample: He has written four critical SF volumes: *Cosmic Engineers: A Study of Hard Science Fiction* (1996), *Islands in the Sky: The Space Station Theme in Science Fiction Literature* (1996), *The Mechanics of Wonder: The Creation of the Idea of Science Fiction* (1998), and *Science Fiction, Children's Literature, and Popular Culture: Coming of Age in Fantasyland* (2000). Gary has also edited/co-edited countless other volumes, including—without the words following the title colons this time—*Immortal Engines, Science Fiction and Market Realities*, and *Foods of the Gods* (all 1996), *Nursery Realms* (1999), *Space and Beyond* (2000), and *Science Fiction, Canonization, Marginalization, and the Academy, Unearthly Visions, Worlds Enough and Time, and No Cure for the Future* (all 2002). He was a consultant editor and contributor to the famous, award-winning and extremely useful 1997 *Encyclopedia of Fantasy*. His articles and reviews have appeared in virtually every important science fiction periodical, including *Locus*, *Foundation*, *Interzone*, *Extrapolation*, *The New York Review of Science Fiction*, many international journals published from Japan to The Czech Republic, and—most important of all—*The SFRA Review*. Gary has helped organize/host a number of important SF conferences, from the Eaton/SFRA's own 1997 "Queen Mary" conference in Long Beach to most recently the March 2003 Cyberculture conference in Hong Kong. His Internet presence ranges from his "Learning Center" in Riverside to the *Interzone* website, "Gary Westfahl's Biographical Encyclopedia of Science Fiction Film." Indeed, when I did a Google search for my own name, I scored 21 hits; when I repeated the process for "Gary Westfahl," I got 1700 hits, which suggests why I'm the one up here reading the "Introduction."

Last year SFRA presented our Pilgrim Award to a U.K. scholar of early SF, Mike Ashley. In an essay published in this last March's *Science Fiction Studies* entitled "Three Decades that Shook the World, Observed Through Two Distorting Lenses and Under One Microscope," Gary Westfahl, after detailing a few virtues and a plentitude of faults in two critical studies of early SF Pulp magazines, wrote about Mike Ashley:

It is with a sense of relief and gratitude that one turns to Mike Ashley's *The Time Machines* His prose style ... is consistently effective and readable, and his writing appealingly projects youthful energy and a strong desire to find every fact available and tell every story that needs to be told.

In a paper presented earlier this morning at this very conference, Gary argued that SF writers from Clifford Simak to Greg Egan have recognized the fundamental importance of the individual thinker, working alone rather than as part of a group-think team, to come up with truly new and significant ideas, and that true SF devotees should celebrate such independent thinkers.

Gary's criteria of an energetic, readable style and an independent, truly new and significant content characterize the work not only of previous Pilgrim

honorees like Mike Ashley but also of his own best critical writing that has already had such an impact of the field of SF critical studies.

So please join me in welcoming the winner of SFRA's 2003 Pilgrim Award, Dr. Gary Westfahl.

PILGRIM AWARD

I Am Not a Role Model ... Or Am I?

Gary Westfahl

On the first day of the 2003 Science Fiction Research Association Conference, I arrived late--because what should have been a ten-minute walk from the Ramada Inn to McKinnon Hall instead became a forty-five-minute ordeal. Standing at the corner of Stone Road and Gordon Street, completely disoriented, I started walking due west, convinced I was going north. Eventually recognizing that I was going the wrong way, I turned around and walked an equivalent distance, due east. Again unable to correlate what I was seeing around me to the map I was carrying, I finally figured out the situation and headed north.

While walking these long distances in sweltering heat wearing a suitcoat and tie, I thought to myself: "This is the story of my life--not getting or listening to good advice, making one bad decision after another, forcing myself to work twice as hard as anyone else." And I touch upon one reason I am discomfited by this award. The winner of a lifetime achievement award is implicitly identified as a success story and as a role model for younger counterparts; yet I have great difficulty in conceiving of myself in such terms.

Consider these aspects of my career. In graduate school, I didn't bother to work up a few publications in a marketable field and thus become an attractive candidate for a tenure-track position. Lacking social skills, I garnered a local reputation as, in the words of one former professor, "The world's worst interview," unable to make that strong first impression so important in getting a desirable job. When I finally got serious about being a science fiction scholar, I didn't follow the time-honored procedure of reading the right critics and studying the right texts; I didn't begin by cautiously extending the work of my distinguished predecessors to make friends in high places and earn the right to move into my own territory. Instead, my career was founded on two self-indulgent, even suicidal principles: 1) I would study whatever I felt like studying, and 2) I would always say exactly what I thought, even if that included harsh criticisms of other scholars. These policies, coupled with flashes of temper in private correspondence, led to my lifelong habit of making bitter enemies, some of whom have come back to haunt me as book reviewers and not-so-anonymous peer reviewers. Clearly, I will never be able to settle into the standard role of a senior scholar, nurturing tender young minds with avuncular bonhomie, and clearly, no sane person would ever advise a young scholar to "Do it Westfahl's way."

I once imagined that my growing cadre of opponents within the academic community wouldn't matter, because I could ingratiate myself with the larger community of science fiction writers and readers. Yet as some of you know, my efforts to make a soft landing in the bosom of science fiction recently exploded in the upper atmosphere, leaving me only the hope that, like the worms on board the space shuttle *Columbia*, I might survive the descent and be allowed to carry on in some humble ecological niche.

Overall, then, I view myself only as someone clinging precariously to the second rung of the long ladder of success, someone who must constantly struggle to maintain or improve his position, always one false step away from falling back into complete oblivion.

annual presentation:

Talon by Paulette Dubé; *Skin Folk* by Nalo Hopkinson; *Salt Fish Girl* by Larissa Lai; *Permanence* by Karl Schroeder; *Dead Man's Gold* by Paul Yee. The award, consisting of a cash prize of \$1000 and a hand-crafted stainless-steel medallion of the Sunburst, from a design by Marcel Gagné, will be presented to the winner in September 2003. These works represent the best in Canadian literature of the fantastic. The authors are either Canadian citizens or landed immigrants. For info about eligibility and the selection process: <www.sunburstaward.org> The jurors for the 2003 award were Lesley Choyce, Hiromi Goto, Terence M. Green, Eileen Kernaghan and Arthur Slade.

The SFWA honored this year's **Nebula Winners** at a banquet in Philadelphia on April 19, 2003. Best Novel: *American Gods*, Neil Gaiman; Best Novella: *Bronte's Egg*, Richard Chwedyk; Best Novelette: *Hell is the Absence of God*, Ted Chiang; Best Short Story: "Creature," Carol Emshwiller; Best Script: "The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring"; Grand Master: Ursula K. Le Guin.

Torcon 3 has announced this year's **Hugo Nominations**. The Hugos will be presented on Saturday, August 30 at Torcon. Best Novel: *Bones of the Earth*, Michael Swanwick; *Hominids*, Robert J. Sawyer; *Kiln People*, David Brin; *The Scar*, China Miéville; *The Years of Rice and Salt*, Kim Stanley Robinson. Best Novella: *A Year in the Linear City*, Paul di Filippo; "Breathmoss," Ian R. MacLeod; "Brontë's Egg," Richard Chwedyk; *Coraline*, Neil Gaiman; "In Spirit," Pat Forde; "The Political Officer" Charles Coleman Finlay. Best

Novelette: "Halo,"

Charles Stross; "Madonna of the Maquiladora" by Gregory Frost; "Presence," Maureen F. McHugh; "Slow Life," Michael Swanwick; "The Wild Girls," Ursula K. Le Guin. Best Short Story: "Lambing Season," Molly Gloss; "Creation," Jeffrey Ford; "Falling Onto Mars," Geoffrey A. Landis; "Hello," Said the Stick," Michael Swanwick; "The Little Cat Laughed to See Such Sport," Michael Swanwick.

Reading for the Future CD : Julie E. Czerneda, Torcon III Science Fiction in the classroom Program Coordinator, is collecting items for a special CD to be provided to attendees and posted on a website. Czerneda is looking for lesson plans and ideas using science fiction from kindergarten to grade 12, practical insights, experiences on using sf with students, recommended science fiction for classroom use, and similar types of information. There will be no payment expected or provided for any materials submitted, and submission does not guarantee inclusion on the CD. Send submissions to RFFDYR@aol.com with the tag SFC CD in the subject. Please supply as attached text files only.

The Internet Speculative Fiction Database, which shut down a few months ago due to increased cost and bandwidth usage, has resumed full functionality following a move to a server at Texas A&M University. The website, which has been active since 1995 when it was created by Al von Ruff, can be found at <<http://www.isfdb.org>>, where it is sponsored by The Cushing Library Science Fiction and Fantasy Research Collection and Institute for Scientific Computation at Texas A&M University.

Forgive me; I know it isn't pleasant to hear such absurd rhetoric, and others have responded negatively to previous outpourings along these lines. I can hear my wife Lynne: "Gary, stop being so self-critical." And David Pringle: "Gary, stop being paranoid." Yet even if it is not entirely accurate, my skewed self-image has salutary effects. The most dangerous thing in the world is to believe that you have it made, to think of yourself as someone special, to imagine that you don't need to always do your best or even do anything at all. And this is another reason why receiving this lifetime achievement award is unsettling. It is a message that I have already done enough work for a lifetime, that it's all right to slow down a bit, to wallow in self-satisfaction, and I don't want to hear it. I don't need a gold watch--my ten-dollar watch from Target works just fine--and I absolutely despise the smell of roses. After this conference, I will go home, finish up another article, and submit it with all the nervousness of a first-year graduate student sending a proposal to her very first conference. And that suits me just fine.

Still, struggling to be uncharacteristically gracious, I will momentarily surrender to the judgment of this distinguished organization and accept the obvious: I am a success story. I must have some wisdom to impart--perhaps not to those with the social graces and savvy to succeed in the normal fashion, but to young blunderers like me who may need advice on how to make it the hard way.

First, you can posture as a lonely rebel all you like, but you will still need a support system. One of the anchors you need is a family, so I must thank my sister and brother-in-law, Brenda and Terry Bright; my children Allison and Jeremy, and my wife Lynne, who is also my best friend and advisor, although I regularly ignore her good advice (such as: "I think you should always just try to be as nice as possible to everyone"). The other essential anchor is a full-time job, even if it falls short of the standard dream of a tenure-track position. I have known too many people who earned Ph.D.s in English and fell into lives as lecturers on short-term contracts or freeway flyers, teaching two classes here and two classes there. They keep saying that they will someday write that article, or someday rework their dissertation into a book, but they never do; the life of a vagabond instructor batters your ego and wears you down. I know. So I will always be grateful to Patrick J. Moran, former Director of the Learning Center of the University of California, Riverside, for hiring me to a full-time position and granting me the job security and nurturing atmosphere that any working scholar needs. And while I'm thanking bosses, I'll also mention David Werner, Director of the University of LaVerne's Educational Programs in Corrections, who has given me a most interesting part-time job as an Adjunct Professor of Mathematics.

Next, I can answer the question I am most frequently asked--"How do you manage to be so prolific?"--by outlining my three-step program for becoming a prolific scholar:

- 1) Give a Damn;
- 2) Have No Life, so that you will have time for research and writing; and
- 3) Bring to Your Work a Modicum of Knowledge and Insight, so what you produce will be worth publishing.

To elaborate on Giving a Damn: I vividly recall when I began to do so. In December, 1988, I was standing in my back yard one night, smoking a cigarette, staring up at the stars, feeling small and insignificant. And the crushing realization hit me: I am thirty seven years old, and I have accomplished absolutely nothing; if I died tomorrow, it would be as if I had never existed. I resolved to do something about that, and the very next day, I began working hard, and I have continued working hard ever since.

I was fortunate, perhaps, to have hard work in my genes. My late

father Wesley Westfahl spent thirty years in the military, found he hated retirement after a couple of months, and launched a second career as an agent for the Drug Enforcement Administration. However, most observers agree that I most closely resemble my late mother Thelma Elder Westfahl, the sort of woman who could work a demanding full-time professional job, *and* a part-time job to earn extra money, *and* spend her weekends repainting the house or laying sod in the backyard. Believe me, the energy I display is nothing compared to hers. So I must always be grateful to my parents for the example they set, though they did not live to see the fruition of their labors to properly bring up their son.

To elaborate on *Having No Life*: this is especially important for those who are not fortunate enough to have light teaching loads and three months off in the summer. On that night in 1988, burdened with professional and personal responsibilities, I made the conscious decision to fall out of touch with my friends, stop going to social events, and allow my minimal social skills to atrophy even further, to provide me with time for research and writing. I transformed myself into someone whose entire waking existence consists of two basic activities: working, in one way or another, and zoning out, playing solitaire or watching television when I no longer had the mental and physical energy to work. Once, when my poor wife Lynne told me that I needed to have more fun in my life, I indignantly replied, "I *hate* having fun!" And sadly, I meant it. If I'm having fun, I'm not accomplishing anything. Perhaps this doesn't make me the best company, and perhaps I haven't always been the husband and father that I should have been, but it's the price I must pay to achieve what I have managed to achieve.

To elaborate on *Bringing to Your Work a Modicum of Knowledge and Insight*: how precisely does one gain such knowledge of and insight into science fiction? Go back in time to when you were eight years ago and tell your young self to become a nerdish bookworm obsessed with endlessly reading all sorts of science fiction. It worked for me. If this isn't feasible, go to your local public library, find the section where all the books have little spaceships pasted on their spines, and choose ten books. Follow a system if you like--so many female authors, so many males, some old books, some new books, some novels, some anthologies--or randomly choose any books that look interesting. When you finish reading those ten books, go back and check out ten more. After ten trips, you'll begin to gain some understanding of science fiction--though one hundred trips would be much better.

The most common weakness in the work of young science fiction scholars is a thoroughly synthetic knowledge of the genre, based entirely on readings of a small number of academically-approved texts, inexorably leading to the iteration of prefabricated opinions. Scholars need to examine the innumerable good authors that other critics aren't writing about, and if they happen to read some bad authors, there are valuable lessons to learn from them as well.

One more piece of advice: having found science fiction, don't abandon this field. True, we represent a peculiar discipline that, all too often, cannot be openly acknowledged as our area of specialization. Most cannot say, "I study science fiction," but must rather assert "I do feminism/queer studies/ intercultural studies/postcolonialism/media studies, with a focus on science fiction." Still, as I know, studying this form of literature is uniquely stimulating and rewarding. To explain my improbable success as a science fiction scholar, one might speak about the tremendous courage shown by the editors I have worked with. Since 1989, when Edward James received a fifty-five page manuscript from a stranger entitled "*On The True History of Science Fiction*," up until 2003, when Mark R. Kelly saw in his inbox an essay he entitled "*Columbia, and the Dreams of Science Fiction*," I have benefited from editors who read my work and dared to

Alexander C. Irvine received the **2003 William L. Crawford Award** for *A Scattering of Jades*. The award, begun in 1985, is presented at the International Conference of the Fantastic in the Arts in Florida to a new fantasy writer.

Clarion Funding Cut: Michigan State University, which has hosted the Clarion Writer's Workshop, has announced their decision to discontinue support of subsidizing the annual event. The organizers are asking members of the community to contact university officials to plead for continuation of funding. Clarion was founded in 1968 at Clarion State College. In 1971, it moved to Tulane, and has been in Michigan State since 1972.

On March 17, **Robert J. Sawyer** was one of 15 people, and the only author, brought to Ottawa by the Canadian federal government's Department of Justice for its "Genetics Futures Forum" to discuss what Canadian law should be in relation to biotechnology, stem-cell research, cloning, and the privacy of personal genetic information. Other participants included geneticists, ethicists, law professors, a theologian, and Bob McDonald, the host of CBC Radio's science program *Quirks and Quarks*.

This year's **Tiptree Award** was presented to two works. M. John Harrison's novel *Light* tied with John Kessel's story "Stories for Men." This is the first time there has been a tie in the Tiptree Awards since 1998. The Tiptree Award is presented for "science fiction or fantasy that explores and expands the roles of women and men for work by both women and men."

The **Analog Science Fiction and Fact** **AnLab Awards** and the **Asimov's Science Fiction Readers Awards** were announced on April 19 during a breakfast at the Nebula Weekend in Philadelphia. AnLab Winners: Novella: (tie) "Sunday Night Yams at Minnie and Earl's", Adam-Troy Castro and "In Spirit", Pat Forde. Novelette: "Look Away", Stephen L. Burns. Short Story: "The Hunters of Pangaea", Stephen Baxter. Fact Article: "Galactic Society", Robert Zubrin. Cover: David A. Hardy. Asimov's Readers' Award Winners: Novella: "Breathmoss", Ian R. MacLeod; Novelette: "The Wild Girls", Ursula K. Le Guin; Short Story: "She Sees My Monsters Now", Robert Reed; Poem: "Eight Things Not to Do or Say When a Mad Scientist Moves into Your Neighborhood", Bruce Boston.

The **Locus Awards**, voted on by readers of Locus Magazine, were presented at Westercon. SF Novel: *The Years of Rice and Salt*, Kim Stanley Robinson; Fantasy Novel: *The Scar*, China Miéville; First Novel: *A Scattering of Jades*, Alexander C. Irvine; Young Adult Novel: *Coraline*, Neil Gaiman; Novella: *The Tain*, China Miéville; Novelette: "The Wild Girls", Ursula K. Le Guin; Story: "October in the Chair", Neil Gaiman; Collection: *Stories of Your Life and Others*, Ted Chiang; Anthology: *The Year's Best Science Fiction: Nineteenth Annual Collection*, Gardner Dozois, ed.; Non-Fiction: *Tomorrow Now: Envisioning the Next Fifty Years*, Bruce Sterling.

Recent & Forthcoming Books:

Brinks, Ellen. *Gothic Masculinity: Effeminacy and the Supernatural in English and German Romanticism*. Bucknell UP, Aug 03

say, "This is worth publishing, and I am going to publish it, even though I know it is going to make a lot of people mad." An incomplete list of other editors who deserve boundless praise for supporting an often-controversial author would include the names of George Slusser, Brett Cooke, Mack Hassler, Stephen P. Brown, the late Damon Knight, the late R. D. Mullen, John Clute, John Grant, David Pringle, Richard Bleiler, George F. Butler, Arthur B. Evans, Wong Kin Yuen, and Rodger Turner.

However, from a broader perspective, these individuals should not be celebrated for any special courage, because they were part of the field of science fiction, where tolerance for dissenting views has long been the norm. As William Tenn noted, "the Essence of Science Fiction is--quarrelsomeness," so it is not genuinely surprising that this quarrelsome figure has been allowed to speak his mind so often. Such openness to different opinions is unfortunately rare in academia. Once, I submitted an article to *College English*, naively thinking that my unique experience of teaching both college-level English classes and college-level Mathematics classes might make my thoughts and conclusions worth considering; in returning the manuscript, the editor commented only that her readers would want to see such material (quoting from memory) "contextualized with the current research." The message couldn't have been clearer: join our club, and play by our rules, or we aren't interested in listening to you. Fields of literary study can display a similar closed-mindedness. But in science fiction scholarship, you don't need to read the right critics, study the right texts, say the right things, in order to be heard, to have an impact.

Yes, there will always be those who will seek to impose a rigid orthodoxy on science fiction. In academia, there are scholars who insist that we must myopically limit our research to that handful of texts most likely to earn the approval of the Modern Language Association. Outside of academia, there are writers who insist that anyone questioning the value of the American space program must be expelled from the field as a heretic. A writer e-mailed me that he was working with his buddies in the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America to get me permanently banned from *Locus Online* because I had been "pissing in the font" of science fiction. I'm sorry; science fiction isn't an ivory tower, and it isn't a church; it's a debating society, and it is by means of ongoing and energetic arguments among contentious individuals that the literature and scholarship of science fiction, unlike other fields I might mention, remains vibrant and alive. A lot of people in this business don't like me; maybe I don't like them; but I will always support everyone's right to stay in the room and express their opinions, even if--perhaps especially if--I disagree with them.

I finally regard myself, then, as a very lucky person--lucky to have found the people I have found, lucky to be receiving this award, and lucky to have ended up in a field that will tolerate, and even celebrate, a person who often goes in the wrong direction, doesn't listen to good advice, and works harder than anyone should have to work. Thank you very, very much.

CLARESON AWARD

Acceptance Speech

Joe Sanders

I'd originally planned to do a few minutes of comedy shtick up here. In fact, though, I do take this award seriously, and I seriously thank you for honoring me tonight.

I was an only child who grew up on a farm in west central Indiana. I didn't realize, at the time, how much solitude was just part of the human

condition, but I knew I was desperate to escape from my isolation. I found my escape in books—which, unfortunately, isolated me even more from the people immediately around me who weren't serious readers. I compounded my alienation by reading that science fiction crap too. There seemed to be no one around who cared to talk about the subjects that mattered to me. Fortunately, sf fandom kept me from feeling totally alone, but I realized that when I began to study literature seriously in college I'd have to do something to keep connected to the reading I loved. A fanzine book review column gave me an excuse to read sf on the side, until I discovered that some of the respectable fiction I was reading for classes was less satisfying as literature than some of the stuff I was reading for fun. It took absurdly long to realize that fantastic literature deserved to be taken seriously; my only excuse is that I had to figure it out all by myself.

Let's skip ahead through grad school, into full-time teaching. As a confirmed sf addict, I wanted to design a proper-sounding sf course to sneak into my college's catalog. The Science Fiction Research Association advertised a workshop for teachers before its 1974 conference, which was relatively nearby in Milwaukee. As it happened, I already knew most of what the workshop offered, but I did meet some of the people who had come to attend the regular conference, including Tom and Alice Clareson. When Tom mentioned that he was open to suggestions of writers who deserved to be the subject of essays in his series *Voices for the Future*, I suggested Roger Zelazny; Tom said that sounded reasonable, so why didn't I write the essay. So I did, and he published it. About that time, while getting ready to attend the next year's SFRA conference in Miami, I did a paper developing a sub-theme of the big Zelazny essay, which I submitted to Tom for *Extrapolation*—and which he promptly rejected because there wasn't enough new thinking to justify a separate publication.

The elation of having an essay published, countered by the disappointment of having another one rejected, taught me an important lesson: People would listen to me when I said something—but only if I worked hard to make it worth hearing.

Everything I've done in and for the SFRA since then has followed from that dual recognition. You are the people who've listened to me and who, sometimes cordially and sometimes rudely but usefully, have replied. That's what we do for each other. It's the reason the SFRA exists. I'm grateful that the Association exists, I've enjoyed doing whatever I could to help it continue, and I'd recommend that anyone who has a chance to help by being an officer, serving on a committee, running a conference, etc. should do it. Remember: if I can manage jobs like that, they can't be extremely difficult.

So thank you, everyone, all SFRA members whether they're here tonight or not. Tom and Alice Clareson. Lynn Williams. Alex and Phyllis Eisenstein. Muriel Becker, a good companion after the Eau Claire conference when she was waiting for a flight home and I was waiting for Neil Gaiman to arrive back in town. Betty Hull and Fred Pohl. Amy Sisson. Neil Barron. The Davids: Dave Mead and my fashion advisor, David Hartwell. The officers of the International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts, especially Bill Senior and Len Hatfield, who agreed that there was no reason SFRA and IAFA should be enemies. Carl Yoke. Charlotte Donsky. Mack and Sue Hassler. The committee that put together the Cleveland conference: Bruce Beatie, Barb Lucas, Stacie Hanes, and Joe Berlant volunteering in the book room. Carolyn Wendell, who turned me on to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Joan Gordon. Mike Levy. And the younger generation of sf scholars, especially Javier Martinez and the new, improved Joe Sanders Mark II.

All of you. Everyone. Thanks.

Chapman, Edgar L. & Carl B. Yoke, eds. *Classic and Iconoclastic Alternate History Science Fiction*. Edwin Mellen Pr, Aug 03

Connors, Scott. *H.P. Lovecraft: A Century Less A Dream*. Wildside, Apr 03.

Dryden, Linda. *The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles: Stevenson, Wilde, and Wells*. Palgrave Macmillan, Sep 03

Fendler, Susanne & Ulrike Maria Horstmann. *Images of Masculinity in Fantasy Fiction*. Edwin Mellen Press, Sep 03

Gupta, Suman. *Re-reading Harry Potter*. Palgrave Macmillan, Apr 03

Haber, Karen. *Exploring the Matrix: Visions of the Cyber Future*. Simon & Schuster, Mar 03

Hayhurst, Robert, ed. *Readings on Michael Crichton*. Greenhaven Pr, Apr 01

James, Edward & Farah Mendlesohn, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*. Cambridge UP, Sep 03

Jones, William B., Jr. *Robert Louis Stevenson Reconsidered: New Critical Perspectives*. McFarland, Feb 03.

Martin, Graham Dustan. *An Inquiry into the Purposes of Speculative Fiction—Fantasy and Truth*. Edwin Mellen Pr, Sep 03

Moylan, Tom & Raffaella Baccolini, eds. *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination*. Routledge, Aug 03

Pastourmatzi, Domna, ed. *Biotechnological and Medical Themes in Science Fiction*. Feb 03. [31 critical essays (2 in Greek). 512 p. Free to academics, who must request a copy on official university letterhead from the editor, School of English, Aristotle Univ, Thessaloniki 54124, Greece (pastourm@enl.auth.gr)]

Pepetone, Gregory G. *Gothic Perspectives in the American Experience*. Peter Lang, Feb 03

Picart, Caroline Joan. *Remaking the Frankenstein Myth on Film: Between Laughter and Horror*. SUNY, Jul 03

Schneider, Steven Jay & Daniel Shaw, eds. *Dark Thoughts: Philosophical Reflections on Cinematic Horror*. Scarecrow Press, Sep 03

Tennent, Colette. *Reading the Gothic in the First Seven Novels of Margaret Atwood*. Edwin Mellen Press, Aug 03

Testenko, Tatiana. *Feminist Utopian Novels of the 1970s: Joanna Russ & Dorothy Bryant*. Routledge, Aug 03

Vierra, Mark A. *Hollywood Horror: From Gothic to Cosmic*. Abrams, Dec 03

Wood, Ralph C. *The Gospel According to Tolkien: Visions of the Kingdom in Middle-earth*. Westminster John Knox Pr, Oct 03

CfP:

WHAT: Here There Be Dragons: The Global Fantastic

WHO: International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts 25

WHEN: March 24-28, 2004

WHERE: Fort Lauderdale Airport Hilton, Dania, Florida

TOPICS: The focus of ICFA-25 is on the global fantastic and on the ways in which language, tradition, and geography shape the narratives we tell. Our cultures are threaded with shifting strands of the fantastic from around the globe: Japanese anime, Russian folktales, fragments of the Ramayana, Latin American magic realism, African trickster stories. Possible topics include: Postcolonial Theory and the Fantastic; the

An Interview With Dan Simmons

Michael Levy

ML: Your debut novel, *Song of Kali* (1985), was a horror/dark fantasy hybrid. Then, in 1989, you published a mind-vampire novel, *Carion Comfort*, a science-fiction novel, *Hyperion*, and a mainstream novel, *Phases of Gravity*. Since then you've moved back and forth between horror, SF, mystery and mainstream fiction. There aren't that many writers who do this kind of genre jumping, and fewer still who do it successfully. What's your secret?

DS: There's no secret to writing in different genres — the secret (which I'm still working on) is writing *well* in different genres. Readers who only read the most recent bestsellers can be fooled into believing their emperor-authors are wearing clothes, but the majority of readers in any genre — SF, mystery, historical fiction, you name it — *know* the standards of excellence their field has set. They *know* which of their authors are the best and can tell you why. It's no place to go slumming, that's for sure. The only secret I could offer to younger authors who're considering crossing genre boundaries is to honor that new genre and its readers with the best work you can give.

ML: Many writers report that once they've made a name in one genre, publishers refuse to take books from them in a different genre, or insist that they adopt a pseudonym. Have you had this problem?

DS: Not really. My current primary publisher — Harper Collins Morrow — has allowed me in the last few years to publish historical fiction about Hemingway (*The Crook Factory*), a mainstream thriller (*Darwin's Blade*), psychological horror (*A Winter Haunting*), and epic SF (*Ilium* and the promised *Olympos*). It's true that they *did* decide not to publish my *noir*, tough-guy series about PI Joe Kurtz (available from St. Martin's Press), but . . . hey . . . they had to draw the line somewhere. Besides, this is why God in Her wisdom created more than one publisher.

ML: You've published twenty-one books. *Ilium* is the seventh that can be counted as science fiction. Do your work or research habits differ from one genre to another? Is doing SF different from writing other things?

DS: My work and research habits tend to vary from each *novel* to the other, regardless of genre. One of the wonderful aspects of writing SF is that language — not just lyrical writing, but the coinage of words and terms themselves — becomes such a challenge. For instance, in *Ilium* my far-future, self-aware, evolving, autonomous organic-mechanical quasi-robotic entities are called “moravecs,” after Hans Moravec. Some readers will understand that immediately; others will just have to get the flavor of it from context.

ML: *Ilium* is, in part, a retelling of the Trojan War and specifically Homer's *Iliad*. What attracted you to that story? How close are your characters to Homer's?

DS: I decided to write *Ilium* — or something like it — after reading David Denby's article “Does Homer Have Legs” in the Sept. 6, 1993, issue of *The New Yorker*. In that essay — and his later book, *Great Books* — Denby goes back to Columbia University after an absence of 30 years and re-takes the introductory courses “Lit Hum” — Literary Humanities — and “CC” — Contemporary Civilization. His first powerful encounter, then and thirty years earlier, was with the *Iliad*. During his second time around, as an adult and father and citizen, Denby was most struck by how *alien* the tale is to all modern sensibilities — male or otherwise. I agreed with that assessment and wanted to find a way to immerse myself in the strangeness of the *Iliad* for a few years. While *Ilium* has several strands being braided through it — some of them having nothing to do with the *Iliad* — those elements taking place on Mount Olympus and on the plains of Troy cel-

celebrate Homer's characters – through the lenses of many translations, of course.

ML: You've centered earlier novels on Chaucer, Keats, Dante, and Hemingway. In *Ilium*, besides Homer, Shakespeare and Proust are integral to the plot. What do your books gain from this extensive use of the classics?

DS: I don't know what the *books* gain, but as a person and a reader, I gain an extension – through research and critical re-reading — of the liberal arts education I first received at Wabash College more than three decades ago. It's one of the reasons I dedicated *Ilium* to Wabash.

ML: *Ilium* is an epic tale, full of larger than life, even super-human characters, but my favorite people in the book are smaller, less powerful characters, like the twentieth-century classicist Thomas Hockenberry. Where does he come from? What's his role in the novel?

DS: A gifted friend of mine when I was a student at Wabash College in the late 1960's – Duane Hockenberry – was murdered not long after graduation. Duane was my main rival during the last few years of school – the “other writer on campus” as it were, and naming my most intriguing human character in *Ilium* after him is a small *homage* to someone who might well have ended up being a much better writer than I'll ever be. (I've also endowed a summer writing internship at Wabash College which is called “the Hockenberry.”) The actual character in *Ilium* isn't so much Duane, of course, but an assemblage of bits and pieces of various classical and Greek and Homeric scholars whom I've also been privileged to call my friends, mixed in with the usual fictional disclaimers.

ML: And how does Shakespeare's Caliban tie into all of this?

DS: Ah, yes, dear old Caliban. If I have any strength as a writer, it may be in ferreting out overlooked or underused monsters such as the goddess Kali, something called the Shrike, mind vampires, the city of Calcutta itself. And even though *The Tempest's* wonderful monster has been portrayed as a brave, struggling victim of colonialism for decades, that's our hang-up. Shakespeare created a wonderful *monster* – not quite human, not quite anything else, willing, waiting and wanting to rape Prospero's daughter at the slightest opportunity.

My particular Caliban owes as much to Robert Browning's “Caliban Upon Setebos” and W.H. Auden's “The Sea and the Mirror” as it does to Shakespeare's creature. In Auden's poem-play, Caliban is alone on a dark stage when he suddenly says to the audience –

Ladies and gentlemen, please keep your seats,
An unidentified plane is reported
Approaching the city. Probably only a false alarm
But naturally, we cannot afford
To take any chances.

Now wouldn't *that* scare the ever-loving bejeezus out of any modern Manhattan audience? Monsters that devious shouldn't be allowed to go to waste.

NONFICTION REVIEW

FEMSPEC: “Women's Horror”

Gerardo Cummings

Weinbaum, Batya (Ed.) *Femspec*. Caddo Gap Press, 3145 Geary Boulevard PMB 275, San Francisco, CA 94118, 2002. Vol. 4. Issue I. 140 pages.

Femspec, a journal dedicated to critical and creative works of science



Racialized Other in Narrative; the Representation of Race and Gender in the International Fantastic; Fantastic Film Around the Globe; Legends and Fairy Tales of Many Nations; Comparative Literature; The Fantastic in Translation; and the Impact of and on Multiculturalism. In addition, papers on lesser known authors of science fiction, fantasy, and horror from all nations of the world are welcome, as are papers focusing on the work of Guest of Honor Daina Chaviano, Guest Scholar Marcial Souto, and Special Guest Writer Elizabeth Hand. As always, we also welcome proposals for individual papers and for academic sessions and panels on any aspect of the fantastic.

SUBMISSIONS: 500 word abstract to the appropriate Division Head (see website for details)

INFORMATION & CONTACT: <<http://www.iafa.org>>

DEADLINE: October 15, 2003

WHAT: Retro-Futures

WHO: Special Issue of Rhizomes: Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge

WHEN: Spring 2004

TOPICS: A special issue on historic utopias, nostalgic speculations, neo-traditions, modern primitives, archaic science fictions, being/becoming, new urbanism, invented traditions, primitivism, futurism, retro fashion, futurology, back to basics, neo-paganism, origin/destiny, simplicity, the classics, the space age, and any other combination of the old and the new is under construction at <www.rhizomes.net>. Testing the boundaries of cutting-edge and the timeless, the newfangled and the obsolete, “Retro-Futures” will peer into the culture and politics of temporality and everyday life. Rhizomes promotes experimen-

tal work located outside current disciplines, work that has no proper location. As our name suggests, works written in the spirit of Deleuzian approaches are welcomed but not required. We are not interested in publishing texts that establish their authority merely by affirming what is already believed. Instead, we encourage migrations into new conceptual territories resulting from unpredictable juxtapositions

SUBMISSIONS: email attachment to <davinheckman@hotmail.com> & <dheckman@reconstruction.ws>
DEADLINE: abstracts: November 15, 2003. papers: January 15, 2004.
INFORMATION: <http://www.rhizomes.net/files/contact.html>

WHAT: Doris Lessing's Economies: Negotiating Exchange
WHO: First International Doris Lessing Conference
WHERE: New Orleans
WHEN: April 1-4 2004

TOPICS: Proposals are invited for papers on the notion of exchange or other economic aspects of Doris Lessing's fiction and/or nonfiction. Potential topics might include the exchange of commodities, language, affect, or ideas; circulation and consumption; avarice and altruism; symbolic exchange; the ethics of exchange.

SUBMISSIONS: 1-2 page proposals
CONTACT: Cynthia Port, Department of English, U of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 19104 <cport@english.upenn.edu>
DEADLINE: September 15, 2003

WHAT: Doris Lessing and Colonialism
WHAT: First Doris Lessing International Conference
WHEN: April 1-4, 2004

fiction, fantasy, and other supernatural genres, has produced a special issue on "Women's Horror" that is deserving of a wide audience. Gina Wisker's introductory article "'Honey, I'm Home!': Splintering the Fabrication in Domestic Horror," does a superb job of discussing the foundations of horror and presenting prime examples in literature and film. Her tour through Freud, King, Carter, and Kristeva provides useful context for the articles that follow, and facilitates their reading by those unfamiliar with the themes and subjects to be discussed.

After Wisker, a section of creative writing by Suzy McKee Charnas, Louise Shaw, and Doreen Russell is offered before the meat-and-potatoes section of the journal devoted to criticism. While "Evil Thoughts," "The Which Bitch? Project," and "Spell" are not texts subjected to discussion in the critical section that follows them, they serve as introductory statements to McKee Charnas, Shaw, and Russell respectively. The horror themes and subjects in their works (Hallowe'en, evil fairies, and Freddy Krueger among them) suggest the continuing validity of this literature in our post-postmodern world.

The critical essays included in this issue of *Femspec* present groundbreaking approaches to the Vampire myth, the *Alien* films, *Xena: Warrior Princess*, and other horror themes and texts. Frances Tomaszuk's "Lunatics with Lethal Combat Skills: Dark Doubles, Bacchae, and Soulless Women in *Xena: Warrior Princess*" is excellently researched and written, although my own bias toward *Xena* (which I regard as grade-Z schlock) makes it an unbearable chore to follow the article's discussion of the dark double, madness, and horror in the TV series.

The twin topics of vampires and aliens divide the rest of the essays, with a couple of exceptions being the essays by Anita Biressi and Kathleen Kendall. The former's "True Crime, Medicine, and Corporeal Horror" contributes greatly to the theories of the body and corporeal corrosion, but surprisingly fails to address the role Kristeva has played in such theories; the latter's "Who Are You Afraid Of?: Young Women as Consumers and Producers of Horror Films" effectively offers the results of a study Kendall conducted in her Media Studies course. The key conclusion was that young women are prone to enjoy the visual aesthetics of the horror genre, but have their reservations about the way their intelligence may be underestimated.

The essays pertaining to vampire mythology are Sabine Meyer's "Passing Perverts, After All: Vampirism, (In)Visibility, and the Horrors of the Normative in Jewelle Gomez' *The Gilda Stories*," Sara Martín Alegre's "The Other in Me: Nancy Collins's Vampire Heroine, Sonja Blue," and Lorna Jowett's "'Mute and Beautiful': The Representation of the Female in Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*." Meyer first theorizes about what she calls "the new vampire" before delving into a study of *The Gilda Stories*. Martín Alegre's work introduces the concept of the "reluctant vampire"—or vampirism imposed onto innocents—in her discussion of Collins' novel. Lastly, Jowett's take on Rice's canonized work, and her Claudia-centered study of the paradoxical and enigmatic nature of this character, should be included in a critical collection dedicated to Anne Rice's reconfiguring of the vampire myth.

The *Alien* films provide the focus for essays by Aline Ferrara and Andrea Greenbaum. It is hard to decide which of the two is the more ambitious piece of critical research. Ferrara's "Artificial Wombs and Archaic Tombs: Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* and the *Alien* Tetralogy" considers the strong similarities between Carter's post-apocalyptic novel and the films with Ripley's antagonist; Greenbaum's "Biotechnology as Kabbalah: Reconfiguring the Golden Myth in *Alien Resurrection* and *Species*" presents the Golem, codes, DNA, and Hebrew literature in connection to the films of her title.

In conclusion, there are few discernible flaws in any of the articles

included in this volume of *Femspec* (even the *Xena* article). All the essays present interesting aspects of what we could begin to identify as 21st century horror literary criticism.

NONFICTION REVIEW

Human Prehistory in Fiction

Philip Kaveny

De Paolo, Charles. *Human Prehistory in Fiction*. McFarland & Company (2002) 172pp. references, bibliography, index; \$32 soft cover ISBN: 0-7864-1417 0.

Charles De Paolo uses fascinating and innovative methodology to approach the subject of human pre-history in selected works of fiction. The scope of his study is the approximately one hundred-year period from the late 19th century to nearly the end of the 20th century. De Paolo has set no small task before himself since he must fulfill three functions-as a student, a compiler, and an interpreter of historical paleo-anthropology-as well as a literary critic. He examines the efficacy with which the authors he has selected, as they constructed their works, have utilized source material and grounding assumptions from a dynamic, contested, emergent, and necessarily radical, body of scientific knowledge across the extended period of his study.

In my opinion, Charles De Paolo is well up to his task. However, it is important to remember that De Paolo is not a working scientist in the field of paleo-anthropology. Rather, he bears the same relationship to this field as an historian of science would bear to a working scientist within any specific field of study. This is in fact a very good thing because it allows De Paolo to make metacritical and inter-disciplinary observations. In one sense this is not exactly the first time this sort of thing has been done, yet in another sense perhaps it is.

A number of critics have addressed the question of "normal science" as they investigate the manner in which hard science is utilized by science fiction writers. Charles De Paolo is one of the few critics to address human and social science issues from this same standpoint. For example, he does an excellent job of conveying the manner in which author Arthur C. Clarke, in his *2001: A Space Odyssey*, addresses the really big ideas of mid-20th century human evolution and development at the time his work was created.

One example is the "Killer Ape" hypothesis, but he also targets a number of other big open and multi-faceted questions. In order to facilitate his task, De Paolo somewhat opportunistically but successfully utilizes a framework first popularized by Thomas Kuhn in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962). He uses his study to ask this question: What was the paradigm for normal historical paleo-anthropology for the historical milieu in which the works he features were generated? Thus De Paolo relates literary cultural production and operative scientific practices to those operative in paleo-anthropology at the time of the generation of each of the selected works. In doing so he throws an interesting light on both the history of science and artistic choices made by the authors in these selected works.

De Paolo astutely chose to privilege a selective but representative group of authors and their works for his consideration. This is significant because in doing so he extends and broadens the scope of his study to assess historical, generic, and language boundaries. De Paolo treats the following works: H.G. Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, Pierre Boulle's *The Planet of the Apes*, Jules Verne's *The Village in the Treetops*, and Edgar Rice Burroughs' *The Land That Time Forgot*. Specific themes addressed include that of "a god among the heathen" in Wells'

WHERE: New Orleans

TOPICS: For a panel on Doris Lessing and Colonialism written about the period of the European colonization of Africa. Papers may also consider empires in Lessing's work outside the parameters of nineteenth century imperialism such the empires of twentieth century communism, capitalism or the futuristic empires she creates and calls Canopus. Papers may discuss, for example, the effects of imperial aggression or other forms of cultural exploitation on either natives or colonizers. Some may want to pay attention to her vocabulary, language and characterization of native populations. Lessing's stance in relation to colonialism is worth careful analysis.

SUBMISSIONS: 1-2 page proposal

CONTACT: Linda Weinhouse, Department of English, Community College of Baltimore County, Essex Campus, 7201 Rossville Blvd., Baltimore County, Maryland 21237 <lweinhouse@ccbcmd.edu>

DEADLINE: September 15, 2003

WHO: First International Doris Lessing Conference

WHAT: Doris Lessing and/in Africa

WHEN: April 1-4, 2004

WHERE: New Orleans

TOPICS: The writer as observer and participant or insider and outsider.

SUBMISSIONS: 2 page proposals

CONTACT: Anne Serafin, 25 Walnut Place, Newtonville, MA 02460 <anneserafin@earthlink.net>

DEADLINE: September 15, 2003

WHO: First Doris Lessing International Conference

WHAT: Greek Mythology and/ or Grimm's Fairy Tales in Lessing's work

WHEN: April 1-4, 2004

WHERE: New Orleans

TOPICS: Allusions and intertexts, including creation, hero, journey, and monstrous birth myths and fairy-tale motifs and intertexts in *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*, *Memoirs of a Survivor*, or any of her works.

SUBMISSIONS: One-two-page abstracts, email attachment in Word
CONTACT: Sharon Wilson, Dept. of English, U of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO 80631: email to <Sharon.Wilson@unco.edu>
DEADLINE: September 15, 2003.

WHAT: Collection on The Rocky Horror Picture Show and Popular Culture

TOPICS: RHPC and cult films; RHPC fandom, performance, and viewing practices; RHPC and youth culture; RHPC and the Gothic; RHPC and other cinematic genres, including the horror film and the musical; RHPC and popular music; RHPC and pornography; RHPC in the context of 1970s American and world culture; RHPC's current popularity and significance; Queer and feminist approaches to RHPC; RHPC on Broadway.

DEADLINE: Complete essays due by December 20, 2003.

CONTACT: Inquiries and essays to: Jeffrey Weinstock, Department of English, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859. <mailto:Jeffrey.Weinstock@cmich.edu>

WHAT: *20th Century American Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers, 1900-1950*,

TOPICS: Contributors are sought for the first volume of a revision/expansion of the previous *Dictionary of Literary Biography*. The following entries are available: Stephen Vincent Benet; Robert Bloch; Nelson S. Bond; James Branch Cabell; Hugh B. Cave; Robert W. Chambers; Au-

"The Lord of the Dynamos" and other works, the struggle for legitimacy in Wells' "The Grisly Folk," and the Tasmanian analogue in Lester Del Rey's "The Day Is Done." De Paolo also includes William Golding's *The Inheritors: The Promise of Humanity* and Arthur C. Clarke's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, along with Jean Auel's *The Clan of the Cave Bear*, J.H. Rosny-Ainy's *Quest for Fire*, and Wells' *The Time Machine: An Invention*.

In a final chapter, De Paolo considers the paleo-anthropologist as literary critic. De Paolo's treatment of H.G. Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) (a work which Oscar Wilde found amoral and shocking) is very interesting. De Paolo is quick to point out the irony operative within the work by which Wells apparently overturns, with a very un-Darwinian trope, the scale of nature. He attacks the view in which humankind is the crown of creation and adopts another in which evolution seems to consist of a kind of lateral movement between human and other species in the world that Wells has constructed through Dr. Moreau. De Paolo says it best on page seventeen: "In *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, Wells supplants the scale of nature with mythological conventions that underscore the phenomenal character of man. In using the pseudo-scientific convention (heterogeneity) to nullify the scale of nature he counteracted a system which many believed unjustifiably exalted man's place in creation."

De Paolo, a prominent Wellsian in his own right, is justified in focusing on four works of H.G. Wells because it cuts across Wells' half-century career from the 1890s to his death in 1946. H.G. Wells was a world-class literary figure. He wrote his whole lifetime with the intent of expanding the envelope of common scientific knowledge. The meteoric literary and economic success of his Victorian Scientific Romances in the late 1890s was grounded in his own scientific training. Through the rest of his lifetime Wells felt that the fate of civilization was locked in a death race between education and catastrophe. Sadly, by the time of Wells' death, it appeared to him that catastrophe had a big lead (as they would say in horse racing) going into the backstretch. It is also essential to note that H.G. Wells' literary production not only foreshadowed the modern world but also shaped that which it foretold, as it fell into the hands of national policy makers. The measure of Wells' influence was amply demonstrated by H. Bruce Franklin in his ground-breaking work, *War Stars: The Superweapon and the American Imagination* (1988).

Several sections of De Paolo's study deal with the fictionalized portrayal of Cro-Magnon and Neanderthal interactions. The best of these is the section on Jean Auel who, he quite rightly points out, made a systematic and scientific exploration of the working scientific paradigms upon which she based her *Clan of the Cave Bear/Children of Earth* series. However in Wells' portrayal of these same interactions, I wish De Paolo might have addressed charges some have made against Wells about his implicit Victorian racism, but perhaps that was outside the scope of his study. The only other issue I would raise with this study is the question of whether any science can understand human behavior on a transactional basis without access to millions of years of pre-history. However, it is the function of our genre to extrapolate. The writer of science fiction or fantasy can rush into realms in which angels fear to tread.

While time and space do not allow me to do a section-by-section treatment of all the chapters of *Human Prehistory in Fiction*, I feel that overall it is an exemplary study that represents a very promising interdisciplinary direction that I hope other critics in our field will follow. Perhaps the thing I like the most about his work is De Paolo's style. He makes use of the authors he studies without burdening us with endless iteration and re-iteration of narrative and plot details as he proceeds with his analysis. I would highly recommend *Human Prehis-*

tory in Fiction by Charles De Paolo for school public college and university libraries. I would also like to see it appear as a hardcover edition with a substantial library binding.

NONFICTION REVIEW

J. K. Rowling in Two Critical Anthologies

Amelia Rutledge

Lana A. Whited, ed. *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter: Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2002. Hardbound, x+408 pages, \$34.95. ISBN 0-8272-1443-6

Elizabeth E. Heilman, ed. *Harry Potter's World: Multidisciplinary Critical Perspectives*. New York and London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2003. Paperback, ix+308 pages, \$24.95. ISBN 0-415-93374-0

Differing demographics may be the most salient difference between two literary and cultural phenomena—the publication in the USA of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* in the pirated Ballantine edition, and the publication of J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* sequence. Both have engendered intense popular enthusiasm and pundits' scorn—Edmund Wilson's "Oo, Those Awful Orcs" finds its counterparts in articles by William Safire or Philip Hensher—and both have attracted academic attention. There are already articles important enough to receive further critical attention, most notably Jack Zipes's essay in *Sticks and Stones: The Troublesome Success of Children's Literature from Slovenly Peter to Harry Potter* (2000), and Kimbra Wilder Gish's *Horn Book* article (May/June 2000) defining the conservative religious objections to the books. Scholarly and critical work is abundant enough to constitute two anthologies published almost simultaneously.

The title of Lana A. Whited's *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter* (ITHP) defines its audience, although the editor was politely pressured by Rowling's representatives to put "Harry Potter" in second position to avoid misleading youngsters (11-12). The editor of *Harry Potter's World* asserts that few of the advances in critical theory have had much impact on K-12 teachers, hence the current volume in the series "Pedagogy and Popular Culture." Both volumes are informed by contemporary literary theory, although in some essays theoretical exposition is more expansive than authorial discussions. Gender criticism, the impact of focused and intense marketing, and the culture of fandom yield overlapping, mutually informative, essays.

Of the seven subdivisions of *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter*, three focus on literary relations. The essays in Section II, "Harry's Roots in Epic, Myth, and Folklore," list archetypes and folktale patterns, but their overly-ambitious range limit them to compendia of details.

The essays of sections I, "Harry's Cousins in the Magical Realm" and III, "Harry's Other Literary Relatives," could easily have been combined, since only one, Pat Pinsent's "The Education of a Wizard: Harry Potter and his Predecessors," addresses fantastic narratives—the magic school stories of Jill Murphy, Anthony Horowitz, and Diana Wynne-Jones. Amanda Cockrell's "Harry Potter and the secret Password: Finding Our Way in the Magical Genre": compares the books to Kipling's *Stalky and Company*, and David K. Steege, in "Harry Potter, Tom Brown, and the British School Story: Lost in Transit?" notes that Rowling accommodates modern readers by minimizing the "distasteful and the more culturally specific" traditional content. Roni Natov's "Harry Potter and the Extraordinariness of the Ordinary" (reprinted from *The Lion and the Unicorn*),

gust Derleth; Ralph Milne Farley; Charles G. Finney; L. Ron Hubbard; Carl Jacobi; David H. Keller; Frank Belnap Long; Robert A.W. Lowndes; A. Merritt; John Meyers Meyers; Fletcher Pratt; E. Hoffman Price; Ross Rocklyne; Thorne Smith; Donald Wandrei; Manly Wade Wellman; Philip Wylie. SUBMISSIONS: Entries will range from 3000-6000 words. Contributors will receive a small honorarium and a copy of the volume. DLB entries should offer a chronological overview of the author's life and works and should be written for a nonspecialist audience.

CONTACT: Send queries, including a brief CV, to F. Brett Cox, Ph.D., Department of English and Communications, Norwich University, 158 Harmon Drive, Northfield, VT 05663-1035, Email to: <fcox@norwich.edu>.

DEADLINE: Completed entries: March 1, 2004.

WHAT: Imaginary Places: Representations of Dystopia in Literature and Film

WHO: special edition of the journal, Critical Survey, Autumn 2004

TOPICS: Critical Survey is a refereed journal published three times a year. It addresses central issues of literary theory and critical practice. Articles on a diverse range of literary texts from the Renaissance to the present are positively encouraged as are articles on representations of dystopia in film.

SUBMISSIONS: Papers, of between 5,000 and 7,000 words

CONTACT: Pat Wheeler <p.a.wheeler@herts.ac.uk>

DEADLINE: January 2004

INFORMATION: <http://www.herts.ac.uk/fhle/faculty/humanities/frame/set/humanities_welcome.htm>

WHAT: Active Heroines: A Study Day

WHEN: 14th February 2004

WHERE: Liverpool: John Moores University

TOPICS: Ten years ago an examination of active or violent female protagonists would have had scant material to draw upon. In the last decade there has been both a proliferation of such figures in film and television fiction (Xena, Buffy, Sydney Bristow, Clarice Starling) and a proliferation of academic studies on active women (Tasker, Harte, Inness).

This study day is an opportunity to review the work now available and to widen the scope of this debate; to look at new subjects and different media. Topics might include: Female avatars in computer gaming; Girl heroes in comics; The pre-history of the femme fatale; Women in Hong-Kong action cinema; Feminism's violent women

SUBMISSIONS: Abstracts of 250 words should be sent to Rosie White

CONTACT: Rosie White by email: <rosemary.white@unn.ac.uk> or Rosie White, School of Arts and Social Sciences, Lipman Building, Northumbria University, Sandyford Road, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE1 8ST

DEADLINE: 1st December 2003

WHAT: The Slayage Conference on Buffy the Vampire Slayer,

WHEN: May 28-30, 2004

WHERE: Nashville, Tennessee

TOPICS: Any aspect of BtVS or Angel from the perspective of any discipline—literature, history, communications, film and television studies, women's studies, religion, philosophy, linguistics, music, cultural studies, and others. We invite discussion of the text, the social con-

compares Harry to the Dickensian "favorite child" and argues that Rowling is more of a novelist than a fantasist. Readers may take exception to some of the conclusions in the essays (very little is playful in the anti-authoritarianism of Kipling's young men); still, the essays constitute a quick guide to the literary context of the "Harry Potter" books.

The range of approaches is broader and the results more varied in the remaining sections. In "Crowning the King: Harry Potter and the Construction of Authority," (reprinted from *The Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*) Farah Mendlesohn offers a strong critique of the series' ideology of "impartiality" and "fairness." The essay by Lana M. Whited, with M. Katherine Grimes, "What Would Harry do?: J.K. Rowling and Lawrence Kohlberg's Theories of Moral Development," is more engaging when it interrogates the "benevolence" of the structures of authority in the books than when the authors apply Lawrence Korngold's formulaic theories.

The essays in "Gender Issues and Harry Potter," Eliza T. Dresang's "Hermione Granger and the Heritage of Gender" and Terri Doughty's "Locating Harry Potter in the 'Boys' Book' Market," deal as much with authority as with gender. The Dresang essay properly acknowledges the plurality of "feminisms"; however, accounting for each feminism's possible conclusions overburdens the brief essay. Doughty's essay suggests that part of the "Harry Potter" books' appeal is that they *do not* problematize masculinity; however, differences in context and social class make "moral choice" in the "Harry Potter books incommensurate with "moral choice" in contemporary books that depict masculinity and violence.

Rowling's success is an international phenomenon, and Philip Nel's "You Say 'Jelly' and I say 'Jell-0': Harry Potter and the Transfiguration of Language," and Nancy K. Jentsch's "Harry Potter and the Tower of Babel: Translating the Magic" are among the most valuable works in the collection. Jentsch describes the tribulations and successes of translators, and Nel describes not only linguistic imperialism, but also the homogenizing effects of unthinking Americanization, e.g., "Mum" (English) and "Mam" (Irish) both become "Mom."

The essays in the final section "Commodity and Culture in the World of Harry Potter," such as Karin E. Westman's "Specters of Thatcherism: Contemporary British Cultures in Rowling's Harry Potter Series," consider the entanglement of the "Harry Potter" books in commerce, and in constructions of race and class. Elizabeth Teare, in "Harry Potter and the Technology of Magic," notes the ironies of Scholastic's peddling a mythology about the series' origins in non-commercial innocence. Rebecca Sutherland Borrah's ethnographic study, "Apprentice Wizards Welcome: Fan Communities and the Culture of Harry Potter," details Warner Brothers' attempted, and partly successful, commandeering of domain names.

ITHP provides detailed notes and a full bibliography at the end. The volume resembles a casebook, although cultural criticism dominates the collection; readers seeking stylistic or psychoanalytical approaches will probably have to wait for the completion of the series. The references in Elizabeth E. Heilman's *Harry Potter's World: Multidisciplinary Critical Perspectives (HPW)* display a preponderance of sociological studies, as the book's focus would suggest, although one subsection focuses on literary relations.

In the first section of *HPW*, "Cultural Studies" is used to link social criticism, and analyses of technoculture, and of cultural anxiety. Tammy Turner-Vorbeck's "Pottermania: Good, Clean Fun or Cultural Hegemony?," uses a straightforward Althusserian approach, but ends with a corrective focus on agency. Peter Applebaum's "Harry Potter's World: Magic Technoculture, and Becoming Human," which resembles a book introduction in its variety of complex topics, compares Harry Potter to the "gundam" child of *anime*, suggesting that the

“Harry Potter” books and “fanware” are key sites for the cultural constructions of science and technology. “Controversial Content in Children’s Literature: Is *Harry Potter* Harmful to Children?” by Deborah J. Taub and Heather L. Servaty interrogates generalizations about the “negative” effects of the books by offering a developmental taxonomy of “magical thinking” and of children’s responses to the idea of magic.

The “Reader Response” essays examine resistant readers in Kathleen F. Malu’s “Ways of Reading *Harry Potter*: Multiple Stories for Multiple Reader Identities,” and fan collaboration in “Writing Harry’s World: Children Coauthoring Hogwarts” by Ernest Bond and Nancy Michelson; the latter essay also includes a brief discussion of repressive tactics against website creators. Hollie Anderson’s “Reading *Harry Potter* with Navajo Eyes,” invokes a variety of boarding school experiences and emphasizes the importance of considering *multiple* reader-perspectives within a single, complex culture.

Narrative patterns dominate the “Literary Perspectives” essays: “Generic Fusion and the Mosaic of Harry Potter” by Anne Hiebert Alton surveys pulp elements in the “Harry Potter” books, and Maria Nikolajeva’s “*Harry Potter*—A Return to the Romantic Hero” reads the books against Northrop Frye’s mythic cycle, arguing that the “Harry Potter” books offer a respite from the ironic, fragmented, subversive child protagonists currently favored by critics. Deborah De Rosa’s “Wizardly Challenges to and Affirmation of the Initiation Paradigm in *Harry Potter*” takes Joseph Campbell’s paradigm of the quest pattern as normative, seeing an inversion of Campbell’s pattern in Harry’s pre-adventure deprivations; the focus on Campbell’s paradigm neglects the *fairy-tale* pattern (pre-quest deprivation) operative in the “Harry Potter” books.

Essays in the “Critical and Social Perspectives” section are often model-driven, although the contrast of *Gesellschaft* with *Gemeinschaft* models of community in John Kornfeld and Laurie Prothro, in “Comedy, Conflict, and Community: Home and Family in *Harry Potter*” shows some interpretative potential. The differences between reader “plaisir” (a non-resisting reading experience) and “jouissance” (the interrogation of comfortable stereotypes) in Elizabeth E. Heilman’s “Blue Wizards and Pink Witches: Representations of Gender Identity and Power” have more critical potential than conclusions from social research presented without interrogation in this and others among the essays; a more nuanced consideration of the data would better serve the target audience.

The concluding “Appendix: Authenticity in *Harry Potter*: The Movie and the Books” by Alexander R. Wang (a high-school student at the time) might be useful to spark discussion of inconsistencies and discrepancies, but it adds little to the volume.

Both volumes provide material for future investigation, but both would benefit from more rigorous editing: Textual details must be rechecked; Neville is said to be injured in a “Quidditch lesson” and Dean Thomas’s name is reversed both in the text and in the index (both errors occur in the Heilman anthology), and a reference to “flue” powder in the Whited anthology weakens one of Rowling’s puns. More serious, since these essays will probably be taken up by student researchers, are usage errors, some not easily attributable to typesetting, in the Heilman volume.

Perhaps because the “Harry Potter” series is still being produced, there is not much discussion of Rowling’s development as a writer. Neither volume addresses readers’ “desire”—anomalous in its intensity across age groups—that has made this series a publishing phenomenon; the books rightly eschew acceptance of “marketing” as the sole factor for its success, but other possibilities are yet to be explored. While further studies are being produced, both of these

text, the audience, the producers, the production, and more. All proposals/essays must exhibit strong familiarity with already published scholarship. INFORMATION: Visit the in-development conference website at <<http://www.slayage.tv/conference/>>.

SUBMISSIONS: a 250-word proposal or a completed paper, limited to a 20 minute reading time, on any aspect of BtVS or Angel. Also welcome are proposals for pre-arranged, complete sessions.

CONTACT: Submit simultaneously to both David Lavery at <lavery@slayage.tv> and Rhonda Wilcox at <wilcox@slayage.tv>
DEADLINE: September 30, 2003.

WHO: The Southwest Texas Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association

WHAT: CLASSICAL MYTHS IN RECENT LITERATURE AND FILM

WHEN: April 7-10, 2004

WHERE: San Antonio Marriott Rivercenter in San Antonio, TX.

TOPICS: Papers on any aspect of Greek and Roman mythology in contemporary literature and film are eligible for consideration. Possible topics include (but are not limited to): film versions of ancient myths; modern adaptations of classical material in film, music, or literature; the classical heroic figure in modern film or literature; historical fiction in modern film or literature; and classical myth in children’s literature or film. Presentations will be limited to 20 minutes.

SUBMISSIONS: 500 word abstracts of 20 minute papers

CONTACT: Kirsten Day at <lkday@uark.edu>.

DEADLINE: November 1, 2003.

WHAT: The Undying Fire: The Journal of the H.G. Wells Society, the Americas
TOPICS: Interdisciplinary essays welcomed. Published annually, each volume includes from five to seven essays ranging from 10-25 pages in length. MLA documentation preferred. Submit paper copy and the file on disk (in Word format). Be sure to include your e-mail address on your cover letter. We also accept shorter pieces (2-7 pages) for our *_Bits_* section following the submission guidelines above, in addition to book and movie reviews concerning Wells and Wellsiana.
DEADLINE: for the next edition (anticipated publication June 2004): November 1, 2003.
CONTACT: Eric Cash, editor, The Undying Fire, ABAC 32, 2802 Moore Highway, Abraham Baldwin College, Tifton, GA 31793-2601

WHAT: Special Tolkien edition of Modern Fiction Studies
TOPICS: The Editors of Modern Fiction Studies seek theoretically informed, historically contextualized essays on any aspects of Tolkien's fiction (including the posthumous *legendarium*), as well as filmic representations of his fiction. This issue will examine whether postmodern and postcolonial theory better position us to come to terms with a body of fiction that refuses to go away and that may even be more influential than it was fifty years ago. Despite unabated popular interest in fantasy literature, literary critics still frequently find it difficult to take such work seriously except perhaps under the somewhat dismissive rubric of "popular culture" or "trivial literature." Although Tolkien was pointedly excluded from her analysis, Rosemary Jackson has made an impressive

anthologies have their places in junior college and in university libraries, but they should be read with the critical resistance that the best of these essays recommend.

NONFICTION REVIEW

To Seek Out New Worlds: Exploring Links between Science Fiction and World Politics

Richard McKinney

Weldes, Jutta, ed. *To Seek Out New Worlds: Exploring Links between Science Fiction and World Politics*. (2003) Palgrave Macmillan. 230 pp. Index. Paperback, \$22.95, ISBN 1-4039-6058-5; hardcover, \$69.95, ISBN 1-4039-6058-5.

To Seek Out New Worlds consists of eight original essays and a longish introduction. Its subtitle, which indicates that the book seeks to explore links between science fiction and world politics, is a bit misleading, since the anthology has a narrower focus than this description initially implies. World politics is understood only via the academic discipline of international relations, and, although some of the essays question the legitimacy of traditional views found in that discipline, there is little attempt to examine perspectives on either the world or politics from other fields. Science fiction, in its turn, is seen almost exclusively in terms of popular media, with written SF receiving primary attention in a single essay, although the introduction does mention several novels, and Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles* is discussed amongst televisual and cinematic examples in an article by Geoffrey Whitehall. Other contributions deal with *Blade Runner*, *Falling Down*, and *The Matrix* (all interpreted by Ronnie D. Lipschultz as "alien" films); *Starship Troopers* (two essays); *Stalker*, *Star Trek* (a central focus of four essays), and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and its spin-off, *Angel*.

While I am one of the first to defend an interdisciplinary approach, a danger facing such a project is the interpretative inadequacy which may plague scholars operating outside their own areas of expertise – a problem found in the present volume. The contributors here are mainly international relations experts discussing science fiction (rather than SF people looking at world politics), and a lack of familiarity with both SF itself and scholarship about the genre is apparent in many of the essays. Several analyses have been performed without significant reference to the wider science fictional contexts from which the texts were drawn. Since one goal of this volume is to help persuade international relations scholars of the potential value of SF to their field, it is especially disheartening to see a tendency to isolate and decontextualize the chosen examples, and the subsequent disappointing and ineffectual analyses of the texts. Especially conspicuous throughout the book is the almost total lack of reference to written SF, even when such connections are relevant to the ongoing discussion. For instance, in his discussion of *Starship Troopers*, Whitehall never mentions either Heinlein or his book, even in passing, giving an impression that the film has no literary origin.

Several of the essays in the volume demand familiarity with advanced and sophisticated philosophical or sociopolitical backgrounds for their understanding and/or evaluation, and these could prove challenging for introductory readers. The general thrust of the book's essays is sociopolitically critical, and several authors explicitly question both academic positions concerning political issues and the political policies of the USA and various European countries. Unfortunately, some of the articles also suffer from nearly impenetrable writing and excesses

of “Theory”. Whitehall’s contribution is one such example. Using texts of Kant, Heidegger, and Deleuze and Guattari, among others, to support its analyses, portions of the essay are so deeply couched in Theory as to make evaluation of its merits difficult, even for a reader otherwise sympathetic to the author’s views. Worse than the jargon, however, are Whitehall’s questionable claims and conclusions, which are particularly weak with respect to *The Martian Chronicles*.

There *are* interesting and original essays in this volume. Some of the material dealing with *Star Trek* and *Buffy/Angel* provides viable insights into those series; Aida A. Hozic’s article on *Stalker* has valuable points to make; and Neta C. Crawford’s examination of feminist utopianism is worth reading. Surprisingly, in certain of the essays claims for links between the political and SF are poorly developed and defended, while the more original, more interesting contentions explore less relations *between* the two arenas than they do aspects internal to the spheres of science fiction or world politics.

In conclusion, it feels as if the book is something of a missed opportunity. So much more could have been done with a serious examination of even a fraction of the written science fiction which has dealt intelligently and originally, more or less explicitly, with various aspects of world politics. Even a focus solely on popular media would have been more rewarding had the individual discussions been embedded in more meaningful, relevant fictional and/or scholarly contexts. The anthology’s weaknesses severely restrict its value, making it mainly of interest to larger libraries and scholarly completists.

Finally, it should also be pointed out that there are several irritating, unnecessary errors and omissions in the book. Publication dates in one bibliography were incorrect, or inconsistent with those found in the main text. Bibliographic data for films was not usually supplied, and, amazingly, the directors of several of the movies discussed at length are neither found in the index, listed in the bibliographies, nor even identified in the main text. Most serious was the complete absence of any bibliographic reference to at least one source referred to incompletely but repeatedly in the main text, and actually cited at some length.

NONFICTION REVIEW

Taking the Red Pill: Science, Philosophy and Religion in *TheMatrix*

Richard McKinney

Yeffeth, Glenn, ed. *Taking the Red Pill: Science, Philosophy and Religion in The Matrix*. (2003) Benbella . 277 pp. Index. Paperback, \$17.95, ISBN 1-932100-02-4.

The Matrix, the 1999 movie directed by the Wachowski brothers, is one of the most successful movies Hollywood has yet offered the world. Not only did the film produce record sales (and almost single-handedly revived a then-flagging DVD industry), it has also attracted unprecedented attention from academic and cultural critics outside the cinema or SF fields. As everyone is surely aware by now, 2003 had been designated (by Hollywood, at least) as the “year of *The Matrix*”. *Taking the Red Pill* is only one of at least four recent or forthcoming anthologies (along with myriad newspaper, magazine, and internet items) dealing with the film and its two sequels. The topicality of the book under review is therefore assured. A more relevant question is whether the anthology is a worthy addition to the ever-increasing mass of what might be called matrix-discourse. Yeffeth’s volume contains an introduction by David Gerrold, fourteen essays by divers

case for the functioning of the Fantastic as a subversive counter-hegemonic genre. Certainly the genre of “magical realism” has a respected place in theorizing postcolonial literatures, but where does the fiction of Tolkien fit in this schema? Topics might include Tolkien’s relation to canonical modernism or the way a particular theoretical model opens Tolkien’s fiction in new ways; discussions of race, gender/sexuality or class are particularly welcomed.

SUBMISSIONS: two copies of articles, 20-30 pp. following MLA, to The Editors, MFS, Department of English, Purdue University, 500 Oval Dr., West Lafayette, IN 47907-2038.

CONTACT: Shaun Hughes <sfhd@omni.cc.purdue.edu>.

DEADLINE: March 1, 2004

WHAT: Science as Culture (journal)

TOPICS: We are looking to complete a special edition of this interdisciplinary journal on The New Genetics: Linguistic and Literary Metaphors and the Social Construction of the Genome. We need papers that examine the relationship between science, literature, society and real-world culture. Theory matters, but so does engagement with social issues. Papers will be read by a scholarly generalist audience. Papers on any topic of this issue are welcome, but the special issue as a whole does have a cross-European theme. Ideally, we are looking for a length between 4,000-6,000 words. Other lengths and topics will be considered.

CONTACT: Preliminary statements of enquiry may be sent immediately, to kerry.kidd@nottingham.ac.uk
DEADLINE: September 15, 2003

WHAT: Time, Freedom, and Utopia: The Politics of Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*

TOPICS: Published in 1974, *The Dispossessed* immediately received widespread critical acclaim (including both the Hugo and Nebula awards) and generated much scholarly commentary, particularly in the fields of utopian and science fiction studies. More recently, the social and political theorist Gorz commented that *The Dispossessed* is “the most striking description I know of the seductions — and snares — of self-managed communist or, in other words, anarchist society.” To date, however, the radical political ramifications of the novel remain woefully under-explored. We invite submissions that help to right this state of affairs. We particularly welcome papers that address questions such as the following. Is Gorz's characterization of the novel an accurate one? To what extent may *The Dispossessed* be read as an anarchist, ecological, post-industrial, or radical utopia? Which political themes emerge most strongly from the story? Does the book have anything distinctive to say about the nature and role of politics in general? Does it have anything distinctive to say about the relationship between art, politics, and society? To what extent does Le Guin's “ambiguous utopia” represent a challenge to traditional models of utopian thought? Is it fair to describe *The Dispossessed* as a “dynamic” or “pluralistic” utopia? In what ways does the work challenge the reader's sense of conventional temporal relationships? What connections does it make between conceptions of time and ideas of human freedom? What roles do moral, social, and political conflict play in the story?

SUBMISSIONS: an essay title and

hands, and a useful ‘glossary’ of terms and concepts from the first of the *Matrix* films. All of the essays are original to this volume except for the essay by Bill Joy, which was first published in *Wired Magazine* in 2000. I am happy to report that the book as a whole largely succeeds, especially in light of the obviously introductory nature of the volume, and given its intention to provide an overview of selected but important aspects of one of the more significant films of recent years.

Several of the essays in *Taking the Red Pill* examine futurological, technological, philosophical, and/or sociopolitical themes and values their authors find in the film, discussing the implications of their interpretations thereof. A taste of the philosophical background necessary to identify and appreciate some of the foundational structures and intertextual references in the movie is provided in numerous of the essays, and more directly in a contribution by philosopher Lyle Zynda. Two of the authors, both professors of English (Dino Falluga and Andrew Gordon), tackle explicitly the question of whether or not *The Matrix* is, as the subtitle of their articles puts it, a “paradigm of postmodernism or an intellectual poseur,” eventually reaching opposing conclusions. James Gunn and Robert Sawyer place the movie in the historical context of written and cinematic science fiction, in Sawyer's case with a special emphasis on both SF depictions of, and “real-world” research on, artificial intelligence. Not surprisingly, issues and questions of the role and place of computers, thinking ones or no, are appropriately central to many of the contributions. The Christian and Buddhist themes, motifs, and subtexts of the film and its fictional future are the subject matter of essays by Paul Fontana and James L. Ford, respectively. And, of course, many of the articles address the question of “What Is the Matrix?” and explore the ethical consequences of Neo's choosing the red pill over the blue one. The conclusions reached are not always the same ones.

This book could very well serve as required reading in an introductory university course, or independent study-group, dealing with *The Matrix*, in either cinema, media, or cultural studies. Appropriately selected essays from the book could also function well as supplementary reading for various courses on topics ranging from artificial intelligence and computer science, to social aspects of technology or future studies, to religion and popular media, to philosophy and science fiction. Among the greatest strengths of the volume in such a context are its reader-friendly introductory nature, and the diversity of perspectives and approaches it presents. Unfortunately, the first of these strengths is also among the book's weaknesses for professional and advanced readers already well-versed in the arenas with which the various articles deal: some of the articles explain and exemplify at *too* elementary a level, and an experienced reader will normally wish for greater depth of discussion than the book provides in the respective specialized fields. Nor are the essays really long enough to explore the often quite subtle and deep issues many of them take up. This situation is offset to some degree by the variety of the essays, since many readers will probably find at least one or two perspectives with which they are less familiar. Also to be admired is the presence of authors willing to criticize, sometimes quite harshly, the viewpoints found in the film and their execution. *Taking the Red Pill* is not a simple-minded hagiography of the movie; although, admittedly, the majority of the contributors offer more praise than condemnation. I must also admit that among the viewpoints and interpretations found in the volume are some that are, as far as I can see, quite simply wrong — both inadequate and indefensible. Finally, it should be noted that some of the material in the book may need to be re-thought (unavoidably) in light of the final two films in the trilogy. But, despite these minor criticisms, the anthology is basically a good one, recommended to libraries as well as to the indi-

vidual teacher, student, researcher, or, indeed, general reader interested in *The Matrix*, its possible interpretations, and the implications of such interpretations in the context of a wider world.

FICTION REVIEW

Tomorrow Happens

Richard McKinney

Brin, David: *Tomorrow Happens*. Framingham, MA: NESFA, 2003. 224 pages, cloth, \$23.00. ISBN 1-886778-43-4.

This collection of both fiction and non-fiction by David Brin is being published in connection with Boskone (number 40 in 2003), an annual SF convention of the New England Science Fiction Association, at which Brin was this year's guest of honor. *Tomorrow Happens* contains twenty pieces, almost all reprinted from earlier sources, ranging in size from a couple of pages up to novella-length. About half of the material in the volume is non-fiction, mainly futurological speculation cast in the tone and idiom of popular science. The book also has an introduction by Vernor Vinge, and several of the pieces have been supplied with short comments by Brin concerning their backgrounds.

Although this can hardly be considered a major collection from David Brin, it is an interesting one, the main value of which is the insight it provides into selected ideas, values, and opinions of one of the central figures of contemporary American SF. Especially in the non-fiction and opinion pieces, Brin makes admirably clear what he thinks about a number of diverse issues, several of which are important and valuable for an understanding of his fiction. A recurring theme in many of the works in the book, sometimes implicit, but seldom stated explicitly, is the value of writing and reading science fiction. One of the greatest of strengths of SF literature, claims Brin, is that it allows us to avoid the very futures it describes. By warning its readers of certain potential dangers facing humanity, science fiction allows us to take steps to avoid (or at least ameliorate) just those dangers. The 1984 depicted in George Orwell's famous novel of that name, for instance, may never have come to pass precisely because of the way in which the book made its readers aware of the horrors of the society it described. This is, as Brin is clearly aware, an hypothesis which cannot be proven, but it is also one which has considerable *a priori* logical appeal, and it is at least worthy of serious consideration. It also says quite a bit about the motives behind the author's own SF.

Another central concern of Brin's, present in much of his fiction, is the environment and the relationship between human beings and the natural world. Yet, whatever the dangers and threats we must confront in the world of tomorrow (including the ones for which human beings themselves are responsible – and these will not be few), Brin remains ever an optimist, believing that we can overcome obstacles if for no other reason than that we must do so to survive – and we are a people who do survive. In more than one of the essays and stories herein, the author makes the point that humanity is an adapted species, and that the only way to face the future successfully is to continue to adapt to the unavoidable changes we will meet in that future when, as the title puts it, tomorrow happens. Of course, we cannot control all of the developments to which we will be subject, such as the reduction of privacy in what Brin calls the transparent society (the title of his recent book-length study of the subject), where technological advances will eventually make anyone's private life open and accessible to whomsoever has the appropriate technical expertise. Brin, however, refuses to see this as necessarily a totally bad thing, arguing that we should not automatically

c. 300-word proposal
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 DEADLINE: 18th September 2003,

assume the roles of helpless victims, but strive instead to see to it that those who watch must themselves become subjected to of the same kind of advanced surveillance technology. In a world of no privacy, the watched will also have the power to watch the watchers. And that, suggests Brin, might not be so bad as many have imagined it to be.

Sometimes Brin surprises or annoys with the content of these generally easily read pieces, and several of them are indeed of very light weight. Nor is Brin's humor always successful. Nevertheless, the best of the selections in *Tomorrow Happens* sow seeds which can grow into serious thoughts, worthy of consideration, and worth more than passing attention.

FICTION REVIEW

A New Dawn. The Complete Don A. Stuart Stories

Bruce A. Beatie

John W. Campbell, Jr. *A New Dawn. The Complete Don A. Stuart Stories*. Edited by James A. Mann. Framingham, MA: The NESFA Press, 2003. 462 pages. ISBN 1-886778-15-9, \$26 plus \$3 shipping and handling (USA), \$5 international.

Of the 44 stories and four novels published by John W. Campbell in his lifetime, 16 of the stories (a third of his published work) came out under the pseudonym of "Don A. Stuart," an orthographic variant of the name of his first wife, Dona Stuart. All of those 16 stories, plus two short nonfiction pieces, are gathered in this collection. All but one of the stories ("The Elder Gods," 1939) appeared first in *Astounding*, and all but one ("Atomic Power," 1934) has appeared before in anthologies of Campbell's fiction, some repeatedly; even "Atomic Power" appeared in Groff Conklin's 1946 *Best of Science Fiction*. So all that this collection offers that's new consists in the two nonfiction pieces and Barry Malzberg's introduction, "The Man Who Lost the Sea" (pp. vii-xvi). Let me begin, therefore, with these.

In fewer than ten pages, Malzberg packs a remarkable quantity of highly personal insights, focusing in particular on Campbell's character as "a man in schism. . . his duality was profound. . . Campbell the celebrant of the star paths and Stuart the decadent seemed directly opposed." (xiii) Isaac Asimov had earlier attributed this duality to Campbell's shift "from M. I. T., the super-school of science, to Duke University, where psychology was important and where . . . Rhine . . . put parapsychology on the map . . ." (*Astounding*, *John W. Campbell Memorial Anthology*, ed. by Harry Harrison, New York, 1973, xiii), but Malzberg finds deeper reasons. He concentrates more on Campbell's work as editor than as author, an emphasis apparent also in Albert Berger's *The Magic That Works*. *John W. Campbell and the American Response to Technology* (San Bernardino, 1993), and on the influence of that work on the historical development of science fiction as a genre, arguing much more concisely the point that takes Gary Westphal over 300 pages in his *The Mechanics of Wonder. The Creation of the Idea of Science Fiction* (Liverpool, 1998)—though admittedly Westphal deals with Hugo Gernsback and Robert Heinlein as well.

The little essay "Strange Worlds" (457-458), published in *Unknown*, April 1939, is a foretaste of the ideas that dominated Campbell's editorials in *Astounding* and *Analog* decades later: the "strange worlds" are the aspects of our world beyond the normal human sense, especially the varieties of ESP: "we sense, somehow," Campbell says, "that, beyond the false accounts of eyes and ears and touch, there lie unknown worlds that only mind can reach." (458) Malzberg sees rightly that the Stuart stories in many instances also anticipate the dominance of this side of Campbell's dualism.

The other short piece, "Wouldst Write, Wee One?" (459-462), was published originally in the fanzine *Scienti-Snaps* (February 1940); an editor's note said Campbell had advised them "that this is his first and last appearance in fan magazines." (462) Much of his brief advice to SF writers is standard fare, but his conclusion is interesting. "Too few" SF writers, he says, "build civilizations before they build stories. . . Histories tell of kings and emperors and dictators; to get a picture of the civilizations they ruled, archeologists seek broken pots and beds and plowshares, the details of life that give the forgotten times realities. Not kings but broken pots paint life's realities. Not Presidents and Admirals of Space Navies, but the broken pots of another age, is the need of science fiction." (462) Such advice seems to anticipate the "civilization" series that reach from Asimov's *Foundation* series through Herbert's *Dune* series and beyond—and perhaps even more clearly anticipate Tolkien's Middle Earth.

Though Malzberg argues that the Stuart stories "are still worthy on their own terms" (xv), all but two of the stories seem, to me at least, too dated to be of more than historical interest. "Twilight" (19-37, orig. 1934) and "Night" (149-166, orig. 1935) are Stapledonian time-travel stories exploring an entropic universe—indeed, the 1935 story is in a sense a rewrite of the earlier one. The three linked stories of 1935, "The Machine" (53-68), "The Invaders" (69-85), and "The Rebellion" (87-113), begin in an initially non-entropic distant future where mankind's every need is provided by the Machine (a

foreshadowing of Clarke's *Against the Fall of Night* and its revision as *The City and the Stars*)—but mankind is then abandoned and falls into savagery; the two sequels tell of alien invasion and a successful repulse of the invaders. The invasion-and-rebellion tale is retold with different trappings in “Out of Night” (233-267, 1937) and its sequel “Cloak of Aesir” (269-311, 1939). In “Forgetfulness” (209-232, 1937), the pre-Clarkeian edenic future is combined with a remarkably hesitant alien invasion that fails because the apparently non-technological inhabitants of a far-future earth have simply forgotten the technology that was the bridge to their present state of mental power.

Five of the stories are fairly typical 1930s “hard” SF, and the technological speculation on which they depend is so outdated that the stories themselves don't seem to me still “worthy on their own terms.” “Atomic Power” (39-51, orig. 1934) is a “nested universes” story, while “Blindness” (115-129, orig. 1935) tells of a physicist who invents a new alloy allowing him to spend three years in close orbit around the sun in a quest to discover “atomic power”; returning with the secret, he finds that his alloy itself has proven an unlimited power source. “The Escape” (131-147, orig. 1935) is an anti-love-story about a society that uses mental conditioning to support its eugenic decisions. “Elimination” (167-183, orig. 1936) tells of an invention too dangerous to be developed, but not nearly as effectively as Heinlein's first story, “Life-Line,” which Campbell bought for *Astounding* three years later. And finally, “Frictional Losses” (185-207, orig. 1936) is an alien-invasion story in which the aliens' defeat depends on an unlikely invention that eliminates friction, so that “things fall apart.”

The two stories that best hold their own (and the two longest in the collection) are the classic novelette “Who Goes There?” (335-384, orig. 1938), Campbell's most-often-reprinted story and the basis for two films, and “The Elder Gods” (385-456, written with an unidentified Arthur J. Burks, orig. in *Unknown*, 1939). In this almost-pure fantasy novella, the Elder Gods (Nazun, Talun, Martal, and Tammar) have been displaced in their city of Tordu by the Invisible Ones, obscure “divinities” that use patterns of hypnotic light to mesmerize their worshippers. Forbidden in an undefined way to take action on their own, the Elder Gods choose Daron, a “good sea rover, with a spark and flame within him” (386), and cast him adrift on the shore. Daron works his way up the hierarchy in Tordu and is brought to trial before the priests of the Invisible Ones, but eventually manages to destroy the machine that creates them by means of a strobe (the only SF element in the story) that eliminates the hypnotic patterns. The King of Tordu dies of joy at the city's newfound freedom, and Daron is made king. Both of these stories remain readable and enjoyable because they depend more on the interactions of personalities than on technological devices.

The edition seems well-edited: though I was working with uncorrected bound galleys, I found no typos or other obvious errors. For historical reasons, it is good to have all the Stuart stories together in a single volume, and it makes “The Elder Gods” available for the first time since Campbell's 1951 Fantasy Press omnibus *The Moon Is Hell*. But today's average SF reader is unlikely to find it worthwhile. One may hope, though, that this edition may inspire some SF scholars and critics; I was surprised to find that Campbell has only 144 entries in Hal Hall's SF and fantasy index, compared to 303 for Clarke, 427 for Heinlein, 608 for Asimov—and 986 for Tolkien!

FICTION REVIEW

The Changeling Plague

Jeff Prickman

Mitchell, Syne. *The Changeling Plague*. New York: Roc, 2003. 327 pp. \$6.99 pb. ISBN 0-451-45910-5

The Changeling Plague is Nancy Kress-lite meets 1980s cyberpunk cliches, but far from a condemnation, I mean that as a recommendation for Mitchell's refreshingly standalone novel (not a sequel to *Technogenesis*, see my review in *SFRA Review* #256). Mitchell offers a less paranoid take on the biomedical mayhem of Kress' duology *Oaths And Miracles* (1996) and *Stinger* (1998), mixed with the body-cyberspace interface of classic William Gibson, plus a heavily diluted pinch of Pat Cadigan's *Synners* (1991).

Damning with faint praise? Yes, but only a little. Mitchell's third novel is a huge leap forward from the trite all-powerful machine intelligence theme of *Technogenesis* (2002). In *The Changeling Plague* the recent Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome headlines come nightmarishly to life in a story that, while ostensibly set after 2013, seems to take place in the present. This book could easily be marketed as a mainstream thriller, with breathless pacing and characters who, while intriguing, do not have a great deal of depth. The exception is Idaho “Blue” Davis, the ultra uber-hacker whose poignant machinations both selfish and selfless form the backbone of the plot.

The cause of the titular *Plague* is an illegally created and acquired viral cure for wealthy Geoffrey Allen's cystic fibrosis (CF). However, while the virus works successfully for him, it is also contagious, and "would cause random genetic damage in anyone without CF, resulting in cancers, thalassemia, and a host of other genetic diseases" (73). Acquired Human Mutagenic Syndrome (AHMS) affects victims in a manner uniquely damaging to each individual's genes.

To Mitchell's credit, she unflinchingly depicts an all too believable United States government response to AHMS: internment camps for the ill mandated by the passage of The Containment Act. Another thought provoking consequence of the plague is a blurring of victims' features to create one human race: "he had once been Asian. Now he had the same blended DNA as everyone else in the camp, sharing their tan mottled skin and dark brown hair" (236). A further compelling feature of the story is the desire of many to make themselves "changelings" through genetically engineered body modification, including one character's desire for wings a la M. John Harrison's *Signs Of Life* (1997).

Although some of the elements of *The Changeling Plague* are a bit farfetched (e.g., hackers who can teach themselves genetic manipulation) this is an ideal book for a science fiction class, particularly for instructors in search of a quick, highly readable, and contemporary text. Mitchell's explanations of DNA and genetics are clear and enlightening, and her subject matter is certainly timely.

FICTION REVIEW

Claremont Tales II

Amy M. Clarke

Lupoff, Richard A. *Claremont Tales II*. Urbana, IL.: Golden Gryphon Press, 2002. 298 pages, hardcover, \$23.95. ISBN 1-930846-07-X.

Reading Richard Lupoff's collection of short stories is a little like watching a season of *Night Gallery* or *The Twilight Zone*. The stories share a slick professionalism, a slightly twisted sensibility, and a glib range across genres. They entertain and sometimes startle, but briefly; for the most part, they fade into a memory of solid but unspectacular sameness punctuated by the occasional bad episode. *Claremont Tales II* is the third volume in what Lupoff describes as a comprehensive overview of his shorter fiction from fifty plus years of writing (the earlier volumes are *Before...12:01...and After* and *Claremont Tales*). The thirteen stories date from 1969 to the present and are a mix sf, horror, detective, and mainstream fiction. The collection showcases Lupoff's gravity-defying ability to move among genres and to produce sleekly rendered prose. His versatility of form and his emphasis on his own "professionalism" seem like a holdover from an earlier era, when the writer produced quickly and voluminously and aimed for the pulp market. In his long career, Lupoff has indeed produced an astonishing amount of writing.

The volume starts out with a new story, the longest of the collection, "Green Ice" featuring a character from "Black Mist," here called Ino Hajime. This is sf/espionage fiction, with hints of Phillip K. Dick; one of the most interesting stories in the collection, it deals with a Japanese-controlled world and the attempts by a cult to cleanse it spiritually. Other sf-oriented stories include "31-12-99," which presents two versions of the same day, and "Jubilee" an alternate history in which Rome never fell. "The Heyworth Fragment" tells of a Blair Witch-like fragment of film possibly depicting human subjects of alien torture. Lupoff likes to play with the familiar, as in his Sherlock Holmes story "Boulevard Assassin" and in "News from New Providence" which presents a highly unflattering take on the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. "You Don't Know Me, Charlie" is from the tradition of Dashiell Hammett. He also includes the Lovecraft-inspired "The Turret" and "The Devil's Hop Yard." Fans of Lupoff's detective team of Hobart Lindsey and Marvia Plum—who figure in a series of novels—will appreciate "Old Folks at Home." There are also a few "mainstream" stories. These include "Stream of Consciousness," in which a man getting up late at night to relieve himself unleashes his mind as well as his bodily fluids, and "A Freeway for Draculas," about how a paradigm change can make a person feel like the only "normal" human left.

"Whatever Happened to Nick Neptune" is in some ways the collection's keynote tale, telling as it does about the world of the professional pulp writer. A story that lampoons the extremes collectors pay for original publications, it nonetheless underscores the life of scraping by that most writers, editors, and publishers endure. It's a fitting tale for a collection of stories illuminating Lupoff's career as a self-described "professional" writer. The author reminds us that such a writer draws from many sources and is constantly attenuated to his own imaginative well spring. The resulting product, written rapidly and edited superficially, is "either right or it's not" as Lupoff himself states. Some of the stories in this collection are; a few

aren't. Their overall impression, though, is of a talent that touches lightly and briefly, not profoundly.

FICTION REVIEW

The Wreck of The River of Stars

Bill Dynes

Flynn, Michael. *The Wreck of The River of Stars*. New York: Tor, 2003. 480 pages, cloth, \$27.95. ISBN: 0-765-30099-0.

The River of Stars is a luxury sailing vessel struggling to survive in a new era of fast engines and grimy cargo trading. Her sailing master and deck hands coexist uncomfortably with engineers who believe their vocation quaint and officers with both eyes on the bottom line. The glory days of shimmering sails and taut rigging behind her, the ship lumbers from port to port as a memory, bitter to some, of what has been lost to the rush of progress and the lure of profit.

That Flynn's novel is set in the year 2084 rather than 1884 is not irrelevant to this story of past and present colliding; this is a convincing hard-SF adventure yarn of a ship designed to ride the solar winds upon magnetic fields sixty-four kilometers wide formed by superconducting filaments bound to an aerogel mast. Flynn combines the languages of 19th century sail and 21st century technology in a compelling manner, but seems most interested in the psychological pull of past dreams and past heartaches. The River of Stars lingers uncomfortably in a present where it is largely superfluous, and that knowledge haunts her misfit crew, most of whom are struggling with ghosts of their own.

The novel opens with the death of Captain Hand and an accident that ruins half of The River's engines, leaving her unable to reach her port at Jupiter and on a dangerous collision course with asteroidal debris at one of Jupiter's Trojan points. The remaining crew battle with the physics of space travel and with one another in an effort to rescue the ship. Restoring her sails may help the ship brake in time to reach Jupiter Roads safely, but resources are limited, and re-establishing the sails may doom efforts to repair the engines. Flynn manages the tension between urgency and episode very well; the pace of the plot rarely lags, but Flynn is able to juggle a cast of more than a dozen idiosyncratic characters in such a way that their personalities emerge and clash effectively. If the plot of the novel in its broadest sense is familiar, even conventional, the closely realized, thoroughly plausible articulation of detail makes it entirely engaging.

Language is a delightful key to the novel's success. Flynn's omniscient narrative voice is ironic without being detached, capable of wry insights and evocative imagery. Colloquialisms and jargon give the life of the novel a comfortable, inhabited feel; the ship's acceleration is expressed in "kisses" rather than "kilometers per second squared," for example, and characters used to living with the pull of gravity complain of being "enziggied" when the drifting ship exerts zero G on them. Flynn luxuriates in the arcane grammars of both sail and fusion power. The cargo master, aloft amid the sails following another run-in with a "tsunami" of rock, looks out over

an aurora of greens and blues [...]. The 'splashes,' he saw now, were geysers, where the hull had been breached, and air spumed from the vessel as from a breaching whale. A mutant whale, for he saw there were five such geysers. The gasses froze into a rime that glimmered in the shadows and sublimed where the sunlight caught it out. Elsewhere, the engine plumes, creeping up the maglines like vines up a trellis, stripped and ionized the oxygen and nitrogen, and flowers bloomed in the somber colors ghosts were said to favor. It was one of the most terribly beautiful sights he had ever seen. (355)

If the ethereal vision evokes memories of Melville's whale hunt, the phrase "terribly beautiful" recalls Yeats' "Easter, 1916." In that poem, when all is "changed, changed utterly: / A terrible beauty is born." Yeats writes that "[h]earts with one purpose alone / ... seem / Enchanted to a stone / To trouble the living stream." Flynn's characters understand that the calcified heart doesn't free one from what Yeats calls "excess of love," and the drive to break through the pain of the past to discover love again is as compelling here as the drive to rescue the broken ship. Flynn's prose style neatly balances these twinned elements, the terror and the allure of change, evoking both a dark beauty in his imagery and a sense of playful familiarity that renders this alien space recognizable.

Adam Roberts has argued that, "although many people think of SF as something that looks to the future, the truth is that most SF texts are more interested in the way things have been. SF uses the trappings of fantasy to explore again age-old issues; or, to put it another way, the chief mode of science fiction is not prophecy, but nostalgia" (Science Fiction 33). The pull of the past is a compelling one for characters like Sailing Master Satterwaithe and Cargo Master Ratline, both of whom are interested in restoring sails to The River of Stars less because these may help in the braking process than because they

yearn to see the ship restored to her former glory. Yet the force of nostalgia is not for what was so much as it is for what might have been; there is a telling irony in the fact that the ship's AI, designed to manage the complex fusion engines, can't sense the presence of the sails, and so can't take their effect into its calculations. Ignorance of the past is as damning as obsession.

What gives the novel its power, however, isn't the threat of failure but the presence of hope. The battles that are fought here, with the grim realities of physics and the equally grim realities of the heart, are poignant and compelling. Flynn's novel may evoke memories of other SF adventures structured around naval images and ideologies – Chandler's John Grimes' series, Pournelle's CoDominium novels, or even Star Trek. But this novel succeeds because it refuses to use nostalgia simply as a device, insisting instead upon exploring the psychology of memory in all its danger and its promise.

FICTION REVIEW
Hyperthought
 Jeff Prickman

Buckner, M. M. *Hyperthought*. New York: Ace, 2003. 177 pp. \$5.99 pb. ISBN 0-441-01023-7.

Hyperthought comes from out of nowhere to provide a much needed shakeup to the cyberpunk subgenre. Googling "M. M. Buckner" finds no prior offerings, just a site promoting her first novel. And what a debut this is!

Mary M. Buckner instantly vaults to the status of an author to keep an eye on and put at the top of the reading pile. I wholeheartedly recommend this slim, readable tale for any science fiction syllabus, for two reasons: 1) Buckner can write, and 2) she makes me believe in cyberpunk again—true cp, not post-, not *Matrix*-ed, not (Charles) Strossy antics, but a genuine lived-in near future with enough political and philosophical chops to rattle anyone's brainstem. Think a less melancholic Eric Brown or Anne Harris, a less baroque George Foy, and you will be close to the tone and vibe that permeate *Hyperthought*.

Buckner writes well, at least in the entertaining first person perspective presented here. Jolie Sauvage (look it up), extreme tours guide, is a breath of fresh air, despite the wasted, toxic Earth she has grown up in, or, literally, below. It is quite awhile since I have encountered such an appealing, self-deprecating main character: "Don't worry, this story isn't about me. You don't want to hear about Jolie Blanche Sauvage, the skinny, bleached white Paris rat, one of the millions of Euro orphans left over after the Great Dislocation. Maybe you browsed video about the big European die-off in the summer of 2057. That was before they knew how fast the atmosphere was changing, before they'd built enough sealed underground habitats to protect everyone from the toxins" (6-7). Despite her protestations, the reader does want to hear all about her, and experiencing the story through this "tunnel rat"'s point of view, punctuated by her charming use of French phrases, makes for a great deal of page-turning fun.

The cyberpunk future seems to have gone out of style, at least in the recent work of such founders as William Gibson, who sets *Pattern Recognition* (2003) in 2002 (and, despite a single-vantage-point narrative, does not attempt the first person), and Bruce Sterling, whose *Zeitgeist* (2000) is set in 1999. Meanwhile, John Shirley abandons any hint of the future, or even the supernatural, in *Spider Moon* (2002), and Neal Stephenson heads to the past in *Quicksilver* (forthcoming). In contrast, *Hyperthought* does not fit the trend these examples may portend.

My point is simply that the kind of science fiction that depicts a believable future setting on Earth without spaceships or aliens, and seamlessly integrates the Net, nanotech, corporate dominance, lower class rebellion, and environmental havoc has been dubbed passé for awhile, and perhaps rightly so...but more novels of the caliber of *Hyperthought* could change that quickly. When Jolie meets actor Jin Airlangga Sura, son of the Pacific.Com (amusingly dubbed "Com mies") scion Lord Suradon Sura, she tells him she admires his acting: "you have to invent a whole world and live in it. That must take a lot of imagination" (22). Buckner skillfully invents and imagines a fully realized world for us to live in via Jolie. While the life she presents may not be desirable, it is hard to dismiss this vision of a devastated surface, total corporate control, and geopolitical global split between the uptight, slave-labor North vs. the less rigid, but only just, South. Furthermore, few authors in any genre create a credible multicultural cast so effortlessly. Add to that *Hyperthought's* theme of questioning the nature of reality, consciousness, and perception, and the result is unforgettable. Finally, rather than groaning, I look forward to the sequel clearly forecast by the ending.

FICTION REVIEW

Black Projects, White Knights: The Company Dossiers

Philip Snyder

Kage Baker. *Black Projects, White Knights: The Company Dossiers*. Urbana: Golden Gryphon, 2002. Hardcover, 297 pp., \$24.95, ISBN 1-930-84611-8.

Ever since Wells's *Time Machine* kicked modern English-language SF into high gear in 1895, time travel has been one of the genre's most fertile and popular tropes. Besides the small library of classics that includes, among others, Fritz Leiber's *The Big Time* and Poul Anderson's *Time Patrol* and memorable short stories by L. Sprague de Camp and Brian Aldiss and Ian Watson, it seems that every SF writer has made at least one pass at this perdurable theme. So what makes Kage Baker's time travels so special? Is it the pleasure she takes in deploying this trope in the service of sheer, outrageously old-fashioned adventure? Her use of such fictions as launch points for philosophical explorations? Her exploitation of time travel as an intellectual playground for a fascinating ensemble-cast of characters? All of the above, of course – and more.

Consider the depth and range of the following stories, all previously published in Asimov's: "Noble Mold," which leads the collection, reprints the first public appearance of the Company (a.k.a. Dr. Zeus Incorporated, a.k.a. Jovian Integrated Systems, a.k.a. Kronos Diversified Stock Company); a deceptively light adventure, starring series characters Mendoza and Joseph in a plot to steal a rare plant, the story serves as an excellent introduction to Baker's 24th Century organization of time-traveling, near-immortal cyborgs, but also offers a compact study of ethics. "The Facts Relating to the Arrest of Dr. Kalugin" is Baker Lite, the adventure of a flawed Company courier who is desperately allergic to his own short-term memory. A little meatier is "The Literary Agent," wherein a dying Robert Louis Stevenson is rescued by Joseph the Facilitator, seeking new material for the Chronos Photo-Play Company; the story provokes some interesting thoughts on the cultural significance of pop fiction, along with play speculation on the genesis of *Treasure Island*. Moving from pop fiction to pop mythology, Baker pulls out all the stops in "Lemuria Will Rise!" Placing agent Mendoza in 1860 Pismo Beach, Baker crosses her Company mythology with legends of Atlantis, UFOs, and occult conspiracies in a goofy, lighthearted romp.

Not all of the reprints in *Black Projects* are fun and games, however. "The Wreck of the Gladstone," for instance, could have been just a Three Musketeers-ish adventure starring the charming and elegant Mme. D'Arraignee, the cold and dangerous Victor, and the sensitive but courageous Kalugin; instead, it offers a story of both literal and metaphorical salvage, and a serious meditation on human values. In "Hanuman," the cyborg Mendoza is paired up with Michael Robert Hanuman, a reconstructed and augmented Australopithecus Afarensis; what emerges from their encounter is a thoughtful investigation of commercial greed, the hubris of science, and the elusive boundaries separating ape, human, and machine. And in the comically titled "Studio Dick Drowns Near Malibu," the comedy is dark indeed as time-traveling Joseph saves a suicidal young woman from drowning, precipitating an intriguing drama of identity, mortality, and second chances.

Of the stories in *Black Projects* appearing for the first time, the best are the two written especially for this collection. "The Hounds of Zeus," which leads off the book, is an introduction-as-story which serves as a delicious hors d'oeuvre to the main feast, while "The Queen in Yellow," the story of a quest for treasure from Ancient Egypt, offers a thriller about archaeology, history, larceny, and timeless values (along with a touching portrait of Literature Preservationist Lewis). The other two newly published stories again display the range of moods available in this series. On the one hand, "Old Flat Top" is pretty much a flat-out action adventure about the Enforcers, "the optimum morphological design for a humanoid fighting machine," bred to stamp out the Great Goat Cult. In "The Hotel at Harlan's Landing," on the other hand, these same Enforcers play a deeper and more genuinely terrifying role in a violent confrontation between two immortals in hiding, the Enforcer sent to apprehend them, and the mortals caught in the middle. Where the first Enforcer story is basically a videogame in print, the second provides a sobering glimpse of the darker side of the Company.

For many of Baker's regular readers, the gems of this collection will be the four Alec Checkerfield stories, a series-within-the-series about Baker's most mysterious and intriguing character. Included here is "Smart Alec," the story which first introduced readers to Alec, to his wealthy but distant parents Roger and Cecelia, and to faithful servants Sarah (the nurse), Lewin (the butler), and Mrs. Lewin (the cook); the story also introduces us to the political hyper-correctness of Baker's 24th century, and to the Pembroke Playfriend AI (which precocious Alec reprograms into a Pirate Captain. The political theme of the miniseries is also exploited in "Monster Story," a biting satire of what Baker calls the "secular Puritanism" of her extrapolated 24th century. (Alec's "sorting" in this story – via "Pre-Societal Vocational Appraisal – puts in a whole new light the famous

Sorting Ceremony of the *Harry Potter* books.) In “The Dust Enclosed Here, Alec’s encounter with a holographic reproduction of Shakespeare puts to good use Baker’s long professional experience with Elizabethan drama. And in “The Likely Lad,” the most recent (and best) of the Checkerfield offerings herein, young Alec stars in an adventure on the high seas concerned with technocrime, puberty, and the puzzle of our young hero’s DNA. (Note: A novel about Alec, *The Life of the World to Come*, is in the works and eagerly anticipated.)

Within the ongoing series of novels of which they are a part, the stories in *Black Projects*, *White Knights* are positioned at roughly midpoint in the sequence, beginning with *In the Garden of Eden* and continuing through *Sky Coyote*, *Mendoza in Hollywood*, and, most recently, *The Graveyard Game*. The collection will probably be of keenest interest to followers of the series, much as Kim Stanley Robinson’s *The Martians* functions best (but by no means exclusively) for readers already familiar with his complete Red, Green, and Blue trilogy. But most of Baker’s stories here are pretty sturdy standalones, and in the aggregate they whet the appetite for more, inviting new readers to go back and get caught up with one of the most rewarding time-travel series in, well, quite some time.

FICTION REVIEW

Nebula Awards Showcase 2003

Sandra Lindow

Nebula Awards Showcase 2003, edited by Nancy Kress, New York: Penguin Roc, 2003, 230 pp., ISBN 0-451-45909, \$14.95.

If circles represented each of the literary genres, then the science fiction circle would intersect with all the other genre circles creating a complex Venn diagram of literary relationships. There would be substantial intersections with fantasy, mystery, adventure, western, ghost story, folk tale, horror and romance. Gary Wolfe in his essay, “Evaporating Genre” (*Edging Into the Future*, ed. by Veronica Hollinger and Joan Gordon. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002) calls these intersections “colonizations,” as if writers purposely set out to combine SF with other genres in order to gain literary legitimacy, riches or some other social status. I disagree. Science fiction began as speculation about the future and evolved into stories about the wonders of scientific advancement. The first science fiction had to do with problem solving and was inspired, at least in part, by a fascination with electricity and its potential (Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, 1818; Hugo Gernsbach’s *Modern Electrics*, 1908). Initially Gernsbach’s “scientific fiction” was published in pulp magazines along with radio kits and home improvement ideas. Since stories, by definition, have characters and settings as well as problems, it is only natural that SF evolved away from its scientific center. Future scientific discoveries may engender a sense of wonder but along the way characters get scared, have adventures, and/or fall in love. When early SF writers began to focus on their characters’ emotions, science fiction automatically began intersecting with other genres. In other words, SF writers do not necessarily take their intellectual armadas to colonize other genre islands as their own but rather take their reading memories (their island vacations) like photographs when they write. The blurring of genre peripheries is the expected outcome of maturity in reading and writing.

Nowhere is this more obvious than in the 2002 Nebula Awards anthology. The Nebula is given by the membership of SFWA, the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America. There are around 1,200 of them and since 1965 they have been giving an award for the year’s best novel, novella, novelette, and short story. The members vote on works they have nominated. Specific stories have to have received at least ten independent nominations to appear on the preliminary ballot. The 2002 Nebula winners show the genre’s maturity and sophistication through their intersections.

All of the 2002 Nebula Award stories intersect with other genres. Severna Park’s romantic, role-reversal short story, “The Cure For Everything,” is a near future tale about Maria, a young albino woman whose job is protecting the last rain forest natives from extinction. When she discovers that an international pharmaceutical company has taken an isolated indigenous tribe to milk for their superior genetics, she finds herself in a morally ambiguous situation where she realizes that a certain young man might be able to provide her with a healthy child, her deepest desire.

Ninety-four year old SF veteran, Jack Williamson’s novella, “The Ultimate Earth” is a picaresque adventure set in the far future. It involves a group of children, clones of people who died thousands of years before on Tycho Station, a moon outpost. When two of the young clones steal a plane and land on the radically terraformed, amusement park-like Earth, there is no place for them among Earth’s evolved, nearly immortal citizens. A look at Williamson’s story reveals not only the traditional young SF adventurer, but also speculations about the future effects of genetic engineering nanotechnology,

or “nanorobs” as Williamson calls them. One wonders if, in fact, his far future humanity has been “robbed” of something essential. More answers and ideas can be found in Williamson’s new novel, *Terraforming Earth*.

The Nebula for best novelette was given to Kelly Link for “Louise’s Ghost,” an urban fantasy. Link, who co-edits *Lady Churchill’s Rosebud Wristlet* with her husband, Gavin Grant, has a remarkable talent for seamlessly combining the amusing/hilarious/bizarre with the poignant. In “Louise’s Ghost,” “Louise and Louise” have been best friends since childhood. Now middle-aged, Louise is a single mother and travel agent, while her friend Louise is tone-deaf fund-raiser for the symphony with a sexual taste for cello players. Everything changes when a naked ghost takes up residence in Louise’s new old house.

James Patrick Kelly’s “Undone” was a runner up for best novelette. Kelly’s literary trademark is a brilliant whimsical humor that gently captures human foibles. “Undone” is an unlikely speculation about Mada, a young woman whose sentient, time-traveling space ship maroons her twenty million years in the future. Mada’s problem solving involves a complex series of time skip redoes created by her ship in order to correct social mistakes Mada makes in interacting with future earthlings. In true *Ground Hog’s Day* style Mada eventually gets it right. The problem may have been scientific in origin, but the impetus for finding a solution involves both true love and the long term survival of the species.

Kress calls Mike Resnick’s “The Elephants on Neptune” “an unclassifiable short story, sui generis.” It involves men who land on Neptune in the year 2473 a.d. and find a herd of elephants living “an idyllic life” despite the fact that Neptune is a gas giant. The elephants are sentient, sophisticated and fully cognizant of the brutality experienced by elephants throughout the history of man unkind. If “elephants never forget” is the guiding principle, the story itself is satire and proof that SF writers need not base their stories on scientific principles, but only be aware that they exist.

The Nebula for best novel was given to Catherine Asaro’s *Quantum Rose*, an interstellar romance in her Skolian Empire series. In true bodice-ripping style it begins with a beautiful young woman forced into marriage to an enigmatic, troubled but devastatingly handsome man; however, its organization comes from the principles of quantum mechanics. Asaro, a physicist, understands the quantum scattering theory of particles hitting a target so thoroughly that she organizes her 29 chapters according to its various outcomes. Although, the *Showcase* only includes a tantalizing 30 page excerpt from the beginning, the novel itself is 420 pages including an explanation of the physics called “Quantum Dreams” and a “Timeline” that includes events in Asaro’s earlier novels.

There has been considerable discussion in the field concerning the Rhysling Awards for SF poetry and whether they should be part of the Nebula Awards anthology. They were excluded from the 2002 volume by editor Kim Stanley Robinson. Happily Kress has returned to the tradition of inclusion. Grand Master Bruce Boston’s short poem, “My Wife Returns As She Would Have It,” tells a bittersweet story about grief and renewal in just a few words. “I see a butterfly/ has landed at my feet. ... ‘Is that you, sweetheart?’ I whisper.” Joe Haldeman’s long poem, “January Fires,” is also an elegy, a mini history of tragedy in our space program, “a solid spasm of fire/ cloud tombstone on the edge of space” made more devastating by the February 1, 2003, Columbia disaster. Reading his poem in March 2003 at ICFA in Ft. Lauderdale, Haldeman could not hold back tears, nor could most in his audience.

In “Joys and Jeremiads” Kress includes state of the art commentary by a number of SF writers. “Hard Science Fiction” by Geoffrey Landis points out (as indicated by the Nebulas earned by Williamson, Park and Asaro) that SF once focused on the work of large, hard machines, but now more often focuses on the very tiny, genes and quantum particles. In “Soft-and Medium-Viscosity Science Fiction” editor Scott Edelman writes that “We cannot truly blueprint the future, only dream it.” What’s important in SF, he implies, is not the facts but “the sense of wonder.” Terry Bisson’s “SF Humor: A Look at the Numbers” is a total, off the wall fabrication that only a mind like Bisson’s could concoct. Bisson suggests that “Mark Twain ... would be a SFWA member if he weren’t so dead.” In his essay on “Contemporary Fantasy” Andy Duncan suggests that the current trend is not the Tolkien-like “pastoral long ago and far away” but “our world, straight up, with a twist” (“Louise’s Ghost” is certainly a wonderful example of this). Whether SF or fantasy, all of the stories in the Nebula Anthology fall comfortably within the circle of speculative fiction. They all hypothesize, “What if ...?” In a genre that rewards the innovative it makes sense that boundary blurring should occur. What’s true for budding artists is true for speculative writers, coloring outside the circle creates the craft. In reading this anthology I am impressed by the depth of thought that went into each story. My only regret is that this year’s showcase is 90 pages shorter than last year’s. I would have liked a look at two other runners up, Lucius Shepard’s “Radiant Green Star” and James Morrow’s “Auspicious Eggs.” See you at the library.

FICTION REVIEW

Redemption Ark

David Mead

Alastair Reynolds, *Redemption Ark*. New York: Ace, June 2003 . \$24.95 hc. 567 pages. ISBN 0-441-01058-X. [Reviewed in uncorrected proofs.]

Redemption Ark is the third massive block in what promises to be a truly grand edifice, a space opera of extraordinary richness and vision. The first two parts of the adventure – *Revelation Space* and *Chasm City* – established the scene and circumstances from which *Redemption Ark* develops, and this book – satisfying in itself – sets the stage for some grand developments to follow. I am eager now to see what happens next.

When Khouri the Assassin left Chasm City on Yellowstone aboard the Ultra vessel *Nostalgia for Infinity*, she expected to kill Dan Silveste on Resurgam. Unexpected events take her, the Ultra traders, and Silveste to Cerberus, a mysterious object orbiting the neutron star Hades. Their attempt to penetrate this artifact and learn what had destroyed the natives of Resurgam some half million years before draws the attention of the Inhibitors, a machine species which has dedicated itself – apparently successfully, and in a good cause – to destroying starfaring sentients wherever it finds them. Now the Inhibitors are building a great weapon to destroy Resurgam and its inhabitants; the detection and destruction of the rest of humanity’s worlds will follow in due course. It is up to Khouri, the former Ultra Ilia Volyova, and the now-sentient *Nostalgia for Infinity* to try to save the colonists.

Meanwhile, back in the Yellowstone system, a war for control of the system has broken out between the pre-Melding-plague ruling class, the Demarchists, and the cybernetically enhanced, group-minded Conjoiners. Although the Conjoiners are defeating the Demarchists, their victory seems suddenly irrelevant, since they have learned that the alien “wolves” that destroy space-faring lifeforms have detected humanity’s interstellar expansion and are preparing their attack. They also know that a cache of “hell-class” weapons created by their founders has been taken to Resurgam space. The Conjoiners want those weapons, hoping to fend off the “wolves” – i.e. the Inhibitors – long enough to create a fleet of arks and flee. They send Skade, their best agent – a fully-enhanced Conjoiner who may also be possessed by the mysterious cybernetic mentality known as The Mademoiselle – to Resurgam to reclaim their property, using a dangerous new technique for controlling inertia which allows much faster subluminal travel. Complicating Conjoiner plans is the defection of their hero Nevil Clavain, who decides it’s important to try to save all humanity, not just the Conjoiners. With help from mysterious figures in Chasm City, a gang of criminal pigs, and some independent traders from the Rust Belt around Yellowstone, Clavain pursues Skade to Resurgam, only to find the Inhibitors in full control of the system and nearly ready to destroy its inhabitants. The Conjoiners’ weapons are useless against them. The only chance that remains for the humans in Resurgam space is flight, the *Nostalgia for Infinity* becoming an ark carrying the colonists of Resurgam out of harm’s way – for now.

This is a terrific story, and more complex in plot and character than this summary might imply. I did not want to put it down. Like most good sequels or series novels, *Redemption Ark* delivers enough exposition of antecedent events so that a reader unacquainted with *Revelation Space* or *Chasm City* can understand the events of the story. Nevertheless, I recommend – quite enthusiastically, actually – that readers get and read *Revelation Space* before tackling this book; your pleasure in both will be enhanced. Alastair Reynolds is one of the most interesting writers of hard SF today, easily ranking with Greg Benford, Stephen Baxter and Ken MacLeod. If you haven’t read his work yet, I strongly suggest you start soon. And if you have, go buy *Redemption Ark* as soon as you can.

FICTION REVIEW

The Risen Empire: Book One of Succession

Richard McKinney

Scott Westerfeld, *The Risen Empire: Book One of Succession*. New York: Tor, 2003. 304 pages, cloth, \$24.95. ISBN 0-765-30555-0.

The Risen Empire, the first of a two-volume series according to TOR press information, is Scott Westerfeld’s fourth

published novel. The book is space opera – a term not intended pejoratively, it should be emphasized – set amidst a far-flung interstellar empire in a distant future. The book’s greatest strengths are to be found in a well-written text and a well-told story more than in its original ideas. The story itself is a complex one, with several parallel plot lines and various narrative devices designed to provide requisite elements of suspense and adequate surprise at the appropriate places. Flashbacks are one particular technique used to provide pivotal information on the novel’s persons, places, and plotlines. Several set-pieces in the novel are quite well done. These include a fast-paced and suspenseful introductory section which depicts a military attempt at rescuing a captured risen (the term refers to persons “risen” from death, as the elite which steers the galaxy in Westerfeld’s future are known) princess and assorted hostages from the hands of the machine-augmented humans called the Rix, cyborgs who are fighting to spread a form of artificial intelligence, centered on planet-wide “compound minds”, across the universe. Another portion of the novel which makes for fascinating reading is the description of the planting, growth, and development of a house from “seed” to “independent” entity.

Alas – and unfortunately – it is very difficult to make a final judgement on the merits of this book without seeing where the author will take us in its companion volume. The reason is that, as is now the case, *The Risen Empire* is quite simply too incomplete to stand successfully alone. (At this point, it is perhaps natural to wonder whether it is Westerfeld himself who sees his work as two novels, or whether it was the publisher who decreed that a single work be broken into two separate volumes. If the latter, it is difficult to understand a publishing attitude which has no trouble supporting a seemingly unending stream of giant fantasy tomes, but apparently feels that SF readers will be frightened off by anything over three hundred pages or so.) The novel has far too many initially interesting but undeveloped questions, too many promising but sketchily portrayed characters, and too many fascinating but unexplored social and cultural environments – in general, too many loose ends. Not to mention the explicit, drawn-out cliff-hanger with which the book concludes.

Depending on what Westerfeld does in the forthcoming ‘second book of succession’, the two-volume work, considered as a whole, may represent either a strong contribution to the space opera subgenre, or little more than an unfulfilled promise. That the author has a talent for both words and ideas is not in doubt, as can be seen even better in his previous novel, *Evolution’s Darling*, from 2000, where he takes up some of the same themes seen in *The Risen Empire*, but with a depth and sensitivity not as readily – or, at least, not as consistently – evident in his newest book. Nevertheless, this first novel of the Succession duo reiterates that Westerfeld does have a distinct and distinctive voice – one which should bode well for his future in SF. There is a resonance in Westerfeld’s best writing with that of Roger Zelazny, in one of the latter author’s more mythic modes. A further strength of the book is Westerfeld’s ability to convey the feeling of a complex, plausible future, skillfully integrating elements borrowed from both cyberpunk scenarios and more traditional space opera. He also has a knack for giving his major (and some of the minor) characters an admirable impression of a greater depth than that with which they are actually explicitly provided in the text – all the more reason one wants to see what he will do with them in the sequel. Here is, in fact, one of the novel’s major weaknesses as a stand-alone book: what appear to be major characters (not all of whom are human, by the way) are introduced in a sufficiently strong manner to warrant the interest or empathy of the reader, only to then be relegated to minor roles in the story, or even to disappear from the stage altogether. Furthermore, a strategy of using the points of view of a large number of characters as the plot develops, which is the way Westerfeld has structured this novel, only works well when sufficient space can be devoted to each of the main protagonists to allow for significant development – in terms both psychological and with respect to their roles in the story. In *The Risen Empire*, much of this kind of character development is unfortunately lacking – again, presumably because at least some of it will be supplied in the sequel. Even in terms of the social and technological SF themes and motifs found in the novel – such as the nature of artificial intelligence and our ethical stance towards it, the advanced usage of microminiaturization and nanodevices and the consequences thereof, and the possibility of the conquest of and/or survival after death (the latter clearly more science fantasy than science fiction, but also obviously set up for major revelations in the next book) – it seems that, although the novel throws out some interesting ideas and important conundrums, it does not really follow up on them very much.

In conclusion: this *may* be (the first part of) an important work by a man who may develop into an important SF author. The potential is certainly there. The problem is that what we have here is only half of that potentially major work, and any final decision on its status must await the concluding portion of the story of the risen empire.

Science Fiction Research Association

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